



## **AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES LIFE SENTENCE OF MAN FOR 1997 MURDER OF HIS WIFE IN JACKSON COUNTY**

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange announced that Barry Whitton yesterday was sentenced to life imprisonment for the 1997 murder of his wife, Michelle Townson Whitton, in Jackson County. Whitton, formerly of Section, was found guilty by a jury in Jackson County Circuit Court on September 24.

Speaking after the sentencing, Attorney General Strange said, "A collective sigh of relief has been heard all over Jackson County today. Justice was served to a convicted murderer who will finally pay for the heinous crime he committed 18 years ago."

Attorney General Strange's Criminal Trials Division presented evidence at trial that Whitton murdered his wife, who was 28 years old, by bludgeoning her in the head with a shotgun. He then placed her body in a shallow grave, and for 17 years went uncharged for her murder.

During the trial, forensic evidence was presented about blood that was found in the bedroom of the Whitton home. Two witnesses testified that Whitton confessed to them that he had killed his wife in the bedroom. Additional evidence was presented about his disposal of her body, the shotgun he used to kill her, carpeting from the bedroom and other related items. Further testimony was presented from family and members of the community about Whitton's actions and consciousness of guilt following the murder.

Attorney General Strange praised those involved in bringing this case to a successful conclusion. "In particular, I want to commend the witnesses, including family members, who gave important testimony that led to Whitton's conviction." He gave special thanks to members of the Attorney General's prosecutorial and investigative team for their skill and dedication, noting Assistant Attorneys General Leigh Gwathney and John Hensley of the Criminal Trials Division, and Special Agents of the Attorney General's Cold Case Unit and Investigations Division. He also thanked the sheriff's offices of Jackson, DeKalb and Cullman counties, the Jackson County District Attorney's Office, the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences and the State Bureau of Investigations.

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