

Press release

For immediate release

Sept. 5, 2013

Morgan Jury convicts Prichard man for Decatur robberies

A Morgan County jury brought closure to a string of armed robberies that occurred in Decatur four years ago with the conviction of the last defendant in the cases on Tuesday in Circuit Court.

The jury found Harold James Brown, of Prichard, guilty of four counts of first-degree robbery and Circuit Judge Steve Haddock scheduled sentencing for Nov. 12.

Chief Assistant District Attorney Jerry Knight prosecuted Brown.

Decatur experienced a rash of perplexing armed robberies in 2009.

Authorities realized that the robberies all exhibited a common, unique pattern that came from meticulous planning by a criminal enterprise whose leaders were from Birmingham and the Prichard area of Mobile County. Decatur Police Department Detective Joe Renshaw worked closely with the district attorney's office to identify the suspects in robberies here and other counties.

They committed six robberies in Decatur, two in Madison, two in Huntsville, one in Oxford and one in Saraland between August and November 2009.

The scheme the robbers had in place targeted employees of retail businesses as they went to make bank deposits. Victims were robbed at gunpoint. The perpetrators did not disguise themselves, but in each case they wore gloves.

They used surveillance to learn the victims' banking routine. All victims were employed by a restaurant or convenience store.

A break came in the case when a Decatur police officer confronted an acquaintance of the robbers driving a stolen vehicle that was used in the Oxford and Saraland robberies. The interaction between the officer and driver of the vehicle led to a search of a Southwest Decatur residence where evidence was found. Cellular phone numbers and nicknames of those who spearheaded the crimes were given by occupants of the residence.

Prior to Brown's conviction other defendants pleaded guilty and received four life sentences and one 20-year sentence.

District Attorney Scott Anderson credited the tireless efforts of Renshaw, DA Investigator Johnny Coker and Knight for resolving the cases.

"Also, we give credit to DNA and cutting edge cellular technology for bringing the defendants to justice," Anderson said.

Brown remains in the Morgan County Jail pending sentencing.

MORGAN COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE