

Miller...from Page 1A

of false imprisonment to be served concurrently.

Because of his advanced age, Frank Miller was sentenced to life with parole because a state inmate must serve 30 years of a sentence before being considered for parole.

Frank Miller was convicted of murdering his 59-year-old daughter Colleen Grant.

Frank Miller was convicted of malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault in violation of Georgia's Family Violence Act, aggravated assault, and two counts false imprisonment, court records show.

Frank Miller was taken into custody about 5:30 a.m. on Sept. 1, 2013 following a standoff with authorities, Union County Sheriff Mason said.

The events that led to Grant's murder began about 1:23 a.m., Sept. 1, 2013 as Union County E-911 received a call from Colleen Grant regarding a domestic crisis involving her father, Frank Miller, Sheriff Mason said.

While on the line, dispatchers heard Frank Miller shout out that "everybody's going to hell tonight." The next thing they heard were gunshots, Sheriff Mason said.

Some of those shots struck and killed Grant, Frank Miller's daughter. At least one gunshot struck Frank Miller's 19-year-old great-grandson Sawyer Dockery in the right leg, Sheriff Mason said.

The call and subsequent shooting began an intense five-hour standoff between Union County law enforcement and Frank Miller.

"We talked with him, and he opened the door three times and invited us in," Sheriff Mason said. "We had been to that residence about a week ago regarding a suspected burglary attempt. We knew that Mr. Miller was a retired Florida police officer; we knew he was heavily armed and we didn't know if he was inviting us in to shoot us or what. We didn't accept his invitation for obvious reasons."

During the course of the investigation, which included five Georgia Bureau of Investigation agents, detectives found about 40 fully loaded

weapons, Union County sheriff's SSgt. Daren Osborn said.

"He was loaded for bear," Staff Sgt. Osborn said.

Dockery was able to escape the home prior to the standoff with law enforcement, Sheriff Mason said.

"It's our understanding that the victim and the great-grandson came home and Mr. Miller was intoxicated," Sheriff Mason said. "As for the motive for the shooting, it's our belief that the victim hid Mr. Miller's liquor and that upset him."

Sheriff Mason said that the best friend law enforcement had during the intense standoff was cover of darkness.

"If it had been daylight, there was a greater risk. We knew we had to end the ordeal before daylight, for fear of him shooting at us from inside the home," the sheriff said. "It was dark, and he didn't have any idea how many law enforcement officers were out there. We knew we had to do something before daylight."

Sheriff Dane Kirby volunteered Sheriff Mason mutu-

al aid from the Fannin County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Kirby sent his SWAT team to Union County to assist Sheriff Mason and his deputies.

About daybreak, Frank Miller was spotted inside his home standing near a kitchen counter. Fannin's SWAT team broke down a door, rushed Frank Miller and took him down with a Taser, Sheriff Mason said.

"That ended the ordeal," the sheriff said.

As deputies and Sheriff Mason entered the home, they found Grant dead, with six shell casings lying close to her lifeless body, Sheriff Mason said.

"The casings looked like they were from a .357 Magnum, I didn't pick them up to see for obvious reasons. We also found a speed loader," the sheriff said. "He had an AK-47, a SKS assault rifle, several high caliber handguns. He was heavily armed and we suspected that."

Sheriff Mason praised Dockery, who approached sheriff's deputies as they first arrived at the scene.

"He gave us the intel-

ligence on the layout of the house, and he assured us that nothing could be done to help his grandmother," Sheriff Mason said. "He was an eyewitness to the shooting."

"Giving Mr. Miller time to think, and not pushing the issue, probably weighed in our favor in a very intense sit-

uation," Sheriff Mason said.

Frank Miller awaits transport to the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison near Jackson. The prison serves as a central hub where sentenced felons begin the process of being admitted into the Georgia State Correctional System.

Vestal...from Page 1A

Georgia 325 in Union County.

Vestal confessed to Union County Sheriff's Detective Tom Mangifesta that he murdered his mother, 60-year-old Marilyn Laughlin, and her 52-year-old live-in boyfriend Tony Poat, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Vestal and Poat had a confrontation on Saturday, March 14, Detective Mangifesta said Vestal confirmed.

Dayton, Tenn. police confronted Vestal after he told medical workers at Rhea Medical Center that he wanted to kill himself, authorities in Tennessee and Georgia said.

Vestal returned to his vehicle after telling Rhea Medical Center staff that he wanted to kill himself.

Hospital officials called Dayton police who found Vestal in a Nissan Xterra outside the hospital. Inside his vehicle was a loaded AR-15 rifle, with a second, fully loaded clip.

Vestal was arrested on a charge of disorderly conduct. En route to jail, Vestal began to have convulsions. He apparently had taken two bottles of sleep aid pills.

Vestal was returned to Rhea Medical Center, and then airlifted to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tenn., authorities say.

The vehicle Vestal was

driving was registered to Marilyn Laughlin, of Georgia 325, in Blairsville.

Unaware of a double homicide at that address, Dayton police contacted the Union County Sheriff's Office and asked them to tell Laughlin that her son was in intensive care in the Chattanooga hospital, Union County Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Andrew Hammond said.

Sgt. Hammond said that Union County sheriff's deputies arrived at the home that Laughlin shared with Poat on Sunday, March 15.

Sgt. Hammond said that deputies knocked on the door, but were unable to get anyone to answer. Deputies returned on Monday, and the scene was

the same as it was on Sunday.

"Nothing had been touched, the same lights were on, and the cars were parked exactly the way they were on Sunday," Sgt. Hammond said. "We walked around the house, looking in the windows, and we saw what we believed to be a body inside the home."

"We kicked the door in, went inside the home and discovered two bodies," Sgt. Hammond said. "We went back outside so as not to disturb the crime scene, and we secured a search warrant to search the home."

Sheriff Mason contacted authorities in Chattanooga to alert them that Vestal was a person of interest in a double homicide in Union County.

Two Union County deputies were dispatched to Erlanger Hospital to stand guard over Vestal as he recovered from his suicide attempt.

As Vestal recovered and was ready for release, he waived extradition back to Union County, Sheriff Mason said.

"At that time we secured two arrest warrants for murder for Cody Lee Vestal," Sheriff Mason said.

Once back in Union County, Vestal was interviewed by Detective Mangifesta, and Georgia Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Ben Black.

During the interview with Mangifesta and Couch, Vestal confessed to the double murder, Sheriff Mason said.

Manslaughter...from Page 1A

"After the initial ordeal, (Randall Cone) told me essentially that he had (a 9mm Glock) that he had taken the magazine out of. He said he never kept a round chambered in it."

"He was in the bedroom with his son and (Robin's) daughter, and Robin - laughing, joking and having a good time. He had the gun cocked kind of sideways, he pulled the trigger and (the bullet) struck Robin in the head," Sgt. Hammond said. "That

was corroborated by the other two people that were in the room."

The shooting was ruled a homicide, but not a murder, Sgt. Hammond said.

"The shooting was not intentional," Sgt. Hammond said. "The elements involved in involuntary manslaughter are when someone takes the life of another through the commission of an unlawful act. The unlawful act was pointing a gun at another,

and obviously it had to be pointed at her. Having it pointed at her and pulling the trigger was reckless conduct."

Robin Cone was shot in the head at close range, Sgt. Hammond said.

Alcohol had been consumed by Randall Cone, but not in large quantities, Sgt. Hammond said.

Randall Cone is free on \$12,000 bail, Union County Jail records show.

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