

GUILTY PLEA: Killer of Randy Gori Enters Plea To First-Degree Murder, Two Armed Robberies

by Sanford Schmidt
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EDWARDSVILLE - The killer of prominent attorney Randy Gori could get up to 60 years in prison after pleading guilty Tuesday to first-degree murder and two counts of armed robbery.

Timothy Banowetz, 30, of Wentzville, Mo., carefully planned the crimes, but left a pile of evidence behind, according to Assistant State's Attorney Jake Harlow in court Tuesday.

Banowetz was charged in January 2020 with first-degree murder for entering Gori's Edwardsville home, binding the victim and his two children, then slitting Gori's throat and stabbing him several times. He intended to kill all three and burn the house down, Harlow said the evidence would have shown.

Prosecutors agreed to a cap of 50 years in prison for the murder, plus a consecutive six to 10 years in prison for the robberies. He took a cell phone from each of the young people, Harlow said. Murder carries a sentence of between 30 and 60 years in prison.

Harlow said police were called to the scene of Banowetz's abandoned truck the night before the crimes. In the truck, they found a Google map of the area around the victim's home. There were footprints leading away from the truck, Harlow said.

Harlow said a 911 call came in shortly after the truck was found. A video camera caught an image of the defendant entering the home, armed with a knife and a presumably fake handgun.

The prosecutor said the evidence would have shown that Banowetz demanded money, then slit Gori's throat and stabbed him multiple times. The two minors were bound with zip ties, but a friend showed up outside the house with two barking dogs.

Banowetz fled with \$4,000 he found in the home before the robbery was interrupted.

He fled in Gori's Rolls-Royce. The next day a team of officers found the Banowetz in the Rolls about 1,000 feet from the Gori home. There were bloodstains in the vehicle, plus \$4,000 in cash. Harlow said investigators used the Internet and handwritten documents to piece together the murder's plot.

Madison County State's Attorney Thomas Haine said: "All of our prayers are now with the Gori family, who has been through so much, showed amazing courage and resilience, and now deserves privacy and respect from all as they continue their healing process."

Haine also expressed thanks to the prosecutors and investigators for their hard work on this case.

Circuit Judge Kyle Napp said a sentence for Banowetz will be determined at a later date.