

Auburn man gets 18 years for murder of Mark Lewis

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An Auburn man was sentenced Friday to 18 years in prison for the 2006 strangulation murder of Mark Lewis in Lewis' Springfield apartment.

James B. Campbell, 35, had pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in February and was facing a sentence of from four to 20 years.

Lewis, 36, a supervisor at Physicians Group Associates, was found dead inside his ransacked apartment on Hazel Dell Road just off West Lake Shore Drive on Sept. 29, 2006. Co-workers had gone to check on him when he didn't show up for work.

Lewis had last been seen at a downtown bar about 11 p.m. the night before. His missing Toyota Celica was found abandoned near railroad tracks in the 3700 block of Camp Butler Road about 1 a.m. Sept. 30.

Campbell met Lewis at the bar, and the two went to Lewis' home, where they fought. It was during the fight that Campbell strangled Lewis.

Campbell was charged in March 2007, after DNA evidence from underneath Lewis' fingernails was compared to a national database by Sangamon County sheriff's detectives. Campbell's DNA had been entered into the database only after he was convicted of felony criminal damage to property.

A cigarette butt found inside Lewis' car also was tested for DNA, and that, too, came back matching Campbell's DNA, said first assistant state's attorney John Milhiser.

Milhiser asked Circuit Judge Leslie Graves to sentence Campbell to the maximum allowable under the law.

The courtroom scene was an emotional one.

"He took from this world with his own hands a person very unlike him," Milhiser said. "Mark Lewis was a person liked by all, a person who was caring, compassionate, considerate and responsible."

Defense attorney Mark Wykoff recommended an eight-year sentence, citing Campbell's alcohol problems.

Campbell's mother testified that her son had an addiction to alcohol and had psychiatric problems dating back to childhood.

Milhiser said Campbell continued to blame others for his behavior and still had not accepted responsibility for his actions.

Campbell received credit for two years in the Sangamon County Jail awaiting the outcome of his case.

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