

Convicted rapist gets 7 life terms, plus 15 years

■ The accused Palmetto Bay Rapist was sentenced to seven life terms, plus 15 years for attacking a woman in front of her children in a church parking lot.

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She said the man who raped her still invades her thoughts, torments her children, infuriates her parents and her husband.

"He took away our lives that day in 2002, and I plead with the court to take away his freedom forever," she said.

And that's exactly what Circuit Judge Peter Adrien did Friday, sending Michael Siebert, 44, to prison for life seven times, plus 15 years — meaning he'll spend the rest of his days in prison.

"The evidence that was presented was overwhelming," Adrien said, after listening to Siebert's defiant insistence that he was innocent despite DNA evidence. "He's the person who committed these crimes."

Police believe Siebert committed other crimes. Dubbed the Palmetto Bay Rapist, he is accused of raping four other women.

"She's going to carry this in her mind for the rest of her life," Adrien said of the victim who testified Friday. "Her children will carry it in their minds for the rest of their lives. It's horrible."

Siebert accosted the victim in the parking lot of her Cutler Ridge church, where she was picking up her daughter from day care. He forced her into the car and raped her repeatedly over three hours as her children — her infant son was in the car, too — screamed for help.

The victim told Adrien that she had spent four years in therapy, that her daughter, who was only 3 at the time, has also been in therapy, and that even her husband has struggled with Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

"Whether it's the image of my rap-



SENTENCED: Seemingly unconcerned, convicted rapist Michael Siebert winks at a courtroom observer during his sentencing Friday.

DAVID ADAMS/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

'She's going to carry this in her mind for the rest of her life. Her children are going to carry it in their minds for the rest of their lives. It's horrible.'

— CIRCUIT JUDGE PETER ADRIEN, in a ruling sentencing rapist Michael Siebert to life in prison

*TURN TO SENTENCE, 2B

Convicted rapist is sentenced

*SENTENCE, FROM 1B

ist's face, the sound of my screaming children or the complete helplessness I felt as he drove me to the middle of nowhere, I am a constant prisoner of my thoughts," she said.

Her young daughter "carries deep within her the constant reminder of how dark and terrifying the world can be," she said.

Her infant son also watched, and Siebert forced her to look into the baby's

eyes during the most brutal parts of the rape.

"You know what, it worked," she told Adrien. "After the attack, every time I looked at my son, I remembered with crystal-clear detail how it felt to be raped by Mr. Siebert."

Her parents and her husband also testified Friday, urging the judge to give Siebert the maximum seven life sentences.

"Everybody has a wife, a sister, a daughter . . . it just can't ever happen . . . you

have to take these people out and put them away forever," her father begged, choking back tears.

"This man has no respect for anything," said her husband as he gripped the podium to stop his hands from shaking.

Siebert's own father also testified, setting the stage for Siebert to deny his crimes.

"My wife and I still find it difficult to believe that Michael did these hellacious crimes," Edgar Siebert said.

Finally, Michael Siebert

stood to address the judge.

"I'm not a person to hold children hostage and attempt to kill them," he said. "The real me is not that person. Your honor, I did not commit these crimes."

Adrien twice asked him about the DNA evidence, but Siebert declined, saying only "your honor, we would be here all day."

Assistant State Attorney Laura Adams said Siebert deserved the life terms. "The community deserves to know that he will never rap-

another woman or take the innocence away from another child," she said.

Siebert's attorney, John Weinberg, argued for leniency because the victim wasn't killed or disfigured.

"You don't think rape is a form of disfigurement?" Adrien asked.

After the sentence was pronounced, the victim thanked the jury, the judge and the prosecutor. "It's finally over," she said. "I didn't know it would feel this good."