

35 years for taking a life

MANASSAS » Gainesville man sentenced for February shooting death

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A Gainesville man was sentenced Friday to serve 35 years in prison for the February shooting death of 20-year-old Joseph Page.

John Matthew Moran, 20, pleaded guilty in October to six felony charges, including second-degree murder.

Circuit Court Judge Lon E. Farris sentenced Moran to a total of 80 years in prison, with 45 years suspended.

The courtroom was filled to capacity Friday afternoon with friends and family of both Moran and Page. About 20 more people sat in the hallway outside the courtroom, waiting to hear the sentence.

Page was killed during a party at a house in the 7500 block of Alleghany Road, near Manassas Park, on Feb. 3.

According to previous court testimony, Moran and two others, Shannon Smerbeck and Jose Escobar, attended the party uninvited.

At some point, a fight broke out between Moran and other people at the party and the three were asked to leave, police said.

After they left, Moran noticed that his tooth was chipped during the fight and insisted on going back, witnesses said during a preliminary hearing for the case.

At the party, Moran and Escobar got out of the car and went behind a neighboring house, witnesses said.

Moran fired a gun at the party house and a bullet hit

Page, who was standing on the back porch at the time, police said.

Page, who did not know Moran and the others, and was not involved in the earlier fight, was taken to an area hospital where he died from his injuries a few days later.

According to court testimony, the three fled the scene soon after the shooting. The gun was never recovered.

Both Escobar and Smerbeck are currently charged with first-degree murder, shooting into an occupied dwelling and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

Escobar is scheduled to enter a plea in February. Smerbeck's trial date has not yet been set.

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