

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Life in Prison Plus 5 Years for Woman Convicted of Burn Pile Murder of Husband
State vs. Melody Walker Farris

December 5, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr. sentenced Melody Walker Farris, 64, to serve life in prison plus 5 years for the murder of her husband. She is also forbidden to have contact with family members except for those who wish to have contact.

A Cherokee County jury found the defendant guilty of malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, concealing the death of another, and making a false statement. The jury's verdict came on Nov. 4, after an 18-day trial in Superior Court Judge David Cannon Jr.'s courtroom. The defendant was found guilty of all charges.

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.

The defendant 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.

Melody Farris was later arrested and charged with the murder of her husband.

During the 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.

At today's sentencing hearing, the State read a written victim impact statement prepared by one of Gary Farris's children that read, in part, "We ask this court to consider the gravity of this crime, the devastating impact it has had on our family, and to ensure that justice is served. No sentence can bring our father back, but a just punishment can offer a semblance of closure and prevent another family from experiencing this unimaginable pain."

Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish said that throughout the investigation, prosecution, and trial, Melody Farris "tainted and tarnished" her children's relationships and divided the family for her own selfish motives. She described the defendant as having a "depraved heart and mind."

“This sentence should reflect the life that was lost, the way it was lost, and the manner in which it was lost, at her hands, with her depraved heart and mind,” said Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, in reference to the defendant. “Gary Farris was a brilliant lawyer, a forgiving man, and a beloved father and grandfather. The sentence should reflect what his family and what the world lost.”

During the hearing, two individuals identified as friends of Melody Farris spoke on her behalf, and the defendant delivered a lengthy statement herself.

“The disturbing facts of this case, complex investigation, and long prosecution have taken the focus away from the fact that an innocent man was brutally murdered and burned on his own property,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “A good man was lost on that day, and a family was forever divided. This horrifying crime will remain with us always. Our hope is that this sentence will bring some measure of peace.”

Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish and Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Geoffrey Fogus prosecuted this case. Cherokee Sheriff’s Office investigated the case, with assistance from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and 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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