

'For All Practical Purposes He Will Never See The Light Of Day As A Free Man Again,' Haine Says After Banowetz Guilty Plea

by Sanford Schmidt
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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine provided statements today after Timothy Banowetz, 30, of Wentzville, Mo. pled guilty to one

count of first-degree murder and two counts of armed robbery in the murder of Randy Gori.

“Nothing can heal the terror and loss Timothy Banowetz has caused to the Gori family and this entire community,” Haine said. “But at least today, we have some measure of justice, and some measure of closure.”



“We found out Banowetz intended to plea today just minutes before opening arguments were to begin,” Haine said. “We weren’t prepared to give him much. After all, the evidence is overwhelming. But to save the family the trauma of reliving that terrifying night almost two years ago, and with their full agreement, we agreed to an open plea on the murder, and two armed robberies of the children, dismissing the rest. The practical

effect is this: Banowetz admitted guilt and is now facing up to 70 years in prison. We will be arguing for that maximum number, so for all practical purposes, he will never see the light of day as a free man again.”



On the evening of January 4, 2020, police found Randy Gori dead at his rural Edwardsville home. The state’s evidence showed that Banowetz had bound Gori and his two minor children before stabbing Gori and fleeing the premises with stolen cell phones from the children and cash. Banowetz was apprehended the next morning in a wooded area near Gori’s home in one of Gori’s vehicles.

“A search warrant was done on Banowetz’s computer, which was found in a study room at his school in St. Louis. And nothing in Banowetz’s extensive online history or the written materials on his person indicates that anyone else was involved in this terrible crime, or that he had any personal relationship with Randy Gori. Further, Banowetz was given multiple opportunities to unlock his phone for investigators and conveniently forgot his code every time. The evidence tells a simpler tale: greed and envy in a warped mind, which caused a terrible cold-blooded murder for money.”

“I’m especially appreciative of the hard work of Assistant States Attorneys Lauren Maricle and Jacob Harlow, as well as the members of the Madison County Sheriff’s Office, Edwardsville Police Department, and Major Case Squad for their efforts,

providing invaluable evidence proving Banowetz's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. And finally, we appreciate the jurors, who did not get to hear this case but were prepared to do their duty, and Judge Napp for her typically fair, impartial, and professional proceeding," Haine said.

This is the probable cause (PC) statement that was read in court by Assistant State's Attorney Jacob Harlow following the defendant's guilty plea.

On January 4th, 2020, around 11:00 a.m. the Madison County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to the area of 1143 Prickett Ave. in Edwardsville, Madison County, Illinois.

The purpose was due to the property owner finding an abandoned vehicle on the property. The vehicle was a black Ford F150 truck. The license plates were found to be removed from the vehicle and placed inside the vehicle. Inside the vehicle was a hard copy printout from a Google Maps search with the address of 1143 Prickett Ave. in Edwardsville, Illinois.

The registered owner of the vehicle was determined to be Timothy Banowetz and he could not be located.

The property owner of 1143 Prickett Ave in Edwardsville, Illinois was not aware of any association to the registered owner of the license plates. Footprints led in a northeast direction from the suspect vehicle. On January 4th, 2020, around 8:56 p.m. the Madison County, Illinois Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 call to the address of 4586 Mooney Creek Road, Edwardsville, Madison County, Illinois. Upon arrival, they discovered the body of a deceased male who was subsequently pronounced dead at the scene. He appeared to have his throat slit open and to have suffered from multiple stab wounds. His hands were bound behind his back with zip ties. The deceased male was identified as Randy L. Gori, who is a 47-year-old male and resides at the address.

A vehicle described as a black 2020 Rolls Royce SUV Cullinan was taken from the residence. This residence is approximately 2,900 feet from where the black Ford F150 truck described above was found. Randy Gori's juvenile children, 15-year-old E.G. and 13-year-old G.G. were held captive by a male suspect during the incident and they were located by first responders with their hands' zip tied behind their backs as well.

The juvenile children subsequently gave audio/video recorded statements to a trained forensic interviewer at the Madison County Child Advocacy Center on January 5, 2020. During their interviews, they stated that when they returned home from dinner on the evening of January 4, 2020, they parked in the driveway outside their garage and got out of the vehicle. At that time, the suspect ran up on them and their father with what he represented to be a gun. He forced them all to the ground and bound their hands behind

their backs with zip ties. He then made them go inside their residence through the garage and kept them bound on the ground while he demanded U.S. Currency and searched the house for the money. The suspect took all of their cellphones from them and their father's wallet as well. He also got about \$4,000-\$5,000 from the kitchen as well.

The suspect then fled the residence in their father's vehicle, a 2020 Rolls-Royce Cullinan. The Rolls-Royce stolen is an over \$300K vehicle. The suspect was described by the children as being a Caucasian male, over 6 feet tall, with brown eyes and a youngish sounding voice. He had a handgun, which E.G. believed to be a fake airsoft gun and a military-style knife with a black handle. The residence had exterior video surveillance, which depicts the suspect rapidly approaching the victims upon their arrival at the residence. The suspect is shown holding what appears to be a handgun in one hand and possibly a knife in another hand.

The suspect forces the victims to the ground and then directs them into the inside of the residence. On the morning of January 5, 2020, while Major Case Squad Investigators were searching the area where Timothy Banowetz's black truck had been found, Timothy Banowetz approaches the officers stating that he is looking for his vehicle. (it had been towed earlier that day). Shortly thereafter, the 2020 Rolls-Royce Cullinan belonging to Randy Gori was found abandoned alongside Zika Lane in Edwardsville approximately 1,000 feet from where Timothy Banowetz's vehicle was located in the woods.

Banowetz was arrested and had what appeared to be bloodstains on his clothing. The blood on his clothing was later confirmed by the Illinois State Police Crime Lab to be that of Randy Gori. He was also wearing shoes that appeared to match those of the suspect captured on video surveillance. Furthermore, he had in his possession approximately \$4,500 U.S. Currency and a handwritten piece of paper that appears consistent with the preparation and planning of the armed robbery and murder, including the following:

“watch with binoculars from woods”

“use gun & knife to subdue”

“ziptie hands & duck tape mouth”

“have withdraw \$4-6 million from bank”

“kill all of them & take zipties and duck tape off”

“burn bodies & house” Furthermore, the evidence at trial would show that in the months leading up to the murder, the defendant had used his computer to research Randy Gori via the Internet and to plan the armed robbery and murder.