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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JAMES MICHAEL DEESE, DESOTO, ILLINOIS SENTENCED FOR FIRST DEGREE MURDER

Michael C. Carr, Jackson County State's Attorney, announced today the results of a sentencing hearing held in Jackson County, Illinois Circuit Court relating to the First-Degree Murder of Frank Stonemark, 76, of DeSoto, Illinois.

James Michael Deese, age 54, of DeSoto, Illinois, previously plead guilty on July 9, 2018, to the murder of Frank Stonemark. He was sentenced Monday, July 20, 2020, to 25 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. The Indictment alleged that Deese killed Stonemark by strangling him on October 29, 2017. A second count charging Deese with Concealing the Death of Stonemark with knowledge that Stonemark had died by homicidal means and a third count charging him with moving a body from the place of death with intent to conceal information regarding the place and manner of the death were dismissed as part of a plea agreement which required that Deese cooperate in the case involving Stonemark's wife, Carmen Stonemark. Because there is no early release program, Deese will be required to serve all 25 years. Given that he is eligible to receive credit for time he has already served since he was arrested on March 22, 2018, he will not be able to be released until he is 77 years old.

Carmen Stonemark was subsequently indicted and convicted of Solicitation/Murder for Hire and Concealment of a Homicidal Death due to Deese's cooperation with the investigation. She is serving a twenty (20) year sentence in the Illinois Department of Corrections and is not eligible for parole until she is 70 years old.

Law enforcement first learned that Frank Stonemark was missing after his wife Carmen called and claimed he was missing following an argument she had with him. The investigation revealed that, at the time of the call, she, and Deese, had already planned for and carried out the

murder so that they could be together. Deese strangled Frank Stonemark, who was in poor health, at Stonemark's house after making plans to do so with Carmen Stonemark. Both he and Carmen Stonemark participated in removing and destroying the body.

Months after Stonemark was reported missing, Deese was interviewed by detectives from the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and admitted his role in the offense. At the same time, he agreed to call and record conversations with Carmen Stonemark which led to her arrest. Although the body was never recovered, Sheriff's Department detectives were able to locate Stonemark's van in Paducah, Kentucky, and forensic evidence revealed Frank Stonemark's blood on sheetrock located in the van which Deese admitted was used to transport the body. Detectives also found forensic evidence corroborating information provided by Deese that he and Carmen Stonemark had hidden Frank Stonemark's body on property owned by the Stonemark's in rural Jackson County. According to Deese, he and Carmen Stonemark destroyed and burned the body months after the murder.

The investigation was conducted by the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, the Desoto Police Department, the Illinois State Police, the Murphysboro, Illinois Police Department, and the Illinois State Police Metro-East Forensic Science Laboratory in Belleville.

State's Attorney Michael Carr handled the Grand Jury investigation and murder prosecutions.