

For Immediate Release

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Chattooga County Jury Convicts Man of Arson, Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty

February 17, 2022 - Chattooga, GA A Chattooga County jury returned a guilty verdict in an arson case on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, in Summerville, Georgia. Defendant Robert Anthony Swearinger, 38, was convicted in less than 20 minutes of Arson in the First Degree, Criminal Damage to Property in the First Degree, two counts of Aggravated Cruelty to Animals, and Battery, Family Violence.

On 3, August 2021, Swearinger was living with his girlfriend in the basement of a home in Chattooga County belonging to his girlfriend's father and grandmother, who lived upstairs. After Swearinger struck his girlfriend, her father demanded Swearinger leave the home. Alone in the basement, Swearinger set a fire and left the residence. Within a short time, the entire home was consumed and completely destroyed by the flames. The three other residents escaped the blaze. Two family pets, a dog and a cat, were killed in the fire.

The case was investigated by Investigator Wendell Flood of the Chattooga County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Corey Fielding initially responded to the call, and Cloudland Fire Department responded to the emergency in less than 10 minutes. Fire Marshall Investigator Jerry Parrish also assisted in the investigation. Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit (LMJC) Assistant District Attorney Clayton Fuller presented the case over three days. The jury returned a verdict of guilty on all counts.

Judge Kristina Cook Graham presided over the trial and will sentence Swearinger on Monday, February 21, 2022.

"Investigator Flood and the Chattooga County Sheriff's office should be commended for their hard work in this investigation," said Chris Arnt, LMJC District Attorney. "Without their dedication to seeking justice in this case, Swearinger may have escaped accountability. I'd also like to thank all emergency personnel who responded in an attempt to save the victims' home." Arnt also noted that without the contributions of Victim Advocate Cara Parris, Administrative Assistant Jennifer McLamb, and Investigator Eric Sliz a conviction would not have been possible.

"We cannot replace everything this family lost. I wish we could. What we can do though, is work together as a community of law enforcement professionals to seek justice for this family and accountability for this defendant," said Arnt. "I believe anyone who maliciously burns down someone's home in an attempt to harm people and animals should be behind bars. My team will not tolerate those actions in our community."





