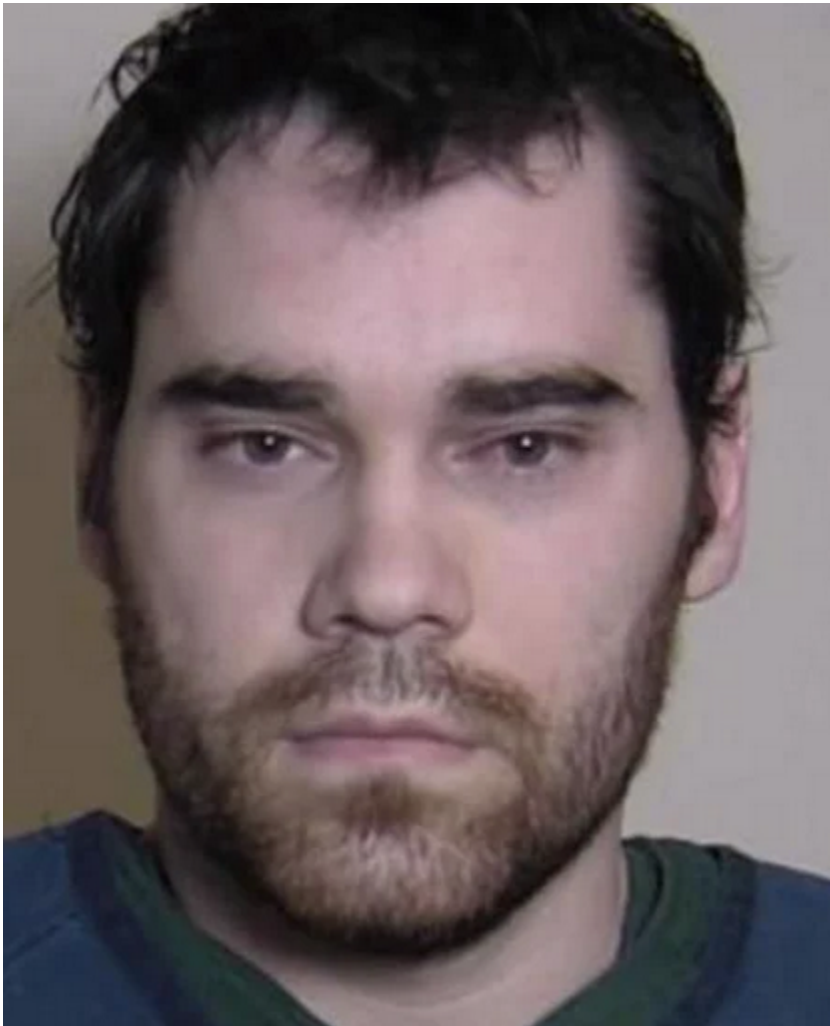


Convicted Murderer Banowetz Stalked Gori and Family Because He 'Resented Wealthy People'

by Sanford Schmidt

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EDWARDSVILLE - Timothy Banowetz, the killer of prominent attorney Randy Gori was sentenced Friday to 70 years in prison after the state presented hours of detailed evidence that showed how he stalked Gori and his family because he resented wealthy people.

During the hearing, family members used words like “deplorable, heinous, evil, vicious, monster, and demon from hell” to describe Banowetz, 30. He pleaded guilty in October to first-degree murder and two counts of armed robbery.

Circuit Judge Kyle Napp sentenced him to the maximum possible under a plea agreement that lead to his guilty plea.

His widow, Beth Gori, said in a written statement, read on her behalf, that she lost her two children on the night of the murder of their father. They have never been the same since she said.

Several of the family members have had to undergo psychological therapy since the killing and robbery, the evidence showed. “He took away my kids,” Beth Gori said.

“They learned that there is true evil in this world. He took away their sense of safety,” she wrote.

Before the evidence was presented, Banowetz was allowed to fire his public defender and allowed to represent himself, but he asked no questions of the witnesses and made no statement on his own behalf. He tried to withdraw his guilty plea, but the judge said the attempt was out of order. After that, sat passively and stared straight ahead during the proceedings.

Deputy Sheriff Tim Lawrence said on the stand that Banowetz was interviewed and had “extreme disdain for wealthy people.” He said that the defendant would answer no questions but said, “You have all the answers you need.”

Detective Brian Koberna testified that Banowetz had made a detailed search of the Hershey Family of Springfield, Mo., which owns a large amount of property in that area.

He 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.

He was a failing student at St. Louis College of Pharmacy and was reported missing by his family in 2017.

Harlow introduced a handwritten note found on the defendant's person the day after the crimes. The note included a list of things to do on the night of the crimes, the prosecutor said.

In the note, Banowetz wrote: "Items from Walmart, zip ties, take license plates off, park in woods next to cell phone tower, duct tape, me to survive, weapons to conceal, big knife, big gun, face mask, use gun and knife to rob, get \$6 million from the bank, kill all, take cash, burn bodies and house, put plates on."

Digital evidence presented to the judge confirmed all the items on the written list, including a fake handgun, zip ties, and a knife from a Walmart in Maplewood, Mo.

Detectives took the defendant's shirt as evidence and learned that it was stained with Gori's blood, as was the \$4,000 cash he took from the victim.

Koberna and other deputies painted a picture of how they searched the defendant's computer to find evidence that he carried out most of the items on the list. He was caught short of killing the children and burning the bodies when a friend of Gori's showed up with two German shepherds, who appeared to scare off the killer.

Deputy Bryon Bauer testified that detectives viewed security videos of the two children screaming, ages 13 and 15, screaming and crying with their hands tied behind their backs.

All three victims pleaded with the killer to stop. Gori offered him anything he wanted if he just left. "Please don't hurt anyone," one of the children said.

"Omigosh, why are you making this so difficult?" the killer responded.