

## Attack On Frail Farmer Recounted

Written by Rudi Prinsloo  
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A frail 79-year-old Cedarville farmer nearly died of cold in July 2007 after he was stabbed five times, the Pietermaritzburg High Court heard on Thursday.

Judge Anton van Zyl recounted the attack on Tom Southey when jailing Fusi Booi, 19, for an effective 15 years.

Booi, aged 17 at the time of the attack, evaded arrest for two years but pleaded guilty on Thursday.

Other members of his gang -- who denied guilt -- were earlier jailed for an effective 30 years by the Ramsgate High Court.

They were given 20 years for the aggravated robbery of Southey and 10 years for the unlawful possession of firearms stolen from Southey.

A brooch valued at R60,000, which Southey's wife Winifred inherited from her grandmother, was one of the items stolen.

It was sold for R120 in a pawnshop, prosecutor Donardo MacDonald told the Pietermaritzburg High Court.

Van Zyl said aggravating factors were that the gang attacked a frail old man on a farm made vulnerable by its isolation.

They subjected him to severe and gratuitous violence and left him alone so that he nearly died of cold.

A report from Kokstad district surgeon Dr John Biggs, noted: "Injuries consistent with history of being attacked. Severity and nature of injuries consistent with intent of killing the victim in violent and inhumane way of prolonged exposure to elements and slow death by bleeding."

Southey was able to wriggle free after a long struggle and made his way to a neighbour who cared for him. He was alone at the time.

Kevin Singh, for Booi, said his client was influenced by older members of the gang, had pleaded guilty, showed remorse, and may have reform potential.

Southey was initially accosted as he was closing the gate of his farm.

One of the gang grabbed him round the neck, holding a knife at his throat. They drove to his house where he was assaulted and made to open a safe from which they took valuables.

Booi was not charged for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, which his former gang colleagues were convicted of.

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