

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Notice of Conviction
Guilty of All Charges in Burn Pile Murder of Husband
State vs. Melody Walker Farris

November 4, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that this afternoon, a Cherokee County jury found Melody Walker Farris, 64, guilty of all charges in the 2018 murder of her husband, Gary Wayne Farris. The trial took place over the course of 18 days, beginning on October 7 and ending with closing arguments on October 30.

Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr. announced that sentencing would be set at a later date.

“In July 2018, a horrific murder occurred in Cherokee County. A man was shot then left on a burn pile, where his remains were later discovered. The victim, Gary Farris, was killed by his wife on his own property. The shocking facts of this crime will forever remain with all who were involved in this case, including first responders, prosecutors, jurors, and witnesses,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “Today, through this verdict, we are able to finally bring justice for Gary Farris.”

Cherokee Sheriff’s Office began investigating this case on July 5, 2018, after human remains were found on a burn pile 100 yards from a home on Purcell Lane in Cherokee County. Gary Wayne Farris, the 58-year-old husband of Melody Farris, was missing at the time of discovery. The remains were later confirmed to be Mr. Farris.

Melody Farris told detectives that her husband had started the fire on the property in the days prior. She also mentioned that Mr. Farris had medical problems, suggesting a medical emergency or accidental death.

Signs of foul play became apparent when law enforcement found a bullet lodged in Mr. Farris’ rib cage and a spent bullet inside the home. Investigators also found blood spots on the home’s basement floor and steps.

While processing the crime scene, investigators photographed and collected physical evidence from the property, home, and barn.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation assisted by analyzing and interpreting evidence collected, including DNA, bullets, and arson analysis, in addition to conducting the autopsy. The GBI Crime Lab confirmed that Mr. Farris’ DNA was found on the spent bullet.

“The GBI will continue to use every tool at our disposal to bring those who commit crimes to justice. This case displays the important role that the GBI Crime Lab plays in criminal investigations. Together with our partners, we will continue to hold criminals accountable and send the clear message that there is no place for violence in our state,” said GBI Director Chris Hosey.

Cherokee Sheriff's Office conducted interviews with family members, neighbors, and Melody Farris' current and past boyfriends, as well as analyzing digital evidence. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation assisted with interviews.

Melody Farris was later arrested and charged with malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, concealing the death of another, and making a false statement.

"Collaboration with other agencies was critical in the investigation of this case," said Cherokee County Sheriff Frank Reynolds. "We are thankful for our law enforcement partners as well as other agencies that played a key role in arresting and, ultimately, convicting Melody Farris for the murder of her husband."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish and Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Geoffrey Fogus. During the jury trial, the State called 36 witnesses to testify and introduced more than 1,200 pieces of evidence, including crime scene photos, digital evidence from cell phone extractions, cell phone records, cell phone tower records, Google records, and other digital evidence.

In closing arguments, Lead Prosecutor Meaghan Frankish told the jury it is their duty to hold people accountable when they commit murder.

"The last thing he [Gary Farris] saw was staring down the barrel of a 38-revolver in the hands of his bitter wife who was constantly betraying him. This was the ultimate betrayal," said Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish in her closing. "You do not get to shoot and mutilate your life partner. You don't get to take away the grandfather of your grandchildren. That is not your choice to make. The ultimate betrayal. Gary will not walk through that door and that's because she took him off this planet. Find her guilty of all the counts in this indictment. The evidence and the law demand it."

The jury deliberated for just over three days before finding the defendant guilty of all charges.

Under Georgia law, these convictions carry a minimum sentence of life in prison. Melody Farris has been remanded to custody.

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, as well as the Cherokee County Coroner's Office, Marshal's Office, and Fire Department.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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