

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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Man who murdered mother and son sentenced to Life without Parole

(July 20, 2010 ... Akron) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that a jury recommended that Johnnie Cook, 32, of Akron, be sentenced to Life without Parole for killing mother and son Julianna and Alan Grna. The jury heard testimony beginning yesterday, Monday, July 19, that entailed mitigating circumstances about Cook's life and why the death penalty should not be imposed for the murders. After deliberating almost four hours, they returned with their recommended sentence.

Walsh said, "The jury did their job and we appreciate their service and thorough attention to this case. Our goal was to ensure that Johnnie Cook could never again kill or harm others and the jury's recommendation of life without parole achieves that goal. We thank the jury for their service. I also want to commend Assistant Prosecutor Jon Baumel for his hard work on this case. He did an outstanding job, as did the Akron Police Department in their investigation, to ensure justice was served."

The jury found Cook guilty on July 8, 2010 of four counts of Aggravated Murder with a death specification, two counts of Aggravated Robbery, two counts of Aggravated Burglary, Theft, Grand Theft and Theft from the Elderly. Judge Mary Margaret Rowlands will sentence Cook on August 9, 2010 at 9:00 a.m.

On July 11, 2009, at approximately 4:30 a.m., Alan Grna, 43, and his mother, Julianna Grna, 85, were murdered inside their home on Johnston Street in Akron. Both victims were struck multiple times in the head with a hammer-like object. Alan Grna was killed in the kitchen and Julianna Grna was killed in her bedroom. Cook stole the victims' car, cell phone, jewelry, firearms, and credit cards.

The bodies were not discovered until July 17th when a concerned friend contacted the police. Evidence presented at trial included Cook's use of Grna's cell phone and car the evening of the murders. The car was involved in a hit/skip accident. In addition, Cook pawned the victim's jewelry two days after the murder.

DNA evidence discovered on the sink handle and the inside of a toilet paper roll in the victim's bathroom was consistent with Cook trying to clean up after the murders. A witness, Joseph Johnston, told police that he saw the defendant around the time of the murders with blood on his shirt and with the victim's car.

Subsequent to Cook's arrest, Johnston was arrested for an unrelated offense. Three letters were later sent from jail confessing to the murders and signed by Joseph Johnson (last name was misspelled). Prosecutors presented evidence at trial that the letters were actually sent by Cook using Johnston's name.

