



Franklin Woman Convicted of Murder in Scalding Death of Four Year Old

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Warren County woman was convicted today in the scalding death of her four year old stepson. Anna Marie Ritchie, 25, of Franklin pled guilty as charged to all counts including murder, involuntary manslaughter, felonious assault, and endangering children. Ritchie was convicted for the March 2016 killing of Austin Cooper. Ritchie admitted to law enforcement that she was frustrated with the child because he did not like to take baths, so she intentionally ran his bath water hotter than normal as a form of punishment. Ritchie also acknowledged that Austin struggled with her, but she held him in the bath tub for approximately 20-25 minutes, by which time skin was falling off his body and his feet were bleeding. Ritchie placed pajamas on the boy and socks on his feet so that he would not bleed all over his comforter and mattress, and put him to bed before 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2016. Over 16 hours elapsed before anyone checked on Austin, at which point the boy's father, Robert Ritchie, discovered him dead in his crib. Had Austin received medical treatment, consisting primarily of IV fluids, burn experts indicated he would have had a 99.1% chance of surviving the scald injuries.

Judge Robert Peeler immediately sentenced Ritchie to the maximum possible sentence of 18 years to life in prison.

“As bad as the images of burn injuries can be, the most sickening evidence in this case are the photographs of the series of ‘claw mark’ cuts on his arms where her fingernails cut into him as she gripped, and gripped, and re-gripped to hold that screaming little boy down in that scalding water. It’s just horrifying,” said Warren County Prosecutor David P. Fornshell.

Robert Ritchie, Austin Cooper's father, awaits trial on multiple charges including involuntary manslaughter for his alleged failure to seek medical treatment of the child after learning he had been injured.

Fornshell praised the efforts of Franklin Police Department Detectives Steve Figliola and Jeff Stewart, Assistant Prosecutors Julie Kraft and Steve Knippen, Chief Investigator Scott Male, Victim Witness Coordinator Jessi Flint, and Legal Assistant Jaclyn Zaczek for their work on the case.



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