

Man sentenced for 14-year-old rape

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A former Osbourn Park teacher saw the face of the man who she has drawn for 14 years in Prince William Circuit Court on Friday.

Terry Leon McDonald, 43, received two life in prison sentences for the July 1990 rape and abduction.

Avid bicyclist Anne Heck was pushing her bike up a hill near Haymarket when McDonald attacked her. She had biked from her apartment in Manassas. McDonald had driven a car stolen from a woman he had raped in West Virginia. He had escaped from a West Virginia prison work crew.

"I'm very sorry for what I did that day. There's not enough I can say to show that I'm sorry," McDonald said Friday in a courtroom filled with Heck's family and friends. He turned to face Heck. "I hope you can accept my apology."

Seated in the front row of the court room, Heck, who now lives in North Carolina, gave a slight nod.

The Potomac News normally does not identify sexual assault victims, however Heck told the Washington Post in a recent article about her ordeal that it was important to her that she not be a faceless victim. She declined comment after the hearing Friday.

McDonald was linked to Heck's rape by a cold case hit after West Virginia created a DNA database, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Richard A. Conway said Friday. McDonald was West Virginia's first cold case hit, Conway said.

Conway questioned the sincerity of McDonald's remorse. He argued that when Prince William County Detective Samson Newsome interviewed McDonald in prison in West Virginia, McDonald claimed he had never been to Prince William County.

"He has already taken much of the lives of four women," Conway said. "Let's not give him the chance at a fifth."

Earlier in the hearing, Heck described the rape, and the months after when she had to be

tested for pregnancy and HIV. She tried counseling, which she abhorred. She took a self-defense class, and a group of women colleagues at Osbourn Park came to her graduation. A year later she left Manassas, hoping to move on.

"I loved the freedom I felt on two wheels with the sun on my back," Heck said of the day she was raped, calling the attack a "stark contrast" to the ride she had planned.

Though she still experienced pain in her hips and pelvis, and still drew pictures of her rapist, she thought about the past less and less. That was until she received a call from Prince William Detective Samson Newsome in January 2003, telling her that McDonald had been identified by DNA.

Not long after Newsome called Heck, she called her old cycling buddy Ted Coopwood.

"I was there from the beginning ... she wanted me to be here," Coopwood said after the sentencing. "I knew if it ever came to trial, I knew I would be there."

Coopwood and Heck met on in 1989, on a two-day, 100-mile Multiple Sclerosis benefit race. She was wearing number 511. It became his nickname for her. Coopwood, of Bealeton, was impressed by Heck's riding, and later by her strength after the rape.

"Without this experience I believe I would have felt none of the richness of my life," Heck said. "I'm grateful for the growth this act has provided me."

Heck said she learned about friendship from the stranger that picked her up on the side of the road after the attack and drove her to the nearest paramedic unit. She said she learned about letting go of fear, and patience with the process of healing.

McDonald told the court he has an illness that he cannot control. He said it is better for him to be locked up until a cure is found. But he told the judge that he would prefer to serve his time in West Virginia, where he grew up.

Defense attorney Michael Pignone said McDonald is eligible for parole in West Virginia in 2026. McDonald's only concern is where he will die, and he wants to die in West Virginia, Pignone said.

"It's very easy for me to conclude you should be incarcerated for the rest of your life," Circuit Court Judge LeRoy F. Millette Jr. told McDonald. "You said so yourself."

Millette said it was up the Virginia and West Virginia correctional departments to determine where McDonald does his time.

After the sentencing, Anne Heck hugged Ted Coopwood in the hallway. Grinning, she pulled off her blue suit jacket to reveal race number 511 pinned to the back of her blouse.

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