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AURORA MAN GETS 30-YEAR SENTENCE FOR MURDER OF 18-YEAR-OLD VICTIM ABY VILLALPANDO, A FRIEND OF DEFENDANT, BEATEN TO DEATH WITH HAMMER

June 12, 2014

An Aurora man has pleaded guilty to his role in the grisly murder of an 18-year-old female friend.

Juan Garnica, 20 (d.o.b. 3-4-1994), of the 400 block of Ashland Avenue, Aurora, today agreed to a sentence of 30 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections in exchange for a guilty plea to first-degree murder.

Circuit Judge John A. Barsanti accepted the plea.

Sometime after 1 p.m. Jan. 31, 2013, the victim, 18-year-old Abigail Villalpando of Aurora, went to visit Garnica and co-defendant Enrique Prado, 20 (d.o.b. 10-26-1993), of the 400 block of Jefferson Street, Aurora, at Prado's home. During her visit, Garnica asked Abigail to look into an aquarium at a dead turtle. As she looked, Garnica pulled a hammer from his pocket and struck Abigail twice in the head with it. She fell to the floor. Garnica struck her with the hammer several more times and then checked to be sure she was dead. Garnica then put Abigail's body into a large tote container and placed the container in the rafters of his garage.

Around 10 a.m. Feb. 1, 2013, Garnica placed Abigail's body in a metal barrel in the back yard and set her body on fire.

Abigail's body was found burned in a wooded area near Fifth Street and Waubonsia Avenue in Montgomery. Her remains were identified through dental records. An autopsy determined that Abigail died of multiple blunt force head trauma.

Prado is charged with arson, a Class 2 felony, and concealment of a homicidal death, a Class 3 felony. He is free on \$1,000 bond. Prado's next court appearance is scheduled for 9 a.m. July 17, 2014, in Courtroom 319 in front of Judge Barsanti.

Co-defendant Jose M. Becerra, 22 (4-26-1992), of the 0-99 block of Seaton Creek Drive, Oswego, is charged with concealment of a homicidal death, a Class 3 felony, and concealing the death of a person, a Class 4 felony. He is free on \$350 bond. Becerra's next court appearance is scheduled for 9 a.m. July 1, 2014, in Courtroom 319 in front of Judge Barsanti.

According to Illinois law, Garnica must serve the full sentence. He receives credit for at least 497 days served in the Kane County jail, where he has been held since his arrest in lieu of \$5 million bail.

“I hope that Aby’s family feels a measure of peace and justice in this sentence. This case has been very emotional for many people, including Aby’s family and all of the Aurora police detectives and officers who were involved in the investigation,” said Kane County State’s Attorney Joe McMahon, who, with Kane County First Assistant State’s Attorney Jody Gleason, prosecuted the case.

“Mr. Garnica’s disturbing and inexplicable actions took away the life of a young woman who was full of promise and was loved by many, and left a gaping hole in Aby’s family that they probably will never fully understand,” McMahon said.

“Many thanks to the dozens of detectives and officers at the Aurora Police Department who worked so hard to solve this case.”

The charges against Becerra and Prado are not proof of guilt. They are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial in which it is the state’s burden to prove their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.