

Editorial

Darby verdict brings closure

Closure finally came this week with a conviction in the Trudy Darby murder case that dates from January 1991. After more than five years of investigation, one man has been convicted and another awaits his trial in Camden County on a first degree murder charge.

Investigators never gave up on the case, and they followed hundreds and hundreds of leads. And after years of effort, a break finally came and two men were charged. As time passed, family and friends of the victim began to feel that they would never know who abducted and killed the former Hickory County resident. Her father's dying wish was to see his daughter's murderer convicted and punished for her death. And before he died, the father knew that the suspects had been arrested and investigators provided him information they had learned about the details of her death. That helped with his closure.

The case is still not over. The second suspect is awaiting trial. And the investigation is now covering a broader scope because letters written by the man convicted of the killing have indicated that he and others associated with him may have been connected to cases involving women missing at Nevada and Clinton. Those families also need closure. The bodies of those two women have never been located, and no one has been arrested for their deaths. The questions still haunt family members, friends and investigators.

The highly publicized cases of three missing women in Springfield have emphasized how a

family loses some of its ability to function as long as questions remain about the disappearance of a family member. Those questions were just as burning for the family of a victim whose body was found in Hickory County as they are for the families of the three Springfield victims and for the victims at Clinton or Nevada or elsewhere.

While those other cases remain unsolved, closure has finally come for the Hickory County portion of one missing woman case. But this was more than a missing woman case because we knew the victim, because her family had local connections, and because she was found here. The three missing women in Springfield also have Hickory County connections and close Hickory County family members. So for them and the families of other missing victims, the Darby case has to give them some hope that while weeks stretch into months and months into years, the case is never closed as long as there is a chance that someone somewhere is harboring information crucial to solving the case.

The jury's verdict cannot bring back the victim nor heal the hurt that will never go away for friends and families of Trudy Darby. But for them and for the families of the other unsolved cases, the jury's action provided satisfaction that the system still works and justice, while often delayed, is still possible regardless of the amount of time that has passed.

Justice delayed is better than justice unfulfilled.