



SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR

For Immediate Release:
CONTACT: James Pollack
Phone: (330) 604-2739
pollack@prosecutor.summitoh.net
Twitter: @ProsecutorWalsh
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Akron Man Found Guilty in Series of Cold-Case Rapes

AKRON, Ohio (Friday, May 14, 2021) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that a Summit County jury found Prentice Smith, 45, of Anderson Avenue in Akron, guilty in connection with four cold case rapes in Akron, one dating back to 2011.

Jurors found Smith guilty of the following charges:

- 5 Counts of Rape with Sexually Violent Predator specifications – Felonies of 1st Degree
- 4 Counts of Kidnapping – Felonies of 1st Degree

In January of 2011, Prentice Smith forced the victim in his car by gunpoint. Smith drove to an empty parking lot where he raped the woman.

In March of 2015, Smith pulled up next to a woman and offered her a ride. Smith then drove the woman to a vacant parking lot and parked next to a building to prevent the woman from opening the door. Smith then beat and raped the woman.

In May of 2015, Smith pulled his car up to the victim and offered her a ride. Smith parked in a vacant parking lot next to a building and prevented the woman from opening the car. Smith then beat and raped the woman.

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On December 25, 2018, pulled up next to a woman and offered her a ride. Smith drove to a vacant parking lot and parked close to a building to prevent the victim from getting out. Smith then raped the woman.

DNA was collected from the crime scenes which eventually matched Prentice Smith. Smith was arrested in June of 2019.

“Justice has finally come for the survivors of these horrible attacks. I am so proud of these women who came forward and testified against this serial rapist,” said Prosecutor Walsh. “I am also proud of the Assistant Prosecutors as well as our Sexual Assault Specialist for their work on this case. Finally, I want to thank the Akron Police Department for their collaboration in helping solve this crime.”

Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Alison McCarty will sentence Smith Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 11am.

This is the first trial in Summit County involving the recently created Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit (SAKI). In 2018, the Akron Police Department received a three-year, one-million dollar grant from the Department of Justice to form the SAKI Unit. The Akron Sexual Assault Kit Initiative reviews unsolved rape cases less than 20 years old where DNA was collected but no suspect was charged with a crime. The Akron SAKI unit is made up of three Summit County Prosecutor’s Office employees, three Akron Police Department detectives, and members of the Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties, and the Summit County Victim Assistance Program.