



MICHAEL C. O'MALLEY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY PROSECUTOR

Thomas Knuff Convicted of Aggravated Murder for Parma Heights Double Homicide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, June 13, 2019

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that after a seven-week trial, the Jury found Thomas Knuff, 44, guilty for the murders of John Mann, 65, and Regina Capobianco, 50, in Parma Heights on May 11, 2017. The Jury's guilty verdict of Aggravated Murder included Capital Specifications, which carries a max sentence of the Death Penalty. The case moves to the Sentencing Phase of trial, which is scheduled for July 22, 2019 at 9:00am.

“The victims welcomed this defendant into their residence when he had no other place to stay, only to be repaid by being viciously attacked and murdered,” said Prosecutor O'Malley. “Today's verdict is a step towards justice for the victims' families.”

The jury found Knuff guilty of the following charges:

- Aggravated Murder
- Aggravated Burglary
- Grand Theft
- Theft
- Kidnapping
- Gross Abuse Of A Corpse
- Conspiracy
- Breaking And Entering
- Vandalism
- Attempted Tampering With Evidence

On April 11, 2017, Knuff was paroled from Noble Correctional Institution (NCI) after serving a 16-year sentence for an Aggravated Robbery conviction. John Mann and his friend, Regina Capobianco, picked up Knuff from NCI and dropped him off at his friend's house in Hamilton, Ohio. Knuff developed a relationship with Ms. Capobianco while she was incarcerated via a prison pen pal program.

Alicia Stoner, 42, picked up Knuff from his friend's house in Hamilton and dropped him off at a motel in Strongsville. Stoner, a former Trumbull Correctional Institution social worker, had developed a romantic relationship with Knuff while he was incarcerated at that facility.

Knuff's parole conditions required that he live in Cuyahoga County. Ms. Stoner provided Knuff money to cover the motel expenses over the next few weeks. Attempting to help Knuff, Mr. Mann invited him to live

with them at his Parma Heights residence on Nelwood Road. On May 10, 2017, Mr. Mann took Knuff to meet his parole officer and Knuff confirmed that he would be living at Mann's Nelwood residence.

On May 11, Knuff killed both victims by stabbing each multiple times inside the Nelwood home. He stabbed Mr. Mann 15 times in the neck, abdomen, hands, and legs. He stabbed Ms. Capobianco 6 times in the neck, abdomen, clavicle, and back. He rolled up their bodies in blankets, dragged them into a back bedroom, and covered the bodies with numerous garbage bags. Knuff spent the next few days attempting to clean up the crime scene. He scrubbed down the walls, removed the living room carpet, and disposed the carpet in garbage bags which he left strewn around the house.

On May 17, Knuff broke into two Parma Heights beauty salons and stole over \$1,000. On the following day he stole his son's vehicle and cellphone. He parked it in the emergency lane along Interstate-71 near Brunswick Hills and put a gun to his head in an apparent suicide attempt to draw attention. Police were called and he was sent to Medina Hospital for a psychological evaluation. Two days later, he was released and his son dropped him off at a friend's apartment in Brunswick Hills.

Ms. Capobianco's sister drove to her Nelwood home after not hearing from her for several weeks. After no one answered the door, she entered the home but did not find anyone inside. Parma Heights Police were called, and she filed a missing person's report.

On May 31, Knuff was arrested at his friend's apartment in Brunswick Hills on charges related to the beauty salon break-ins and booked into Medina County Jail. While being interviewed, police questioned Knuff on the whereabouts of Mr. Mann and Ms. Capobianco, and he stated that they may be staying at a friend's place in Canton.

On June 13, Knuff was interviewed by police at Medina County Jail. They questioned his involvement in the salon break-ins and again asked about Mr. Mann and Ms. Capobianco's whereabouts. He confessed to burglarizing the salon stores and stated that the missing persons may be in Texas.

On June 21, Parma Heights Police responded to the Nelwood residence to conduct further investigation after neighbors reported a broken window and strong odor emanating from the house. After extensively searching the house, they discovered both victims' bodies. The investigation was conducted by Parma Heights Police, Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office, and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Investigators linked Knuff to the murders utilizing DNA evidence, witness testimony, cellphone and water department records. Knuff's DNA was found on evidence retrieved from the house. Stoner testified, among various things, that she received a handwritten letter from Knuff detailing a plan to hire someone to burn down the Nelwood residence to eradicate any evidence. The State subpoenaed Parma Heights Water Department records which showed unusually high levels on the days immediately following the murders. Water usage ceased altogether on May 16.

Prosecutors called 50 witnesses to testify in trial. Jury selection began April 26th. Closing arguments were given June 11th. The jury deliberated for two days before reaching the verdict.

The Sentencing Phase will begin July 22, 2019, where the State will present evidence demonstrating the defendant deserves the death penalty over any mitigating factors presented by the defense. The Jury will make a recommendation to the judge of either life, life without parole, or death. The judge decides on the imposition of sentencing.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Anna Faraglia, Erin Stone, Kevin Bringman, and Chris Schroeder.

Contact: Ryan Miday, Director of Communications and Public Policy. Phone: 216.443.7488 or Email: rmiday@prosecutor.cuyahogacounty.us