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GAFFNEY MAN RECEIVES 20-YEAR SENTENCE FOR ARMED ROBBERY AND ASSAULT

A Gaffney man received a 20-year prison sentence today for using a piece of wood to beat an elderly man during a robbery.

Billy G. Petrea, 55, will serve 80 percent of Circuit Judge Mark Hayes' prison sentence before he is eligible for release. Petrea pleaded guilty to armed robbery and assault and battery with intent to kill at an earlier this summer but sentencing was delayed until today.

Petrea took \$400 from Thomas Blanton, 80, during a robbery that occurred May 7, 2010 at Blanton's Cherokee Avenue business. Petrea told sheriff's deputies he was worried about repaying a financial debt when he entered the business and struck up a conversation with Blanton. Petrea told deputies he decided to commit the robbery when he realized he was the only person in the business with Blanton. He picked up a piece of wood he found inside the business and used it to strike the victim several times on the head. Petrea took Blanton's wallet and fled the business.

Deputies arrested Petrea a short time later at a Jefferson Street home. Some of the stolen money was recovered.

Blanton named Petrea as his attacker during an interview with deputies. Petrea also admitted his involvement in the crime during a post-arrest interview. The defendant told deputies he used some of the robbery proceeds to purchase crack cocaine.

"This was a senseless act of violence," Assistant Solicitor Michael Morin said. "Mr. Blanton is fortunate to be alive today."

Petrea's prior criminal record included a conviction for second-degree burglary and several drug offenses.

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at 809-4892.

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