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Jackson Township Man Sentenced to LIFE IN PRISON in Cold Case Murders

AKRON, Ohio (Wednesday, April 5, 2023) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Alison Breaux sentenced Gustave Sapharas, 78, of Jackson Township, to the maximum sentence of LIFE IN PRISON WITHOUT PAROLE for the murders of two women, one in 1970 and the other in 1975.

“For 50 years, the horrible murders of Loretta Jean Davis and Karen Bentz remained unsolved, until now. For 50 years, Gustave Sapharas evaded prosecution and responsibility, until now. For 50 years, the families of Loretta Davis and Karen Bentz were without hope that the killer would ever be found, until now,” said Prosecutor Walsh. “Thank you for the tenacious work of the investigators, prosecutors, and victim advocates who fought for justice for Loretta and Karen and their families.”

On March 16, 2023, a Summit County jury found Sapharas guilty of the following charges:

- Aggravated Murder (Loretta Jean Davis)
- Murder (Loretta Jean Davis)
- Murder In the First Degree (Abduction Resulting in Death) Involving an Abduction (Karen Bentz)
- Murder In the Second Degree (Karen Bentz)
- Maiming or Disfiguring Another (Karen Bentz)

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Sapharas was arrested and indicted in 2019 in the cold case murders but was charged under what Ohio law was when the crimes were committed.

18-year-old Karen Bentz of Akron was last seen alive at about 11pm on Tuesday, April 28th, 1970 in Akron, Ohio. Her body was discovered on the morning of April 29th on the side of Indian Hills Drive in Tallmadge. Karen had been stabbed multiple times and was strangled.

20-year-old Loretta Jean Davis of Brimfield was last seen alive about 2am on Sunday, September 28, 1975 in Tallmadge, Ohio. Her body was discovered later that day on the side of Congress Lake Road in Portage County. Loretta had been stabbed.