

Ex-gang member guilty in murder

FROM THE REGISTER'S AMES BUREAU

Boone, Ia. — A former member of a motorcycle gang has pleaded guilty of murdering a Boone woman more than 12 years ago.

District Judge Timothy Finn immediately sentenced Ronald Merrill Gruber, 40, to a maximum term of 50 years in prison after hearing him plead guilty of second-degree murder Tuesday.

Gruber was charged last summer in the death of Penny Jean Weitzel, 23. Weitzel was found shot to death at her Boone home on Nov. 30, 1984, after a party attended by Gruber and other members of the Sons of Silence motorcycle gang.

Tuesday, Gruber told Finn he shot Weitzel in the head after a night of drinking at her home.

After he finishes a four-year racketeering sentence in federal prison in Greenville, Ill., he'll be brought to Iowa for the murder sentence, said Boone County Attorney Steven Oeth.