



Man is Convicted of First Degree Murder in Alton Case

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE — The Madison County State's Attorney's Office announced today a Madison County jury convicted a 56-year-old man today for the murder and attempted murder of two victims after firing multiple shots at the victims inside their home in Alton.

Ernie L. Sykes (d.o.b. 1/17/64) was found guilty by jury of First Degree Murder, a Class M felony and Attempted First Degree Murder, a Class X felony. Jury selection began on Monday afternoon and trial started at 9 a.m. Tuesday. Closing arguments took place this morning and after less than one hour of deliberation, the jurors returned a guilty verdict on both counts.

At 4 a.m. on Nov. 21, 2018, the Alton Police Department responded to a 911 call from the victim, Daniel Ferrel, 26, who reported he had been shot in the leg in his home at 2335 Edwards Street, Alton. When officers arrived, Ferrel met them at the door with three gunshot wounds throughout his body. Upon entering the house, officers found Angel Syddall, 31, in her bedroom with what were later identified as seven gunshot wounds. Syddall was rushed to the hospital where she died from the wounds inflicted by the defendant, who was identified as Syddall's ex-boyfriend.

In closing arguments, Assistant State's Attorney Lauren Heischmidt asked the jury to "hold the defendant accountable for what he did that night." A substantial amount of evidence and testimonies presented allowed for the quick, guilty verdict.

Four days before the defendant murdered Syddall, he made threats to Syddall indicating her mother would need to get a black dress, inferencing her funeral. A key witness in the case was the defendant's daughter, who bravely testified against her father telling the jury the despicable things he did to her friend, Angel Syddall. All of Syddall's roommates testified it was made clear Sykes was not allowed in the house. Nonetheless,

the defendant testified in court with a different, made-up story than what he had told police up until trial.

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons said this about the case: "I am grateful to the jurors in this case for their hard work and for helping us bring this murderer to justice. Hopefully, this guilty verdict will provide some measure of relief and closure for Mr. Ferrel and the many family, friends and loved ones of Angel Syddall. We will continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers. This verdict also marks another victory for our community, secured by the State's Attorney's Office Violent Crimes Unit. We never back down from violent criminals and will fight to the end to protect the victims of violent crimes and the safety of our whole community."

Gibbons commended the work of his prosecutors, Assistant State's Attorney's Lauren Heischmidt and Morgan Hudson, for ensuring the guilty verdict. He also recognized the Alton Police Department, Illinois State Police Division of Forensic Services, St. Louis City Medical Examiner's Office, Barnes Jewish Hospital, and other witnesses for their work with the case.

First Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe and head of the Violent Crimes Unit said, "Our office takes the prosecution of Domestic Violence very seriously. Especially in cases like this where the Defendant committed the ultimate act of Domestic Violence when he took the life of Angel Syddall. I am proud of the great work done in this case by both our prosecutors and the Alton Police Department. I hope the family of the victim finds some peace in the verdict."

Synopsis of the convictions: Count 1, First Degree Murder, carries a sentencing range of 45 years to life. Count 2, Attempt First Degree Murder, carries a sentencing range of 31 years to life. Syke's sentencing will be held at a later date.