



Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Man Pleads Guilty to Murder of 94-Year-Old WWII Veteran; Sentenced to Life in Prison

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that Michael Dudas, 42, pleaded guilty to murdering a 94-year-old man inside his Cleveland residence last April. Dudas was sentenced immediately afterward to life in prison.

“Mr. Charles Vonderau was a World War II veteran and a treasure to his family and the Old Brooklyn community,” said Prosecutor O'Malley. “This barbaric crime should keep Michael Dudas in prison for the remainder of his life.”

On April 15, 2020, the victim's daughter, who lives out of town, contacted the Cleveland Division of Police (CPD) to conduct a welfare check at her father's residence after she had not heard from him for several days. Second District CPD officers and Cleveland EMS responded to the residence on Plymouth Road in the city's Old Brooklyn neighborhood. Upon entering, the victim was found unresponsive and pronounced deceased shortly thereafter. The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office (CCMEO) responded, processed the scene, and ruled the victim's cause of death as a homicide the following day.

CPD's Homicide Unit opened an investigation that linked Dudas to the crime through multiple pieces of evidence that included DNA, credit card transactions, and video surveillance. The investigation revealed that Dudas struck the victim multiple times with a hammer resulting in multiple blunt force trauma injuries to his head, body, and defensive wounds to his hands. Dudas stole the victim's credit cards as he fled the scene and threw the murder weapon on the roof of a neighbor's house. The hammer was later recovered and tested by the CCMEO, along with other DNA evidence left at the scene, and connected Dudas to the crime. A hospital admission identification band located on the victim's kitchen floor placed Dudas at the scene. Surveillance video and bank records identified Dudas using the victim's credit cards at nearby gas stations and ATMs between April 14 and April 18. He was arrested on April 18 by the U.S. Marshals Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force at a restaurant near Pearl Road and Henniger Road.

Dudas pleaded guilty to the following charges:

- **One count of Aggravated Murder**
- **One count of Aggravated Robbery**
- **Two counts of Misuse of credit cards**

He was sentenced to life in prison, with first eligibility of parole after serving 28 to 29 ½ years.