

BRUTAL DOMESTIC ATTACK LEADS TO 25-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR INMAN MAN

An Inman man received a 25-year prison sentence today for breaking into his former girlfriend's apartment, slitting her throat, cutting her daughter and setting the apartment home on fire.

Willard S. Gasper, 52, of Inman, pleaded guilty to first-degree burglary, two counts of assault and battery with intent to kill and second-degree arson before Circuit Judge Derhem Cole.

"When you take Mr. Gasper's age into consideration, this is essentially a life sentence," Assistant Solicitor Bob Coler said. "He will have plenty of time behind bars to think about the consequences of some heinous acts."

About 6:55 a.m. on Jan. 15, 2003, Inman police responded to a report of a woman being cut at the Duvall Apartments on Culp Street. Misty Hazard, 35, was found inside of her burning apartment with cuts on her neck. Emergency workers found Hazard in a locked bathroom in the rear of the apartment. She was unconscious. A paramedic thought she was dead when he checked her pulse in three different places and couldn't find one.

Hazard's 15-year-old daughter, Kimberly McElrath, was located inside a neighbor's apartment with a cut on her arm and blood on her clothes. McElrath told investigators she was in her apartment sleeping and Gasper woke her up when he cut her.

McElrath fled to the neighbor's apartment for help.

Less than an hour after police found Hazard and her daughter, Greenville police stopped Gasper at the intersection of Laurens Road and Eastlin Street for suspicion of driving under the influence. He had a bottle of liquor in his hand when officers approached the car. Officers found Hazard's blood on his hands and clothing and gasoline on his shoes.

During their investigation, officers found that Gasper forced his way into the home by using a bolt cutter to break a chain lock. Investigators found two empty gas cans and a blood-stained knife inside the apartment.

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at 809-4892.