

# Alton Murder Suspect Could Be Released in Eight Years

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EDWARDSVILLE - An Alton man initially charged with first-degree murder may be free within eight years after he pleaded guilty Tuesday to a reduced charge of second-degree murder.

“The justice system has failed our family,” Tanya McGee, the mother of the victim, Austin L Pierson, 22, of Alton told defendant Pedro Cisnero-Vega, 25.

However, Assistant State’s Attorney Lauren Maricle explained that the defendant was walking away from the Shell station in upper Alton where the shooting occurred on March 22, 2019, and that Pierson attacked him from behind and punched him several times.

Circuit Judge Kyle Napp told Cisneros-Vega that the law provides for second-degree murder if the defendant believed he was justified in committing the act, but his belief was unreasonable. The judge said she took no part in the plea negotiations, but she bound herself to the agreed-upon sentence of 20 years in prison after hearing details of the case.

Cisneros-Vega may get a day off his sentence for each day he serves, and he will also get credit for the more than two years he was held in the Madison County Jail pending disposition of his case.

Maricle said the defendant was putting gas in his vehicle in the 1200 block of Brown Street when a fight broke out inside the station between his girlfriend and the victim’s girlfriend. She said Cisneros-Vega’s girlfriend motioned for him to come inside the station.

Inside the parties became engaged in a heated exchange, and Pierson punched Cisneros-Vega several times as he was leaving the station. The defendant then pulled out a gun and shot Pierson twice, then fled in his vehicle.

Alton Police came to the Shell station after a report of a fight. Officers also tracked down Cisneros-Vega after he was involved in two traffic crashes outside of Alton. Police had obtained a license plate number for the fleeing vehicle, and Cisneros-Vega was arrested and has been in custody since.

The defendant apologized to the members of the victim’s family who appeared in the courtroom.

McGee said she and members of her family will never get over the death of her loved one. “I hate you,” she told the defendant several times.

“I will never forget the bone-chilling scream of my daughter after she learned about it on the Internet,” she said.