

Madison County State's Attorney's Office Issues Details Of Donald E. Nelson Conviction Of Eldon 'Twirp' Williams Murder

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
October 1 2020 1:03 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Madison County State's Attorney's Office issued official details of Donald M. Nelson conviction of the First-Degree Murder of Eldon "Twirp" Williams.

The State's Attorney's Office said the following: Donald M. Nelson (d.o.b. 9/8/84) was found guilty but mentally ill of First-Degree Murder, a Class M felony; Armed Violence, a Class X felony; Unlawful Possession of a Stolen Firearm, a Class 2 felony; Unlawful Possession of Weapons by a Felony, a Class 2 felony; and Criminal Trespass to a Residence, a Class 4 felony. The bench trial was heard by Circuit Judge Kyle Napp. The Court found that the Defense did not prove that he was insane at the time he murdered Eldon Williams. Opening arguments began Monday morning and closings took place yesterday afternoon. This morning the Honorable Judge Napp returned a guilty verdict on all counts.

"On October 16, 2018 at approximately 11:55 a.m., the Alton Police arrived at 211 W. Delmar in Alton to find a deceased man in the front driver's seat of a Lincoln car," the State's Attorney's Office said. "The elderly man had a gunshot wound to the back of his head. The victim, Eldon C. "Twirp" Williams Jr. of Godfrey, IL., passed away from the bullet discharged by the defendant. Mr. Williams was well-known in his community. He served as the Godfrey Tax Assessor for over 50 years and was a member of the Godfrey Village Board.

"After taken into custody, the defendant confessed to murdering Mr. Williams. Nelson told police the murder was not an accident; he planned it. The defendant stated he would do it again because it gave him a rush.

"The Defense claimed the defendant suffered from mental illness and was insane when he took the life of Mr. Williams. In closings, First Assistant State's Attorney Crystal Uhe argued that it wasn't until three months after being charged that Nelson claimed he has hallucinations and hears voices. Uhe called Dr. Daniel Cuneo, clinical psychologist, as an expert on behalf of the People of the State of Illinois. He testified that it was his expert opinion that while Donald Nelson suffered from Schizoaffective disorder, he was malingering (or faking) his symptoms and was in his expert opinion, sane at the time he committed the murder.

"The Court found that Nelson was cognizant of his actions at the time of the murder but noted the defendant sought mental health treatment in the past and was failed due to lack of funding for mental health centers. Thus, the defendant was found guilty but mentally ill of all counts."

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons said this about the case, "When something this terrible happens to any member of our community, we are all impacted. Because Mr. Williams was and remains an icon and had touched the lives of so many people in Godfrey and the region, the loss of his life is felt by such a great number of us

who are grieving alongside his family and loved ones. I will continue to pray for them that they may find peace and justice in this verdict and can continue on their path to healing from his tragic death.”

Gibbons commended the work of his prosecutors, First Assistant State’s Attorney’s Crystal Uhe and Assistant State’s Attorney Morgan Hudson, for ensuring the guilty verdict. He also recognized the Alton Police Department, the Madison County Sheriff’s Office, the Madison County Coroner’s Office, and other witnesses for their work with this case.

“I want to commend the collaborative investigation by police from Alton, ISP and the Sheriff’s Office in this case. Their amazing and swift police work made this result possible. My condolences go to the family and friends of 'Twirp' Williams. I am glad that the defendant will be held criminally responsible for his horrible acts that ended this great man’s life. I hope that the family and community finds peace in knowing that Donald Nelson can never hurt anyone else,” stated First Assistant State’s Attorney Crystal Uhe."

The defendant’s sentencing will be held at a later date. Nelson will spend the remainder of his life in the Illinois Department of Corrections receiving mental health services.