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ELGIN MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN 2009 MURDER OF 17-YEAR-OLD

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A young Elgin man has pleaded guilty to his role in the 2009 murder of a 17-year-old Elgin youth, a crime for which a woman was convicted last year of first-degree murder.

Lacorbek Benion, 18 (d.o.b. 10-7-1993), last known address of the 1300 block of Todd Farm Drive, Elgin, today agreed with the Kane County State's Attorney to a sentence of 15 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections in exchange for a guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder, a Class 1 felony. Associate Judge Allen M. Anderson accepted the plea.

The night of Nov. 7, 2009, Benion, who was 16 years old at the time, and John Keyes III were at a teenage party. During a fight between the two young men, Keyes punched Benion in the face. Later, Benion told his mother, co-defendant Timera Branch, 36 (d.o.b. 3-6-1976) about the fight. Branch decided to seek revenge upon Keyes. The next day, the afternoon of Nov. 8, 2009, Branch, driving her 1991 Chrysler Imperial, went in search of Keyes. Benion accompanied her as a passenger in a second car.

At about 4 p.m., Branch intentionally struck Keyes with her car, crushing him against a brick building at 260 Center St., Elgin. After Branch ran down Keyes, she exited her heavily damaged car and incited Benion and others in the second car to continue the attack. Witnesses reported seeing Benion swing a baseball bat near where Keyes had been struck with the car. Keyes was pronounced dead of massive internal injuries – the result of being crushed by the car against the building – a short time later at the hospital. No evidence was found to indicate that Keyes actually had been struck with a baseball bat.

Branch was convicted in August 2011 by Judge Anderson of first-degree murder and was sentenced to 34 years in prison.

According to Illinois law, Benion is eligible for day-for-day sentencing. Benion was given credit for at least 32 days served in the Kane County jail. Benion had been free on \$25,000 bond.

"This defendant's decision to accept responsibility for his actions relieved the family of John Keyes III from having to sit through another agonizing trial and suffer through this heartbreak again," Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon said.

“This situation escalated out of control when an adult who should have been a voice of reason decided to be a participant in a dispute among teenagers. The outcome could not have been worse. A young man who was ready to begin adulthood was murdered and two families were destroyed in the pursuit of vigilante justice and a complete disregard for human life.”

“Adolescents will make bad decisions. It’s part of growing up. Adults must help them understand why the decisions were bad. Adults should not jump in and encourage worse behavior.”

“My thanks again to the Elgin Police Department, specifically detectives Scott St. John and Heather Robinson, for their hard work on behalf of the citizens of Elgin during this investigation, and to Kane County Assistant State’s Attorney Greg Sams for his dedication to justice in this case.”