

Man pleads guilty to manslaughter in 2007 killing

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A Geneva County man who was charged with murder in 2007 was sentenced to 20 years in prison on Wednesday after pleading guilty to manslaughter.

Phenico Hornsby, 46, of Bellwood pleaded

guilty to felony manslaughter and assault charges and several misdemeanors related to the death of his girlfriend, Jewel Bingham, and an attack on her former roommate, Carla Lick.

Tommy Scarborough, one of Hornsby's defense attorneys, said Hornsby received 20-year sentences for the manslaughter and assault charges and will serve them concurrently during the same 20-year period.

Hornsby was arrested in June 2007 after law enforcement found the body of his girlfriend in a wooded area in Bellwood.

Just a day earlier, Hornsby had attacked Lick in her home, allegedly attempting to burn the house down.

He was initially charged with murder, arson and attempted murder, but the plea agreement reduced the charges.

Jason Eubanks, another of Hornsby's attorneys, said the agreement was a fair one for both sides.



Phenico Hornsby

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Kirke Adams

Geneva County district attorney

"This was totally a circumstantial evidence case, and with those cases they can go either way," Eubanks said. "It just puts a lot into the jury in deciding such a thing. As far as forensics, there was nothing to speak of linking him to the murder. I think that led a long way to how the offer got down to what it was."

Geneva County District Attorney Kirke Adams said the evidence supported the

manslaughter charge, and he is somewhat satisfied with the results.

"Law enforcement did an excellent job building this case, and based on my conversations with law enforcement and the victim's surviving family, we determined this was best resolution for this case," Adams said. "The defendant and Ms. Bingham had a long relationship together that had a history of domestic violence, and on this occasion, they had a domestic altercation that ultimately led to the death of Ms. Bingham. It was our belief this domestic situation just went too far on this occasion, and he didn't intend to kill her in a premeditated manner."

Still, Adams said it is important Hornsby serves the entire 20 years of

his sentence.

"No result could have brought Ms. Bingham back, and ultimately we have to think about that," he said. "The family wanted closure in this case. My job as prosecutor doesn't stop the day he pleads guilty, it continues to try to keep him in as long as we can. He either does 20 years or his parole board lets him out, and that would have to be over our objection, which is a rare occurrence."