COUNTY OF SCOTLAND

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE CRIMINAL COURT DIVISION FILE NO. 88-CRS-1422

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

Plaintiff, Vs. CHARLES EDWARD MCINNIS, Defendant

TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING

The hearing of Charles Edward McInnis, taken in connection with the captioned cause, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015, at the Superior Criminal Court Term of August 10, 2015 The Honorable Tanya T. Wallace, Judge Presiding.

## APPEARANCES:

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Attorney for Defendant Laurinburg NC 28353-0867

On Behalf of The State On behalf of the Defendant

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THE COURT: Good morning. My name is Tanya Wallace.

I am a Resident Superior Court Judge here in this judicial district. It is my understanding you have a Motion for Appropriate Relief filed in the matter of Edward Charles McInnis. Is this Mr. McInnis?

MR. MCINNIS: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you. All right. I'll let the State proceed.

MS. NEWTON: Your Honor, this would be in the matter of State v. Edward Charles McInnis, 88-CRS-1422, 1423, and 1424. Your Honor, for the Court's information, on February 23, 1988 at approximately 3:15 a.m., the Laurinburg Police Department was dispatched to 620 Prince Street in reference to a burglary, armed robbery, and a rape of Ms. Francis Fletcher. years old at the time. She was home alone. Someone broke into her home and attacked her. She was stabbed in the shoulder. She was originally accosted from behind, dragged into the bedroom, and she was raped on the floor in her bedroom. The perpetrator then took money from her and fled the residence. She, of course, called for police assistance and emergency assistance. Officers from the Laurinburg Police Department responded. Ms. Fletcher was interviewed a total of three times. During all of those interviews, she gave a consistent account of what occurred indicating that she watched television until

approximately 12:30 a.m. until Nightline with Ted Koppel when off. Then she went to bed and fell asleep. She was awakened by a noise. She got up to investigate. Went to the front door and turned on the porch light, looked out through the window, did not see anything. She then went to the back of the residence and turned on the outside lights, looked out and did not see anything. She then turned to go back to the front door to turn off the exterior lighting and she was attacked from behind. During the initial attack, she received abrasions to her face and her lip was busted. She was also stabbed in the shoulder with a letter opener that actually broke off and the sort of blade part of the letter opener was lodged in her shoulder. perpetrator then dragged her into the bedroom, put her on the floor, anally penetrated her twice, and attempted to vaginally penetrate her once. He then asked her if she had any money and had rifled through her pocketbook and took money from her pocketbook and fled the residence. She told law enforcement at the time that she was unable to identify her perpetrator, but she could give a description. She said the perpetrator carried a small pin light with him, which illuminated -- partially illuminated his features, but the other lighting inside the house was off at the time so it was dark. She described her perpetrator as a black male, late teens to early 20's. described average height and slender to average build. Indicated that he was dark-complected, had short hair, and was

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very articulate. He spoke very clearly and did not use any profanity during the attack. At one during the attack, she asked the perpetrator if he knew her and he said that he did not and asked if she knew him and she told him that she did not. But he retrieved a comforter from her bed and placed it over her face during the remainder of the attack. She did tell law enforcement she thought be able to recognize the perpetrator if she heard his voice again, but she would not be able to recognize him based on his physical appearance. She did not give any description of any unique scars, marks, tattoos or anything that could distinguish the characteristics she described from those of another individual with similar characteristics. Law enforcement began an investigation and this Defendant, Mr. McInnis, was offered as a suspect by members of the community. Mr. McInnis had some history of deviant behaviors with regard to older women, and there were at least three separate circumstances where Mr. McInnis had either broken into the home of or approached older women and exposed his penis or asked them for sex. And those circumstances were reported to law enforcement and he actually was convicted of indecent exposure for one of those incidents. That sort of put him on the radar of the Laurinburg Police Department. In March, specifically March 18, 1988, a confidential source of information came forward to Detective Jack Poe, who was the lead investigator in this matter, and gave information indicating

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that he had seen Mr. McInnis and another individual on the Saturday after Ms. Fletcher's attack and that Mr. McInnis had asked him, the informant, if he had heard about the attack on Ms. Fletcher and the break-in at her home. The informant indicated that he had and according to the informant, Mr. McInnis said, "I did that." Lieutenant Poe then secured warrants for Mr. McInnis's arrest charging him with first degree burglary, armed robbery, and first degree rape. The Defendant was arrested on March 19, 1988. He was advised of his Miranda Rights and interviewed by Lieutenant Poe and gave a statement denying any involvement in Ms. Fletcher's attack. Two days later, the Defendant requested to speak with Lieutenant Poe. Lieutenant Poe went to the jail, re-advised the Defendant of his Miranda Rights and the Defendant gave a second statement again denying any involvement in the attack on Ms. Fletcher. And providing a rather detailed accounting of his whereabouts on the afternoon, during the evening hours of February 22<sup>nd</sup> and the early morning hours of February 23<sup>rd</sup> during the attack on Ms. Fletcher. At that point, Lieutenant Poe and an SBI agent set about to go locate and interview the individuals the Defendant claimed could account for his whereabouts. And they did locate numerous people that the Defendant said would be able to account for him being somewhere else. And I will tell Your Honor in candor that generally speaking where the Defendant said he was, there were other individuals who could verify his whereabouts.

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Including from approximately 12:30 a.m. until at least 4:00 a.m. which would cover the time of the attack on Ms. Fletcher. were two separate relatives of the Defendant who were interviewed separately and interviewed almost immediately after the Defendant's second statement which was in custody. And they accounted for his presence elsewhere. Those individuals, both female relatives of the Defendant, said that he came to his niece's residence and knocked on the door between 12:30 a.m. and 12:45 a.m. One relative was awakened by his knocking and she got up and let him in. She had to report to work early the next morning and generally got up at 4:00 a.m., so she saw the Defendant go into the living room and sit down and began watching TV and then she went back to bed. She indicated when she got up at 4:00 a.m. to prepare to go to work. The Defendant was still at the residence in the living room sleeping in a chair watching television. A second relative indicated that the Defendant came to his niece's residence around the same time, 12:30 to 1:00 a.m. and that she watched TV with him until the two of them fell asleep watching TV there in the living room. Your Honor, obviously if the Defendant was accounted for elsewhere during the time of the attack on Ms. Fletcher, it would be impossible for him to have been at a different location attacking Ms. Fletcher. In October of 1988, the Defendant, I'm told, requested to speak to Lieutenant Poe a third time and Lieutenant Poe went to the jail and interviewed the Defendant

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for a third time. I spoke to Lieutenant Poe last week. I will tell Your Honor in candor that I was in high school at the time this happened. I was certainly not here in the D.A.'s office and did not prosecute this case. But in preparing to answer the Defendant's claim of innocence, I did secure the original police investigative file from the Laurinburg Police Department and I did review that file in its entirety. What is not in the file is the identity of the informant who gave information implicating Mr. McInnis. As Your Honor knows, it was very common back during this time that law enforcement did not have to record the identity of an informant. They did not have to disclose it to the prosecution and I have no idea who that It is also not clear from the file how it is that Lieutenant Poe went to the jail in October of 1988 to speak Mr. McInnis. It simply reads in a narrative fashion that the Defendant asked to speak to him and Lieutenant Poe went to the jail. I asked Lieutenant Poe how that came about and he told me that the case was being called for trial. That there was a session of a Superior Court ongoing. That he was informed by a bailiff that the Defendant had requested to speak with him. That he was in the courtroom at the time along with the Defendant's attorney. That he, Lieutenant Poe, made the Defendant's attorney aware of the bailiff's communication to him that the Defendant had requested to speak with him. Defendant's attorney attempted to speak with the Defendant and

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the Defendant declined to speak to his attorney requesting to speak solely to Lieutenant Poe. That Lieutenant Poe then went to the jail, re-advised the Defendant of his Miranda Rights and took a third statement from him. In this third statement, the Defendant confesses essentially. He makes a statement to the effect that he is responsible for breaking into Ms. Fletcher's home and raping her. He gives some detail. Again Your Honor knows this is prior to the requirement for recording and the interview is not verbatim. It is essentially a paraphrase presented in the investigative report in a narrative fashion. But having done this for 20 years, it's pretty clear to me that there was a question/answer dialogue between Lieutenant Poe and the Defendant. When questions were asked of the Defendant about the specific details of the attack on Ms. Fletcher, his answers do not match what Ms. Fletcher describes having occurred. Specifically, the Defendant is unable to explain how entry was gained into Ms. Fletcher's home. Entry was gained, Your Honor, through a bedroom window and it appears that the perpetrator exited through the back door. The Defendant gives both answers at various times in his interview and then ultimately says he has no idea how he got into the residence. When asked about the attack on Ms. Fletcher, which we know both from the physical evidence and the location of blood inside the residence and Ms. Fletcher's description in three separate interviews with law enforcement, that the attack started in the living room near the

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front door. But the Defendant's answer to those questions is that the attack occurred in the bedroom. Also, Your Honor, I would tell the Court that as I indicated earlier Ms. Fletcher was anally raped twice and she was — there was attempted vaginal penetration one time. The physical evidence in this case does come from rectal swabs. The Defendant just gives a very generic description of rape. In fact, he really doesn't give a description at all. He just uses the general word that he raped her. He offers no information about the attack and certainly does not make reference to the specifics of how that assault occurred against Ms. Fletcher. In any event, the Defendant appeared in Superior Court in Scotland County represented by counsel on October 25, 1988 and he entered a plea of guilty. Those documents should be before Your Honor.

THE COURT: They are.

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MS. NEWTON: But I did attach them to the Motion for Appropriate Relief that's filed in this matter. The Defendant received a sentence of life in prison followed by a consecutive sentence of 20 years and he was sent to the Department of Correction. My first contact with this case, Your Honor, came about five years ago and at that time, I first became aware of this Defendant, this case, and that there was a claim of actual innocence. In March of this year, the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, who have representatives present in court today, came to me and -- well, notified by letter that this

Defendant had filed a claim with that agency making a claim of factual or actual innocence. Chief of Police Darwin Williams, who's seated next to me, and Assistant Chief Cliff Sessoms and I then met with representatives from the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission in the District Attorney's Office. Laurinburg Police Department turned over items of physical evidence that had been collected in this case back in 1988 to representatives from the Commission for the purpose of securing DNA testing. I will tell Your Honor that there was a diligent search by these individuals seated next to me to locate that evidence. We had been told by a prior administration that the evidence no longer existed and had been destroyed. There was a Destruction Order in place from 2001 that covered some items of evidence, but not all of them. And I was told initially when this Defendant came forward claiming that he was innocent by prior administration at the Laurinburg Police Department that the evidence no longer was in the care, custody, and control of the Laurinburg Police Department. When the Innocence Inquiry Commission contacted me in March, I made Chief Williams aware of the Defendant's claim and the Commissions inquiry and Chief Williams indicated to me that he did not want to rely on representations made by those who preceded him and wanted to make his own independent search of the evidence facility. And he and his entire investigative unit from the police department engaged in a very arduous task of searching every box within, I

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think, four separate evidence facilities at the Laurinburg Police Department and located the rectal swabs. And that is how we were able to surrender them to the Innocence Inquiry Commission and get the DNA testing that has now exonerated this I do have a copy of the DNA report, Your Honor. have it marked as State's MAR 1. I will tender that to Your I would indicate that we became aware of the results of this DNA testing last Wednesday on August 5<sup>th</sup>. I received phone call on Monday from Sharon Stellato with the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission indicating that she needed to meet with me in person. We met on Wednesday morning here in the District Attorney's Office in Laurinburg and the results were shared with me. It is very clear from a review of the results that this Defendant does not match the DNA profile of the person that rape Ms. Fletcher. There has never been any indication that there was more than one perpetrator. I went back through this file again very meticulously looking for any indication that there could have been two perpetrators. And there's simply no reference to that. Ms. Fletcher in all three of her interviews describes on perpetrator, only one person being inside her residence, and any witness that gave information and the informant that gave information referred to a sole actor. So, there is no evidence available to the State at this time to indicate that more than one person committed this crime. And it is clear from the DNA evidence that this Defendant did not.

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began, on that same day August 5<sup>th</sup>, trying to secure the release of this Defendant as I believe as a minister of justice, it is the only fair thing to do and I filed a Motion with the Court on my own accord, a Motion for Appropriate Relief asking for this Defendant's immediate release as it is my contention that based on all the facts that are known to the State at this time that this man is innocent. The Court appointed Mr. Jonathan McInnis to represent the Defendant and Mr. McInnis and I then worked closely together to file a Consent Motion for Appropriate Relief requesting an immediate hearing and mutually agreeing that this Defendant should be released from custody. So before Your Honor today is a request by the State and by the defense that the Court vacate these convictions, set them aside, and that this Defendant be released from custody. May I approach with the Exhibit?

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THE COURT: Assuming there's no objection.

MR. MCINNIS: No objection, Your Honor. I have a copy.

MS. NEWTON: Your Honor, I believe that would be a sufficient basis. I'll be happy to answer any additional questions you may have.

THE COURT: And I believe I have -- was concerned earlier about the fact that there were actually three charges, not just the -- the rape or sexual assault. And you have clarified my mind that there was only one perpetrator ever

spoken of or elicited. I also was concerned initially I didn't know -- I assumed that these -- I had gotten an idea of what the results were from your application for a Motion for Appropriate Relief. I was concerned as to how obviously on any rape victim there's two potential DNA profilings always, hers and his. And I understand that this is a Y analysis and so they're able to screen out the victim and so that's how we came to this conclusion. I see in the conclusions that Edward McInnis is excluded as a contributor of the male DNA taken from the victim. Mr. McInnis, do you wish to be heard?

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MR. MCINNIS: Just briefly, Your Honor. I have met -as Ms. Newton indicated, I was appointed on Thursday. I
arranged a visit with Mr. McInnis at Roundtree Correctional on
Friday morning. The assistant superintendent Dalrimple was very
helpful in arranging a day that's normally not scheduled. I met
with him after speaking with Ms. Newton, after speaking with the
North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, associate director
Sharon Stellato who is here today. And if I may also Sara Riney
and please forgive me I mispronounce any of these. The
investigators are here today. There are also other staff
members from the Commission here, Catherine Mantoian, staff
attorney, Lindsey Smith associate counsel, Ed Brooks,
investigator, Aschante Pretty paralegal, and Jason Fitts case
coordinator. Sharon and Sarah were the two lead staff working
on the case. I spoke with them on Thursday and went and spoke

with Mr. McInnis on Friday morning. In addition, I've spoken with other esteemed colleagues in the -- in the judicial system, attorneys and spoke with Mr. McInnis and have spoke with him in depth on Friday as well as this morning prior to court. Mr. McInnis's request to proceed with the MAR and to ask -- and join in with the District Attorney's requests and has absolutely no objections to that. In addition, I have covered with him the two possible options that he would have. One being the Consent MAR that is before the Court that he is here to do. I have also spoken with him in reference to the Innocence Commission's --Innocence Inquiry Commission's investigation into the case. We've spoken in depth and if anybody can please correct me if I'm incorrect about any of the procedures. Once this hearing is concluded today, the investigation will at that point stop. Mr. McInnis is aware of that. He is also aware that I believe the information from the Commission will be turned over to the District Attorney's Office for their decision on whether it should be further investigated or not. I have spoken with him in -- in depth about the entire procedure that would need to take place -- that could take place not through the Innocence Inquiry Commission and also the avenues that he would possibly have by going forward with the MAR today as far as his decision to seek a pardon and/or compensation at some point and time. know, Your Honor, when we met in chambers that was a query that you asked. I've talked to him and my investigator has spoken to

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    him this morning and as I indicated I talked to him on Friday
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    and we'd ask the Court to -- to grant the Consent Motion.
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              THE COURT: All right.
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              MR. MCINNIS: Thank you.
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              THE COURT:
                          Thank you. That's what I wanted to know.
              MS. NEWTON: Your Honor, if I may, I did neglect to
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    mention to you that there are two of Ms. Fletcher's relatives
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    that did make it here this morning for the hearing, a niece and
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    nephew.
              THE COURT: Okay. And it's my understanding Ms.
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    Fletcher is no longer with us, is that correct?
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              MS. NEWTON: That's correct, Your Honor.
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              THE COURT: All right. I wish I had something
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    profound to say to everybody. There is nothing. I'm a Judge,
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    I'm not God. I'm so sorry for your aunt and what she had to go
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    through. Certainly, I don't think anyone's questioning that
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    that indeed happened and there's somebody out there. On this
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    side is another victim and a lot of other victims of that person
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    that may -- that's still out there. I will say a lot of people
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    invested a lot of time and effort when there was a possibility
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    that a wrong had been committed. Didn't care where it ended up
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    and still proceeded. And every one of these people should be
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    thanked and commended. So, --
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              MR. MCINNIS: Your Honor, may I?
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              THE COURT: Sure.
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MR. MCINNIS: I apologize. I do want to mention that he has a relative here, his niece, Brenda McInnis.

THE COURT: I can tell.

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MR. MCINNIS: She's -- she is here. She has stood by him from my understanding the entire time and he has had family members pass away while he has been in the Department of Corrections as well. She has stood beside him. I met her for the first time this morning and she's going to be a big part of him being back out into the community.

THE COURT: All right. I'm going to try -- I have reviewed the file and I'm going to try to do this off the top of my head. I will ask that an entire transcript of today's proceeding be actually transcribed. All right. In the matter of State of North Carolina versus Charles Edward McInnis, this matter coming on to be heard and being heard by the Honorable Tanya Wallace and upon a Consent Motion for Appropriate Relief by Kristy Newton, District Attorney for Judicial District 16A and Jonathan McInnis, Public Defendant for Judicial District 16A pursuant to N.C.G.s 15-1411 through 1420(e) and the Court makes the following findings: Defendant was arrested on March 19, 1998 by officers with the Laurinburg Police Department. Defendant was charged with the offenses of first degree rape, first degree burglary, and armed robbery. That attorney Charles Floyd was appointed to represent the Defendant. That the Defendant appeared before the Honorable Robert Hobgood in the

Superior Court of Scotland County on October 25, 1988 and that the Defendant was duly sworn before the Clerk of Superior Court and entered pleas of quilty to the aforementioned charges. the Defendant signed and executed a plea transcript on that date. Defendant was sentenced on October 25, 1988 by the Honorable Robert Hobgood according to fair sentencing and from the presumptive range to active term of imprisonment in the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections of life for the offense of first degree rape followed by a consecutive term of 20 years for the offenses of first degree burglary and armed robbery. That based on the Defendant's pleas of guilty on October 25, 1988 and the corresponding judgment of the Superior Court, the Defendant is currently imprisoned at Brown Creek Correctional Institution through the North -- North Carolina Department of Adult Correction. That the Defendant's claim of actual innocence came to the attention of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission and with the cooperation of the District Attorney of Judicial District 16A and the Laurinburg Police Department, items were submitted for DNA testing. although the Laurinburg Police Department requested DNA testing from Cellmark Diagnostics in 1988, due to the technology available at the time no DNA profile could be generated. using current technology, Cellmark Forensics analyzed certain items of physical evidence and using Y STR SNA analysis has determined that the Defendant is excluded as a contributor of

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the male DNA from the sample. That members of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission disclosed the results of the testing to District Attorney Kristy Newton on August 5, 2015. That according to the prosecutor in court today, one perpetrator and only one perpetrator was ever suggested by the victim for any of the crimes for which the Defendant pled guilty. Based on the above, the Court finds and concludes that certain new evidence is available that has a direct and actual bearing upon the Defendant's guilt or innocence. At this time, it is ordered that the Defendant is entitled at a minimum to a new trial for the charges and is released forthwith. All right, Ms. Newton, you had something further?

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MS. NEWTON: Yes, Your Honor, I have prepared dismissals dismissing the charges of first degree rape, first degree burglary, and robbery with a dangerous weapon in 88-CRS-1422 through 1424. I have provided a copy to Mr. McInnis on behalf of Mr. McInnis and I have the original to tender to the Court.

THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. And there are no other charges for which the Defendant is now awaiting trial, is that correct?

MS. NEWTON: That is correct, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. The Court having declared that the evidence presented today entitles him to be released of all the charges and the State having taken a dismissal in all of

those charges and the Court understanding there are no other charges appearing before this time for Mr. McInnis, he is hereby released from the custody of the Department of Corrections or Adult Corrections or whatever the name is now and may leave this courtroom as he so wishes. (End of hearing.) 2.2 

State of North Carolina v. Charles Edward McInnis

## CERTIFICATION

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF PITT

I, Pamela W. Gray, CVR-M, officer before whom the proceeding was taken, the foregoing pages  $1\,-\,20$  and is a true and accurate transcript of the hearing had.

I further certify that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this proceeding was heard; and further, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, and am not financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Pamela W. Ling, CUR

Pamela W. Gray, CVR-M P. O. Box 358 Grifton, NC 28530

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

COUNTY OF SCOTLAND

CRIMINAL COURT DIVISION FILE NO. 88-CRS-1422

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA Plaintiff,

Vs.

CERTIFICATE OF DELIVERY

CHARLES EDWARD MCINNIS, Defendant.

The above entitled transcript was mailed and sent via email on the 2nd of October, 2015 and to requesting attorneys.

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