

Defendant lied about knowing victim, prosecutor says

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COLUMBIA, Mo. • A man accused in the 1991 death of a Lincoln County woman lied to investigators about having never met the victim after DNA evidence led them to him 15 years after the woman's death, a prosecutor argued Tuesday.

Michael E. Dowell, 46, faces first-degree murder and forcible rape charges in the 1991 death of Stephanie Hogland, 18. Lincoln County Prosecuting Attorney John Richards is seeking the death penalty. The trial was moved to Boone County with a local jury because of publicity in the St. Louis area.

In his opening statement Tues-



Dowell



Hogland

day, Richards told jurors multiple times that the case against Dowell is circumstantial, but he highlighted the defendant's statements to detectives in December 2006.

Dowell, of Ferguson, submitted a DNA sample to his probation and parole officer in an unrelated case in October 2006. A

month later, the Missouri Highway Patrol crime lab reported that his DNA matched a genetic profile created in 2000 from Hogland's underwear.

Richards did not offer a motive in Hogland's death, noting only that she died from blunt force trauma to the head.

Hogland had attended a wedding reception on Jan. 5, 1991, in Old Monroe and left the reception to go to a friend's house, Richards said. Along the way, Hogland's car slipped off an ice-covered road, and she needed help to retrieve the vehicle.

Hogland was last seen alive early the next day after she stopped at a convenience store in Winfield and later at a liquor

store, the prosecutor said.

Tom Marshall, Dowell's public defender, said DNA from the victim could have come from a specimen that was left days before her death — perhaps from consensual sex.

Marshall focused attention on another man who was at the wedding reception with Hogland, saying he repeatedly made advances toward her that were rejected. The man was later seen following Hogland's car through Winfield in his pickup, Marshall said.

Since the killing, that man has made statements that he was responsible for Hogland's death, Marshall told the jury in an opening statement.