

ATLANTIC COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

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NEWS RELEASE

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MAYS LANDING – An Egg Harbor Township man who attacked three elderly woman, resulting in the death of one of them, during a 2006 crime spree was sentenced to 25 years in prison today, Atlantic County Prosecutor Ted Housel announced.

Robert Shaver, 33, entered a guilty plea in May to aggravated manslaughter and three robberies, in connection with the death of one woman and the robberies of two other women. On Thursday Shaver was sentenced in accordance with the plea agreement. He must serve 85 percent of the prison term before parole eligibility. In addition, he was also sentenced on the three robberies, receiving stolen property (an automobile) and extortion. The sentences are to run concurrent to the aggravated manslaughter sentence. Upon release Shaver will be subject to a mandatory five-year period of parole supervision as well as a one-year mandatory driver's license suspension, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Ellen Loughney stated.

On Aug. 11, 2006 Shaver robbed Mildred Petrone in the parking lot of the Absecon ShopRite along Route 30 and left the 87-year-old woman for dead. Petrone suffered a broken neck and died five days later at the hospital. During Shaver's plea hearing in May the defendant told the court that he also robbed Phyllis Cosulich and Irene Ruzzo a few days after the attack on Petrone.

Prior to sentencing Superior Court Judge Albert Garofolo listened to victim impact statements from Irene Ruzzo, 68, and Phyllis Cosulich, 83, who told the court in a letter read by the chief assistant prosecutor that she fears going anywhere alone. She also stated that she wanted to provide her attacker with the Bible.

"I will say I am not happy with 25 years. I believe in an eye for an eye," Irene Ruzzo said, adding that Shaver never once showed remorse for what he had done.

However, Ruzzo also thanked law enforcement officers in the case and said that she takes comfort in knowing Shaver is off the streets.

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Ellen Loughney acknowledged that 25 years is not a perfect outcome. "If it were a perfect world Mildred Petrone would be alive today and Robert

Shaver would not have been on the streets preying on vulnerable people in our community,” she stated.

“To attempt to bring this process to an end for the victims, the State, and even for the defendant, we engaged in plea discussions that were initiated by the defendant,” Loughney stated.

Janet O’Brien, Petrone’s niece, spoke of the loss of her aunt, who she described as a healthy and independent woman until Shaver attacked her. As Petrone lay paralyzed in her hospital bed, all she spoke of was that she wanted to see her home again. O’Brien shed tears and then called Shaver a coward and an animal for what he did to the victims.

Prior to imposing sentence, Superior Court Judge Albert Garofolo asked the defendant if he wished to speak. Referring to the victim’s and Loughney’s comments, he asked the defendant, “Does it have any effect on you?”

Shaver said, “It has an extreme effect on me. I’m sorry that they had to go through what they had to go through. I’m looked at as a monster and an animal.” Shaver concluded, “It was a bad time in my life.”

Anyone with information involving serious crimes is asked to call the Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office at 609-909-7800 or go to the Prosecutor’s Office Web site at <http://www.acpo.org/tips.html> and provide information by filling out the form anonymously on the Submit a Tip page. People can also call Crime Stoppers at 609-652-1234 or 1-800-658-8477 (TIPS). Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those who commit crimes in Atlantic County.