

Adkison found guilty of murder

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Editor

Shawn Lee Adkison was found guilty of the murder of Debbie Ayres Thursday after a week-long trial at Geneva County Courthouse. The jury was out for just 10 minutes.



Adkison

Adkison and Christopher Finley are accused in the murder of Ayres in a trailer in East Ge-

neva County. Ayres' body was found in a shallow grave near Wicksburg in October, and after investigation the two men are charged with the crime.

According to forensic evidence introduced at the trial Ayres was beaten to death, allegedly at Adkison's trailer by Finley. According to testimony at the trial Adkison witnessed the murder and helped dispose of the body and physical evidence.

In his closing arguments, Prosecutor David Emery, the former Geneva County District Attorney, said that

Adkison was not truthful in multiple interviews with law enforcement and knew where Ayres' body was buried even before the interviews. Emery said that Ayres had a hard life, but did not deserve her fate.

"As long as she was alive she had hope," Emery said, "but she was beaten to death."

Emery said that at first Adkison denied knowledge of the crime, but changed his story several times to where the murder involved a stabbing or a beating with a shotgun. "She was murdered in front of his eyes. He rolled her in the rug

in his house and participated in her burial.

"He can't tell the truth," Emery said, noting that eventually Adkison admitted to knowing about the murder. "He knew where she was buried even before the interviews," the prosecutor said, calling Adkison "a drama queen."

Emery noted that it was witness Lee Anderson that came forward with crucial evidence. He called those involved in the slaying "animals walking around looking for drugs and

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feeling the rush.

"It's time to answer for what he did," Emery said in closing.

"I don't know if Mr. Emery has been listening to the same case I did the last two days," said defense attorney Laura Wells. She said that Adkison was consistent with his story throughout, and that witness Anderson "was perfect evidence of reasonable doubt."

She said the state did not prove intent on Adkison's part, and there was no evidence that he touched Ayres during the murder.

Wells also said that Ayres "was not a nice person" and stole from Adkison's children.

"He has never denied that Debbie Ayres was murdered in his house,

but there was nothing he could do to stop that crazy man (Finley) from killing her."

Wells urged the jury to keep the large amount of "gray area" in mind when making up their minds.

Emery said that whether Ayres was "not nice or good, she didn't deserve what she got.

"He (Adkison) told a different story to everyone he talked to," Emery said. He noted testimony about the character of those involved, including that Finley worshipped his knife "like an idol."

"They were all cut out of the same mold, a bunch of dopers and liars."

"Forensics showed that Ayres was beaten to death. It was not a mystery to anyone that was there. She was beaten to death in front of him."

Judge P.B. McLaughlin presided over the case.

Sentencing will be done at a later date, and Finley will go on trial during the October 5 court session.

Authorities originally arrested both Finley and Adkison in October 2014 charging them in connection to the murder of 48-year-old Debbie Ayres.

Geneva County Sheriff Tony Helms said the charges stemmed from a Geneva County missing person investigation.

The victim's body was found on property off U.S. 84 West in the Wicksburg community, Helms said.

Helms said the victim, Ayres, was found buried in 3 to 4 feet of dirt in the woods just past County Road 9 in Wicksburg. Helms said Ayres lived in the Black community

of Geneva County.

•Trial began Monday in the murder case filed against a convicted sex offender, 30-year-old William Robert Williamson Jr., in Geneva County in front of Circuit Judge William Filmore.

Geneva County Sheriff's investigators arrested Williamson Jr. and charged him in the shooting death of 26-year-old James Tice the night of June 4, 2014. Tice, of Dothan, suffered multiple fatal gunshot wounds to his body and was found by authorities in the front yard of a trailer on Cohen Road, a dirt road in the Malvern community.

According to the Alabama sex offender registry website, Williamson was convicted of the second-degree rape of a 15-year-old girl in Houston County in 2006.