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DAVIDSON SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR MURDER OF ROSEANNE WELSH

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that Donald Hugh Davidson Jr., of Middleburg, was sentenced by the Honorable Don Lester to death for the murder of Roseanne Welsh.

Davidson previously waived his right to a jury trial for the guilt and penalty phases and entered a guilty plea to charges of First-Degree Murder, Attempted Sexual Battery (Victim Over 12 Years of Age With Force or Deadly Weapon), four counts of Sexual Battery (Victim Under 12 Years of Age), Lewd or Lascivious Molestation, Kidnapping, and Grand Theft Auto.

“This case shocked the conscious of Clay County -- a kidnapping of a child and rape and murder of her mother. Today brings an end to at least one chapter of the ongoing nightmare for Rosie Welsh’s children, her husband, and family,” said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

On Dec. 1, 2014, Davidson entered the Welsh’s Middleburg residence and — in a premeditated fashion — strangled and stabbed the young mother. Davidson rendered Welsh unconscious before stabbing her in the neck several times. Davidson knew the Welsh’s husband since childhood. Welsh’s son returned home several hours later, but was locked out and told by Davidson his mother was not home. Davidson told him to go to a friend’s house down the street, which he did. Upon returning home, he found his mother murdered on the bathroom floor. His mother’s van and his younger sister were missing from the residence. Law enforcement arrived at the home and spotted Welsh’s daughter running down a dirt road toward her home. The young female victim told investigators she was home at the time of the crime, but did not realize what was happening. She identified Davidson as emerging partially exposed from her mother’s bedroom and approaching her. Davidson sexually battered her in

the home before using the family van to kidnap her. He took the girl to several areas in Clay County to perform other sexual acts on her before driving back to the area of the crime and dropping her off. An extensive manhunt ensued and Davidson was apprehended while driving on Blanding Boulevard. A law enforcement search revealed the knife used in the crime and, post-Miranda, Davidson admitted to planning and attempting to sexually assault Welsh in her residence.

“I am grateful to the Clay County Sheriff’s Office and proud of our SAO team, led by Chief Assistant L.E. Hutton and Clay County Director Pam Hazel, in the handling of this important capital crime,” said Nelson.

The case was investigated by Clay County Sheriff’s Office and was prosecuted by Chief Assistant State Attorney L. E. Hutton, State Attorney Melissa Nelson, and Assistant State Attorney Pam Hazel.