

For Immediate Release

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Trenton Man Convicted for Murdering his Mother

April 20, 2023 – Trenton, GA – A Trenton man was convicted for the murder of his 81 year old mother by a Dade County jury following a three day trial before Judge Don Thompson ending on April 19, 2023. Roger Allen Shrader, 59, was convicted of 8 counts including malice murder, felony murder, and aggravated assault.

Dade County law enforcement responded to 53 Brow Road on Sand Mountain in the late morning of March 4, 2022 after Shrader contacted his son and told him he had killed his mother, Lagatha “Cathy” Watson. Deputies observed a gruesome scene, as the victim had been assaulted with a machete and a mattock to the point of near-decapitation. Shrader was next to her body waiting on law enforcement to arrive, and his pants were covered in her blood. The murder weapons were located next to her body. Shrader apologized to the Jimmie Watson, the victim’s husband who had been waiting outside the residence in his vehicle but was unaware of her murder, as he was placed in a patrol car on scene, and he later gave a full confession to law enforcement later that afternoon. The case was investigated by Daniel Nicholson with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and was assisted by members of Dade County Sheriff Ray Cross’s office.

Evidence presented at trial showed that Shrader had suffered from mental health issues since childhood, but refused treatment despite the pleas of his close family members. Watson was his primary caretaker, but the two had a tumultuous relationship. Shrader argued with Watson regularly about his house and finances, and he claimed she was controlling and abusive to him as a child. Evidence in the case showed these were likely delusional claims.

At trial, Shrader raised the defense of insanity at the time of the crime. Under Georgia law, the insanity defense is only applicable if a defendant cannot distinguish between right and wrong at the time of the offense, or if they are suffering from a delusional compulsion which, under the facts of the delusion, would justify their actions. During the trial Shrader took the stand in his own defense and admitted he knew that he had done a terrible thing when he killed his mother. While he claimed to be suffering from some delusions, Shrader further admitted he was fully aware that he was attacking his mother and that she wasn’t a threat to him at the time he killed her, which indicated he was not suffering from a delusional compulsion which would justify his actions at the time of the murder. The jury found Shrader Guilty but Mentally Ill, which means that if prison officials deem necessary, he can receive mental health services and treatment at a mental health facility during his period of confinement.

The case was presented by Chief Assistant District Attorney Kevin Baugh and Dade County Resident Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Hartline. Mr. Baugh and Ms. Hartline were assisted by Amy Reed as Victim Advocate and witness coordinator, Tara Page who assisted with administrative issues and jury selection, and Chief Investigator Christy Smith who assisted the investigation and with jury selection. A sentencing date has not been scheduled at the time of this release. Under Georgia law, Shrader faces a minimum sentence of life in prison.

“Justice was delivered today in Trenton,” said District Attorney Clayton M. Fuller. “I’d like to thank my prosecution team and law enforcement partners for their work on this case—because it certainly took a toll on them. We all hope that this brings some measure of peace to the victim’s family.”

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