

SPARTANBURG MAN RECEIVES 3 LIFE PRISON SENTENCES FOR WEST SIDE ABDUCTION

A Spartanburg man received 3 consecutive life prison sentences today for the armed abduction and attempted murder of a local chiropractor.

The jury deliberated less than 20 minutes before convicting James J. Barnett, 49, of armed robbery, assault and battery with intent to kill and kidnapping of Dr. William M. Decken of Roebuck. Barnett will serve every day of Circuit Judge Derham Cole's prison sentence. He is not eligible for parole.

"A stranger invaded the life of a decent, good man and nearly ended it," Solicitor Trey Gowdy said.

The abduction occurred about 7:10 p.m. on Dec. 22 at the victim's Wilder Drive business. Moments after asking to use the telephone, Barnett brandished an orange knife with a 4-inch blade and demanded money. After Decken handed over a sum of cash, Barnett forced the victim at knifepoint to get into a nearby car. Barnett drove the car to a secluded area on Frey Road and told Decken to get out. A struggle ensued. Barnett choked Decken and used the knife to severely cut the victim on the left side of his body. Barnett forced Decken to get back in the car and the men drove to the rural Greenville County home of Jackie Norris. Barnett left his injured victim inside the car and went inside the residence to talk with Norris. Barnett eventually moved Decken inside Norris' home. Norris called 911 to report the crime when Barnett wasn't watching. Greenville County deputies responded to Norris' home and arrested the defendant without incident. The knife was recovered inside the home.

Decken was rushed by ambulance to Greenville Memorial Hospital.

Solicitor Gowdy and Deputy Solicitor Derrick Balsa utilized the testimony of Decken and Norris to present their case during the trial.

"If Barnett left Decken alive, he would be able to tell police who took him, who robbed him and who stabbed him," Gowdy said. "So of course he didn't pass two hospitals so Jack Norris could take him to a third. He took him to a place where he thought he could perhaps kill him and get away with it."

Barnett's prior criminal record includes rape and kidnapping convictions from Georgia.

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at (864) 809-4892.