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Title: Ex-salesman convicted of sex attacks

Man abducted three women in 17 days of March '94, police say.
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A Jackson County jury on Wednesday convicted a former vitamin salesman of two sexual attacks that the prosecution described as ``unspeakable acts.'' James J. Hamilton, 35, could be sentenced to more than 11 life terms, and he still faces a kidnapping charge in Clay County. Police say he abducted and attacked three women in 17 days last year.

``He terrorized these women. He made them perform these unspeakable acts,'' Assistant Prosecutor Amy McGowan told jurors.

The jury deliberated less than two hours before convicting Hamilton of two counts each of kidnapping, robbery, rape and sexual abuse and four counts of sodomy.

Hamilton stalked his first victim March 11, 1994, according to trial evidence, and slashed her tire while she was at a restaurant.

She left and soon stopped to try to get air at a closed service station near 77th Street and Wornall Road.

She testified at trial that Hamilton then drove up and forced her into his El Camino at knife point. She was raped, repeatedly sodomized and forced to perform sex acts. Then he drove her to near where she lived, the woman said, and released her after taking a beaded necklace as a souvenir.

As the crying victim left the car, she testified, Hamilton said, ``Thank you for this abduction. ''

Hamilton became angry in the trial because Circuit Judge William F. Mauer would not allow the jury to hear evidence that the 22-year-old victim worked as a nude dancer. So when the judge and lawyers were not looking, Hamilton held up a sign bearing the words ``Nude Dancer'' for jurors to see.

The second attack occurred March 22, 1994, when Hamilton kidnapped an 18-year-old woman from a service station at 2814 Shawnee Mission Parkway.

Hamilton forced his way into the woman's car, she testified, and drove her to a wooded area. He raped her, sodomized her, forced her to perform other acts and took her high school photograph as a souvenir, she said.

Six hours later, the woman said, Hamilton drove her to the Plaza area and left her with some advice. ``He told me to watch out for strangers - not to trust anybody,'' the woman testified.

Defense attorney Joseph Locascio told jurors in closing arguments that his client was innocent and to not be swayed by the ``aberrant and detestable'' facts of the case.

``They are both lying to you,'' he said of the victims.

The second victim, Locascio pointed out, had first told police that her attacker had a scar on his genitals. Hamilton does not.

``How could (the victim) say he had a scar and then say he didn't have a scar? That's reasonable doubt,'' Locascio said.

But Assistant Prosecutor McGowan countered that the witness wasn't identifying her rapist by his genitals, ``She was identifying him by his face.''

McGowan argued it would be impossible for two women to make up such similar stories and identify the same assailant.

Soon after that statement, Hamilton stood and screamed, ``They're prostitutes.''

After the verdict, two jurors said they didn't care what the women did for a living and it would not have mattered if they had known.

Hamilton's maneuvers during the trial were as bizarre as the facts of the crimes. Irritated about delays caused by Hamilton changing attorneys three times, the judge last month ordered one defense attorney to jail for refusing to start trial.

Mauer then appointed Locascio to the case and refused to allow Hamilton to fire Locascio this week.

Hamilton is scheduled to be tried in Clay County in November on charges of kidnapping, robbery and armed criminal action for the March 27, 1994, abduction of a woman from Metro North Mall.

The victim told police she jumped out of the car and escaped after Hamilton stopped along a highway.