



**MICHAEL C. O'MALLEY**  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY PROSECUTOR

## **Judge Imposes Death Sentence on Thomas Knuff for Parma Heights Double Homicide**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Wednesday, August 14, 2019**

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that Thomas Knuff, 44, has been sentenced to Death for the murders of John Mann, 65, and Regina Capobianco, 50.

“Thomas Knuff, through his brutal actions, has placed himself on death row,” said Prosecutor O'Malley. “His denial of any responsibility and complete lack of remorse shows how evil this man truly is.”

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 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 a seven-week trial. Jury selection began April 26<sup>th</sup>. Closing arguments were given June 11<sup>th</sup>. The jury deliberated for two days before finding Knuff guilty of Aggravated Murder, Aggravated Burglary, Grand Theft, Theft, Kidnapping, Gross Abuse Of A Corpse, Conspiracy, Breaking And Entering, Vandalism, and Attempted Tampering With Evidence.

The case proceeded to the mitigation phase of trial on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. After two days, the Jury determined that the aggravating circumstances outweighed the mitigating circumstances of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and unanimously recommended that Knuff receive the Death Penalty for the murders of both victims. The Judge agreed with the Jury's recommendation and sentenced Knuff to Death, as well as an additional 37 years on the remaining counts.

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