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Man gets life for killing aunt of ex-NBC newsman Stone Phillips

Ellis County: He gets life for murder of former 'Dateline' anchor's aunt

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WAXAHACHIE – An Ellis County jury sentenced a Duncanville man to life in prison on Monday for killing the elderly aunt of former *Dateline NBC* anchor Stone Phillips.

Miguel Arciba, 50, sat expressionless as the judge announced the verdict in the capital murder trial in the death of Doris Phillips. Prosecutors did not seek the death penalty.

"You should've gotten the needle for killing my mom," John Phillips said during victim impact statements as sobs from Mr. Arciba's family echoed through the courtroom. "You need to think about how you'll spend the rest of your life. ... Some crimes require a lifetime of pain."

Mrs. Phillips, 81, had been missing for more than a month before Mr. Arciba led authorities to her decomposed body in an abandoned Ellis County farmhouse in September 2006.

Mrs. Phillips had a fractured skull and a fractured hip and had died of blunt force trauma, officials said.

Mr. Arciba's parents had worked for Mrs. Phillips and her late husband, R.C. Phillips.

John Phillips and two of his brothers described the anguish they've endured since their mother was reported missing in July 2006.

"I pray that somehow you do find mercy," Ron Phillips said. "She's gone. We won't be able to hug her anymore.

"We won't be able to tell her we love her."

During the five-day trial, prosecutor Don Maxfield worked to disprove the defense's argument that Mr. Arciba had help with the kidnapping, robbery and killing of Mrs. Phillips.

Defense attorney Charles Slaton tried to establish that Mr. Arciba's roommate, Israel Valdez, was involved.

Authorities could find no evidence to support the claim or that Mr. Arciba's roommate even existed.

Jurors deliberated for about two hours before reaching a verdict.

"They dispassionately found that this defendant committed this offense," Mr. Maxfield said. "I hope the family can find peace with that."

After the trial, as Mr. Arciba's relatives comforted one another outside the courtroom, John Phillips traded embraces with friends and family and shook the hands of investigators.

He said the guilty verdict doesn't bring closure for him.

"I don't know if it is something that will ever come," he said. "I am able to close a book today. ... Now I can begin to live the rest of my life."