

Beat: News

Elderly man sentenced to life for 1980s serial murders in Los Angeles

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USPA News - An elderly man who was arrested in Kentucky two years ago was sentenced to life in prison Thursday after being convicted of murdering three women in downtown Los Angeles more than two decades ago, though investigators believe he may be responsible for many more murders. Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge George Lomeli sentenced Samuel Little, 74, to three consecutive life terms without the possibility of parole after family members of the victims addressed the court.

The sentencing came after a jury convicted Little on September 2 for the first-degree murders of three women whose bodies were dumped in alleyways near downtown Los Angeles in the 1980s. The victims were identified as 41-year-old Carol Alford who was killed in July 1987, 35-year-old Audrey Nelson who was killed in August 1989, and 46-year-old Guadalupe Apodaca who was killed in September 1989. "During the trial, I was there for the coroner's presentation about my sister and those images will be etched in my mind forever," Sherri Nelson, the sister of Audrey Nelson, said in court on Thursday. "I loved my sister dearly and she did not deserve to have her life taken like this." Detectives from the Los Angeles Police Department's Cold Case Homicide Unit began their investigation into Little in 2012 after California's DNA Combined Internet Index System (CODIS) offender databank linked him to DNA which was recovered in relation to the murders of Nelson and Apodaca. Little, who is also known as Samuel McDowell, was taken into custody at his home in Louisville, Kentucky, on September 5, 2012, on an unrelated Los Angeles narcotics warrant from 2009. Little subsequently waived extradition and was returned to Los Angeles in October 2012 while detectives continued building their case. In November 2012, Little was connected to Alford's murder, again through DNA evidence. A grand jury indicted Little in April 2013 for the three murders with the special circumstance of multiple murders, though prosecutors chose not to seek the death penalty, which would unlikely have been carried out due to Little's old age, even if California were to resume carrying out the death penalty. Deputy District Attorney Beth Silverman said all three victims led troubled lives, with both drugs and prostitution making them vulnerable and easy targets for Little. The three victims were all strangled to death with their bodies found naked from the waist down, indicating that they were raped. Cold case detectives are continuing to work with law enforcement agencies throughout the United States in areas where Little has been known to frequent, and investigators believe he may be responsible for dozens of murders throughout the years. Detectives are also reviewing other Los Angeles-area homicides for a possible connection to Little. Los Angeles detectives have been able to solve a number of cold cases in recent years, often through DNA evidence. Former pizza delivery man Chester Turner, who had already been convicted of killing 10 women and an unborn child in Los Angeles over an 11-year-old period starting in 1987, was sentenced to death for a second time last month after being found guilty of four more murders during the same period.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168

Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com