

Jason Mahn gets two life sentences in 1993 murders

[Kris Wernowsky](#) • kwernowsky@pnj.com • September 1, 2010

Circuit Judge Frank Bell sentenced convicted double-murderer Jason Mahn to two consecutive life sentences in the 1993 deaths of Debbie Jean Shanko and her son Anthony.

“I’d like to apologize to the people that I hurt,” the heavily medicated Mahn said at today’s hearing. “I will try to do better in the future.”

Mahn was 19 when he stabbed Debbie Jean Shanko, 36, his father’s girlfriend, 42 times. He also stabbed her 14-year-old son, Anthony Shanko, eight times at a house on Bonaway Drive in Pensacola.

In 1994, Bell sentenced Mahn to life in prison for Debbie Jean Shanko’s murder and ordered his execution in the teen’s murder.

However, in 1998, the Florida Supreme Court rejected Bell’s death sentence and ordered a new sentencing hearing in the teen’s murder.

After that hearing, Mahn could have been resentenced to death or sentenced to life in prison instead. He continued his life sentence in the mother’s death.

The case languished in the court system for years as psychologists ruled Mahn — who has an IQ of 88 — was too incompetent to understand the legal proceedings.

The State Attorney’s Office decided this month not to seek the death sentence again in the boy’s death because Mahn suffers from extensive mental issues, including schizophrenia.

Bell’s only choice was to sentence Mahn to the life terms in prison. The only issue was whether those two terms would be served consecutively, meaning he wouldn’t be eligible for parole for 50 years. If Bell chose to sentence Mahn to concurrent prison terms, he would have been eligible in 25 years.

“Two separate individuals were snuffed out and there should be no free crimes,” Assistant State Attorney John Molchan said.

Bell, who was the original trial judge, said that he recalled the gruesome details of the murders.

“A second sentence is well deserved,” Bell said.

Shanko’s sister wept in the gallery as court security deputies escorted Mahn to his seat. She did not wish to speak as she left the courtroom.