

Timothy Irving Murder



Dennis Watts Jr. was sentenced for his role in the April 2011 shooting death of Timothy Irving. Watts' co-defendant, Raheem Johnson, was sentenced to life plus 42 years last week.

Accomplice sentenced to 45 years

Watts Jr. helped shooter
gain access to apartment
on Graves Mill Road

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A week after Raheem Johnson drew a life-plus-42-year sentence for putting a bullet in Timothy Irving's head last year, the man convicted of being his accomplice was sentenced to serve 45 years in prison.

Dennis Watts, Jr., 20, was sentenced Friday in the April 2011 slaying of Irving at the Mill Woods apartment complex off Graves Mill Road.

Irving's fiancée Artenna Horsley-Robey testified at both trials that Watts and Johnson entered their apartment shortly after midnight on April 11.

Johnson, she said, ordered her onto the ground while demanding that Irving "give it up," shortly before shooting him in the forehead in the couple's bedroom closet, while their 2-year-old son slept on the bed.

In an August bench trial, Circuit Court Judge Leyburn Mosby found Watts guilty of first-degree felony murder, statutory burglary while armed with a deadly weapon and attempted

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robbery, as well as three firearm-use charges.

Mosby also convicted Watts of abduction and a related firearm charge at the trial, but set aside those convictions Friday.

He noted Johnson was not convicted of abduction for ordering Horsley-Robey onto the ground, and said there wasn't enough of a distinguishable difference between the abduction and the attempted robbery.

Mosby sentenced Watts to 50 years on the murder charge, but suspended 30 of that, 20 years with 10 suspended on the burglary charge, two years on the attempted robbery charge, and 13 years on the three firearm use charges.

He ordered Watts to repay Irving's family \$7,500 for funeral expenses.

Johnson, 18, was sentenced last week to life plus 42 years for the same charges, with an additional attempted robbery and firearms charge. He was 17 at the time Irving was shot.

Horsley-Robey testified Friday that her son, now 3½ years old, will wake up in the middle of the night screaming, "don't hurt my daddy!"

She said her fiancé's death has made her life "horrible."

"We did everything together. I've got to do it by myself now," she said.

Irving's mother, Hannah Regent, also testified, saying the situation is "the worst thing I've ever had to deal with."

"He wasn't just my son. He was everybody's friend," she said, recalling the young man who loved macaroni and cheese so much she would make him his own special dish whenever she made din-

issues through his schooling in Lynchburg, including threatening classmates to get money and bringing a switchblade knife to school.

Watts's father, Dennis Watts, Sr., told Mosby he didn't have serious problems with his only son growing up.

"He was always quiet, and always respectful to his sisters and his mother," the elder Watts said.

He said watching his son interact with his own daughter showed good qualities.

"He was gentle, he was nice, everything that you would want your son to be as a father.

“ [Timothy's death is] the worst thing I've ever had to deal with. He wasn't just my son. He was everybody's friend.”

— Hannah Regent,
mother of slain Timothy Irving

"He's had his little problems, but it's nothing that would rise to this level."

Defense Attorney Andrew Childress told Mosby his client wanted to apologize. He asked Mosby to sentence Watts to 20 years, on the basis that Johnson was the one with the gun, the one ordering Horsley-Robey onto the ground and the one demanding money from Irving.

"Dennis's actions are not the same, according to the Commonwealth's evidence," he said.

"His punishment should not be the same as Raheem's."

Felmler blamed Watts directly for Irving's death, as, according to testimony during the trials, Watts