



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MAN CONVICTED FOR 1998 KIDNAPING DEATH OF KC TEEN GIRL**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a man already serving a life sentence in Kansas for the 1998 murder of an elderly woman, was convicted by a federal jury today for kidnaping and killing a 16-year-old Kansas City, Mo., girl that same year.

**Wesley Ira Purkey**, 51, was found guilty of the interstate kidnaping of Jennifer Long for the purpose of forcible rape, resulting in her death.

“The jury agreed that **Wes Purkey** did, in fact, kidnap and murder Jennifer Long,” Graves said. “We’re grateful, and we’re prepared to begin the sentencing phase of the trial on Monday morning.”

Following **Purkey’s** trial, the jury in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Mo., deliberated about two and a half hours before returning the guilty verdict to U.S. District Judge Fernando J. Gaitan, Jr., ending a trial that began Oct. 28, 2003.

In his closing argument this morning, Graves recounted how **Purkey** forcibly kidnaped Jennifer Long and transported her from Kansas City, Mo., to Lansing, Kan., where he raped her on Jan. 22, 1998. After stabbing her to death, **Purkey** hid her body in a tool box and eventually used a chain saw to dismember her body, then burned the remains in a fireplace.

On Dec. 16, 1998, **Purkey** admitted his crime to law enforcement officers. At the time, Graves explained, **Purkey** was charged with murder and aggravated robbery in the death of an elderly Kansas City, Kan., woman who was bludgeoned to death with a hammer, to which he later pleaded guilty. **Purkey** feared spending the rest of his life in the Kansas Department of Corrections, he told officers, and hoped to be moved to a federal penitentiary as a result of his confession to the federal kidnaping charge.

“**Purkey** kidnaped, raped, and killed a little girl, then destroyed all the witnesses and all the evidence,” Graves said in his closing argument. “But he was too smart by half. He forgot to check one thing. He didn’t know that the federal government had the option of seeking the death penalty.”

After learning that the government intended to seek the death penalty, Graves said, **Purkey** tried to retract the portion of his confession that involved kidnaping. “**Wes Purkey** is manipulative,” Graves argued in closing. “His story changes every time there is a new wrinkle in the case.”

As a result of today’s conviction, **Purkey** could be subject to the death penalty, or as the only alternative, a mandatory sentence of life in federal prison without parole. The government filed a notice of intent to seek the death penalty on Nov. 21, 2002. The jury will now begin the sentencing phase of the trial, which commences Monday, Nov. 10, 2003.

The case is being prosecuted by U.S. Attorney Todd P. Graves and Deputy U.S. Attorney Matt J. Whitworth. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Kansas City, Kan., Police Department and the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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