

District Attorney's Office

State of North Carolina

26th Prosecutorial District

Mecklenburg County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Cold case rapist, domestic violence offender convicted by juries

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Two survivors recently took the stand in Mecklenburg County court to speak their truth before juries. Their brave testimonies, which resulted in the convictions of a rapist in a 1982 cold case and a violent domestic violence offender, helped prosecutors ensure justice and protect other women. The trials, which were led by the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Special Victims Team, were held during the week of March 14, 2022, in courtrooms 5370 and 5110 before The Honorable Jacqueline D. Grant and The Honorable Athena F. Brooks, Superior Court Judges.

Richard Wendell Jones, 61, was tried for 1) two counts of first-degree rape, 2) two counts of first-degree sex offense, 3) first-degree kidnapping, and 4) first-degree burglary. After deliberating for less than an hour and a half, the jury found him *guilty* as charged on March 18, 2022. Sentencing him under laws that were in place at the time of the offense in 1982, as required by law, Judge Grant sentenced Jones to two consecutive sentences of life in prison with the possibility of parole. He will be eligible for parole after 40 years in prison. The survivor in this case took the stand and bravely faced her assailant 40 years after Jones attacked her. On February 18, 1982, she was asleep in her Charlotte apartment when a man broke in through a bathroom window and then threatened her with a knife. He bound and gagged her, wrapping tape around her head and tying her to the bed. That is when he proceeded to sexually assault her. When he later fled, he left her tied there. Ultimately, she was able to free herself, and she called police. The case went cold. Decades later, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit began to reexamine the case, and investigators submitted evidence for DNA testing. That testing resulted in a DNA match to Jones, who was serving a prison sentence in Georgia. He was brought to Mecklenburg County in 2019 to answer to these charges. Prosecutors would like to thank those who helped secure justice in this case, including the survivor and cold case investigators, as well as those who were initially involved in the case in 1982. Both the original CMPD detective and the doctor who examined the victim in 1982 testified at trial.

Cory Armstrong, 50, was tried for 1) assault by strangulation, 2) felony habitual misdemeanor assault, and 3) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The firearm offense was dismissed by the court at the close of all evidence. Then, the jury found him *guilty* of assault

by strangulation and felony habitual misdemeanor assault. Judge Brooks sentenced Armstrong to 8-19 months in prison. He was also sentenced to an additional 9-20 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. Armstrong and the survivor had recently developed a dating relationship when they visited Charlotte in December 2018. They went out to dinner, and when they returned to their hotel room, Armstrong grew angry after he saw a text message from a number he did not recognize. He punched his girlfriend in the face and jaw and strangled her by holding her down against the bed. He destroyed her phone and threw the pieces into the toilet. By morning, she had visible injuries on her neck and face, and Armstrong ordered her to wear sunglasses when they went to breakfast at the hotel. But a Good Samaritan saw her injuries, suspected that she was a victim of domestic violence, and called 911. When asked whether the Good Samaritan had seen Armstrong hit the woman, he said he “didn’t need to see him hit her” to know she was being abused. Police responded to the hotel, and after observing the survivor’s injuries and speaking with both her and Armstrong, officers arrested Armstrong.

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