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1987 COLD CASE HOMICIDE RESULTS IN GUILTY PLEA

Adams County District Attorney Brian Sinnett announced that Chris Joseph Larry Speelman, 59, of New Oxford, Pennsylvania pled guilty and was sentenced today for the murder and rape of an 87-year-old woman in 1987. Speelman appeared before Adams County Judge Thomas Campbell and entered pleas of guilty to Murder of the Third Degree, Burglary, and no contest to Rape. Speelman was sentenced to an aggregate period of 25 to 50 years and will not be eligible for parole until 2046.

This remarkable case stems from an original conviction of another individual in 1988 for the crime. Barry Laughman spent sixteen years in prison before he was released after being exonerated by DNA evidence that was recovered at the crime scene. The Pennsylvania State Police then continued with their investigation and through DNA genealogy research were able to identify Speelman as a person of interest in the heinous murder and sexual assault. Following that possible identification, State Police obtained a swab of Speelman's DNA and confirmed that it was a match from the DNA found at the scene of the crime. State Police filed charges in July 2021 and in a statement subsequent to his arrest, Speelman admitted to acting alone in committing this crime.

"Today's plea and sentence finally brings a conclusion to this unique case. Were it not for the exhaustive efforts of investigators and others involved in the genealogy research in this case, the victim's family may never have received any measure of closure for this remarkably heinous and violent attack on their loved one." Sinnett thanked the Pennsylvania State Police for their exhaustive efforts in obtaining justice for the victim and her family. "It is obvious to see that years of effort went into finally unmasking this cowardly killer of an 87-year-old woman who was able to hide behind his actions for so many years while another languished away in prison for the crime Speelman ultimately committed."



Members of the victim's family were on hand for the plea and sentence and did provide impact statements to the Court. Sinnett noted, "No case of which I am aware proves the relentless efforts of law enforcement in justly and honestly apprehending and holding those accountable for the crimes they commit. No passage of time will stop the pursuit of justice for victims and to hold those accountable for the crimes they commit."

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