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Man Gets 20 Years in Sex Assaults of 2 Women

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A man who admitted sexually assaulting a woman in the laundry room of a Northwest Washington apartment building and raping another woman five days later in a basement several blocks away was sentenced yesterday to 20 years in prison.

In April, Earl Long, 40, of no fixed address, had pleaded guilty in D.C. Superior Court to first- and third-degree sexual abuse, and yesterday he was back before Judge Wendell P. Gardner Jr. for the final hearing in a case that drew considerable public attention.

A surveillance camera recorded Long forcing the second victim into a bathroom, where he raped her. The video footage eventually helped lead police to Long.

In the first attack, on Nov. 19, 2004, a 24-year-old woman was accosted by Long in the middle of the night when she went down to the laundry room to put clothes in the dryer. Armed with a metal pipe of some sort, he threatened to harm her if she did not comply with his orders. He then sexually assaulted her. Before fleeing the building, in the 2100 block of O Street, he warned her that he knew where she lived and not to report what happened.

In the second assault, on Dec. 24, 2004, a 29-year-old woman was accosted by Long in the basement of an apartment building in the 1800 block of New Hampshire Avenue NW, where she worked. Long forced her into a bathroom, where, out of view of the surveillance cameras, he raped her.

Yesterday, as Long prepared to learn his fate, the two women sat in the courtroom, one accompanied by her parents, the other by a victim advocate from the U.S. attorney's office. They cried as the prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Deborah L. Connor, recounted details of the crimes against them.

They chose not to speak in court, but they conveyed some of their thoughts in letters to Gardner.

The victim of the Nov. 19, 2004, attack wrote that as time has passed, she has come to realize that no one but Long is responsible for what he did to her -- not her and not the society that they share.

"He deserves to reap the consequences of his actions," she said. "I now believe that Earl Long is a man without regard for humanity -- without the soul of a person who sees a woman crying, begging before him, and stops, even for a moment, to recognize her as a soul herself."

The victim of the Dec. 24 attack said she cannot shake the fear that Long left with her.

"This crime affected my whole life," she wrote. "I am afraid of everybody because I don't trust anyone anymore. . . . Since this happened, I started to have problems with my boyfriend, and we ended up separating. I think if this crime hadn't been committed we would still be together. . . . I cry often and I am colder, distant from everything, even from my children and I feel guilty and sadder and cry even more."