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## Man sentenced to 30 years on rape charge

By Casey Strickland  
Sun-Courier Staff Writer

A Daleville man convicted of first-degree rape on Feb. 24 was sentenced to 30 years in a state penitentiary on April 7.

Ashley Paul Norris, 30, stood silent at the council table and listened as Dale County Circuit Judge Ken Quantlebaum imposed the day-to-day punishment.

Norris was arrested in April 2009 when investigators responded to a report of possible sexual abuse of a child under 12. He was convicted after a two-day trial.

Lonnie Scott Jr., the great-great-grandfather of Norris' son, testified on his behalf.

Scott asked the court to order another investigation, and said it is possible Norris was not responsible for the crime.

"He is not guilty," Scott said. "If he goes to jail, (his) child will grow up without a father."

The victim's father said he believed Norris should get the maximum sentence of life in prison for the crime.

"My daughter is going to have to live with this every day," he said. "Why should he be allowed to get out and have a life? He should have to deal with it every day, because she is always going to have that in the back of her mind."

The victim's stepmother said she understood the pain the case caused Norris' family, but also asked the court to impose a life sentence.

"My little girl has had all of her innocence taken away," she said. "All of her first experiences are gone. She will never ever get to experience a relationship without having to think about what has happened to her."

"I hate that his child will grow up without a father, and I hope one day he finds a father that will be good for him, and (he) never has to go through what she has been through," she said. "She will never get over this, and it has devastated our family, but we

have to find a way to move on. I just don't think he ever deserves a chance at happiness when he took all of hers away."

Defense attorney Everette Urech argued that a life sentence would be too harsh because the victim's behavior has improved.

"We would like to argue that for sentencing on behalf of (Norris) that the court take note of the fact that the child is progressing well and doing better in school. We disagree with the fact that the child will be emotionally scarred for life," he said. "We think a life sentence in this case is too much, and we argue that the court should impose a lower sentence than that."

Urech also asked the court to consider that although Norris has two prior felonies, they are not related to the case he is being sentenced for.

Urech also asked for leniency due to the fact Norris has a small child.

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## Sentenced

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"He wants to be able to have the opportunity in life to be a father to that child," he said. "He also has a wife, and he wants to have an opportunity to be a husband to that wife."

Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams said the victim's testimony and evidence presented at the trial convinced the jury to convict Norris.

"This is not a he-said-she-said (case). There's medi-

cal evidence and all kinds of things involved in this case," he said. "There is no doubt, none, that he committed this crime."

Adams said abuse cases involving children are worse than murder.

"In a murder case somebody is dead. It's over for them," he said. "She's got a long life ahead of her, and she's got to deal with this forever."

Quantlebaum said Norris is not eligible for probation and has the right to appeal the sentence.