



Killer Of Three Shows No Remorse

by Sanford Schmidt

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EDWARDSVILLE - The killer of three Bethalto residents sat still, staring straight ahead Friday as the survivors of his victims forgave him and a judge sentenced him to life in prison.



Brady Witcher, 43, of Birmingham, Ala., made no statement on his own behalf before Circuit Judge Kyle Napp sentenced him to the mandatory life sentence. The law provides that a killer of more than one person must be sentenced to life.

All three of the relatives said on the witness that they don't hate Witcher and wished that God would make him change his ways.

“I see a man whom God has kept alive for a reason,” said Amber Higgins, the sister of victims Andrew Brooks and daughter of victim Shari Yates of Bethalto.

“I know you are not a cold psychopath. God can turn it around and use it for good. My mom would have forgiven you,” Higgins told Witcher.

Higgins’ sister, Sarah Chalberg, expressed similar sentiments but pointed out how tragic the crimes have been to her entire family. She said her children still fear someone is going to come in the house and shoot them.

“I do forgive you, but what you did changed my life,” said Teresa Ferguson, the mother of victim John McMillian.

“The only positive to come out of this case is that the survivors have taken the stand and shown the kind of forgiveness it is hard to understand,” the judge said.

She also sentenced Witcher to up to life for armed robbery.

“The hearing today was truly moving,” State’s Attorney Thomas Haine said. “Several family members of Shari, A.J. and John spoke directly to the unrepentant murder of their loved ones and, with profound grace, forgave and prayed for his redemption. Their extraordinary words moved everyone in the courtroom. They will continue to be in our prayers as they continue to heal,” Haine said.

Assistant State’s Attorney Lauren Maricle was not sympathetic.

“He has shown no remorse. I struggle to understand how a defendant could be more cruel,” Maricle said in the hearing. “His crimes have infected an immeasurable amount of people over a car,” she said.

A jury last month took less than an hour to find Witcher guilty of murder and armed robbery.

Witcher has also been charged with violent crimes in Tennessee and with murder in Alabama. He may face the death penalty in Alabama.

Maricle called the crimes and “cross-country crime spree,” she said She noted that Witcher admitted to a Missouri officer to having killed the three victims. His DNA was found on the murder weapon, she argued at trial.

After the alleged killing in Alabama, Witcher and co-defendant Britany McMillan fled to Clarksville, Tenn., where they assaulted two victims, the trial evidence showed. They then drove north to Bethalto to steal a car and Witcher shot three people execution-style while he was there.

McMillan was aware of the area because Yates took her in out of kindness, prosecutors said.