

Judy Mecum, former HCSO deputy sheriff, dies

BY DENISE ETHERIDGE
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Mecum

1980-1992. HCSO Public Information Officer Derreck Booth confirmed Mecum's passing. "Mecum, the wife of former Hall County Sheriff Richard "Dick" Mecum, served the Hall County community with honor as a member of the HCSO team from April 15, 1973, until Sept. 6, 1996," according to a written statement from the sheriff's office. "Judy

Mecum achieved many things during her tenure, serving as a secretary, deputy sheriff and investigator, rising through the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain. Throughout her successful career, she served as commander of the Crimes Against Children Unit and the overall commander of Criminal Investigations." "Over the years, I have had the honor and privilege of working with Judy Mecum," Hall County Sheriff Gerald Couch said. "She had a passion for law enforcement and was an exceptional investigator. I particularly recall her having

a quick wit and dedication to solving child-related crimes. She helped make our community safer and was a true public servant." Mecum was the first woman promoted to the rank of captain in the Detective's Investigations Division in Hall County Sheriff's Department history, according to her obituary. She entered the Hall County Sheriff's race in the early 2000's, but her campaign was cut short upon the death of her mother Silvia Clark, to care for her ailing father, and aunt, Omie Smith. Chad White, a local law enforce-

ment historian, posted on social media that Mecum attended the police academy in 1977. Judy and Dick Mecum married on Jan. 28, 1978, according to White. Mecum grew up in Gainesville and graduated from Gainesville High School. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30, in the Chapel of Memorial Park Funeral Home at 2030 Memorial Park Dr. The family will receive friends at the funeral home on Wednesday, Jan. 29, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. with full Honor Guard.

Rape case dismissed for Gainesville man after hearing

BY NICK WATSON
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Editor's note: This published in a previous E-Paper edition and is being provided here for print-only readers.

After a 45-minute hearing, a Magistrate Court judge dismissed the rape charge for a 19-year-old Gainesville man Friday, Jan. 24.

Ricardo Ismael Franco appeared in court Friday with his attorney, Arturo Corso.

Franco was originally arrested Jan. 8 on one count of rape and has remained in the jail since then with no bond.

But without any evidence of the woman verbally or physically trying to revoke consent, Judge Michelle Hall dismissed the charge.

Assistant District Attorney Christina Park called Hall County Sheriff's Office Investigator John Galloway to the stand as the sole witness.

Galloway said the 19-year-old woman reported the incident on Nov. 18 to law enforcement, as the warrant alleged this happened between Nov. 16-17.

The investigator testified she was at a birthday party and had messaged Franco, agreeing to let him pick her up, go to the movies and return to his home.

When she asked Franco to take her home, he said he couldn't because he had trouble seeing at night.

"She said she began tickling him to wake him up to have him take her home," Galloway said. "And that led to one thing into another. She said he began to choke her and pull her hair."

When he asked to perform a sexual act, she said "she agreed to that because he was hurting her and she was wanting him to stop pulling her hair and choking her."

This then led to sex that the woman said was not consensual, telling the investigator that she had no romantic interest in him, Galloway testified.

Corso asked if the choking was an aspect of rough sex or wholly separate from the "lovemaking activity," to which Galloway said he believed it was "potentially a part of it."

When interviewed by Galloway, Franco said the woman consented to having sex when he asked.

"He described it as they were friends and they shouldn't be doing this," Galloway said. "And then he said it just felt weird so he stopped and then asked her if she would give him oral sex, and she agreed to that."

Galloway testified that the woman reported she was forced to perform oral sex, though there were no details offered showing force.

"She did nothing and said nothing to let Ricky know that she was not equally, passionately engaged in sex play," Corso said.

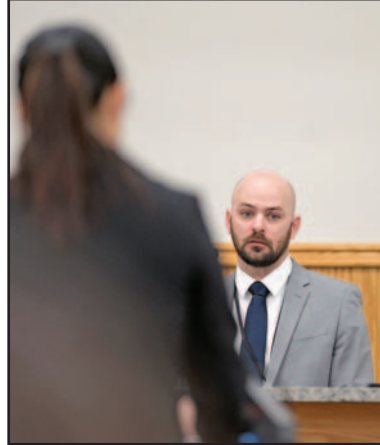
"From my understanding, no," Galloway responded.

Corso referenced a prior rape case adjudicated by Hall a few months prior at the same stage with similar details, where the judge ultimately dismissed the charge.

The defense attorney argued for the charges to be dismissed.

"I think we do see in a lot of rape victims where they are not vocal because they are afraid that any type of being vocal about

Hall County Sheriff's Office Investigator John Galloway is questioned Friday, Jan. 24, in Hall County Magistrate Court by assistant district attorney Christina Park during a committal hearing for Ricardo Franco on a charge of rape. The charge against Franco was dismissed.



Photos by Scott Rogers The Times

Ricardo Franco, right, speaks with attorney Arturo Corso Friday, Jan. 24, in Hall County Magistrate Court following a dismissal of a charge of rape.

was very honest about how things went down," Corso said after the hearing. "The officer was very honest about his investigation. And

at the end of the day, the judge, she made the only decision she could make, which is to say ... there's no way this kid could have

known that the actions of the girl he was with did not exactly mirror her feelings in her head."

INTENT TO OPT OUT OF HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

The Town of Braselton intends to opt out of the statewide adjusted base year ad valorem homestead exemption for Town of Braselton. All concerned citizens are invited to the public hearing on this matter to be held at Braselton Courtroom in the Braselton Police and Municipal Court building at 5040 Highway 53 on January 9, 2025 at 4 pm. Times and places of additional public hearings on this matter are in the same location on February 6, 2025 at 4 pm and February 10, 2025 at 6 pm.

INTENT TO OPT OUT OF HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

The Hall County Board of Commissioners intends to opt out of the statewide adjusted base year ad valorem homestead exemption for Hall County, Georgia.

All concerned citizens are invited to the public hearing on this matter to be held at:

Hall County Government Center
2nd Floor, Commission Meeting Room
2875 Browns Bridge Road
Gainesville, GA 30504
On Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 6:00 PM

Times and places of additional public hearings on this matter are at:

Hall County Government Center
2nd Floor, Commission Meeting Room
2875 Browns Bridge Road
Gainesville, GA 30504
On Monday, February 24, 2025, at 3:00 PM

Hall County Government Center
2nd Floor, Commission Meeting Room
2875 Browns Bridge Road
Gainesville, GA 30504
On Thursday, February 27, 2025, at 6:00 PM