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Page 1 of 1

Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Court of Criminal Appeals Upholds Murder Conviction in Lee County

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the conviction of Timothy O’Neal James, 37, for murder. James was convicted in Lee County Circuit Court on January 31, 2020, for the murder of his girlfriend, Darlene Little.

The evidence at trial showed that on June 10, 2017, at approximately 1:30 p.m., James called 911 to report that Little had shot herself. Officers from the Opelika Police Department soon arrived and found Little dead with a gunshot wound to the head. The State’s forensic witness testified that the location of the wound would have made it difficult for Little to have killed herself. James quickly became a suspect and changed his account of events several times. At trial, James testified that he was holding the gun when it was fired, contrary to his initial statements to police, but claimed that the shooting was an accident. The jury rejected this claim and found him guilty of murder.

Lee County District Attorney Jessica Ventiere’s office successfully prosecuted this case and obtained a guilty verdict. James was sentenced to 40 years’ imprisonment for his crime. James sought to have his conviction reversed on appeal.

The Attorney General's Criminal Appeals Division handled the case during the appeals process, arguing for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals to affirm James’s conviction. The Court did so in a decision issued Friday, January 29, 2021.

Attorney General Marshall commended Assistant Attorney General Stephen Dodd for his successful work on this case, and thanked District Attorney Jessica Ventiere and her staff for their valuable assistance in defending the murder conviction.

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