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DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

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Kimberly Edds
Director of Public Affairs
Office: 714-347-8405, Cell: 714-504-1917
media@ocdapa.org

Orange County Superior Court Judge Convicted of Murder for Shooting Wife to Death During Drunken Argument over Money

SANTA ANA, Calif. – An Orange County Superior Court judge has been convicted of second-degree murder for shooting his 65-year-old wife to death in their Anaheim Hills home in August 2023 after a drunken argument over money.

Instead of rendering aid to his wife, Sheryl, after shooting her as they sat in their living room watching television, Judge Jeffrey Ferguson, then 72, went outside and texted his court bailiff and clerk, “I just lost it. I just shot my wife. I won’t be in tomorrow. I will be in custody. I’m so sorry.”

The couple’s 22-year-old son, who tackled his father to wrestle the gun away from him after the shooting, was left inside performing CPR on his mother while being directed by emergency dispatchers.

Jurors rejected Ferguson’s testimony that he accidentally shot his wife and convicted him of one felony count of murder and one felony enhancement of personal use of a firearm and one felony enhancement of discharge of a firearm causing great bodily injury and death. He faces a maximum sentence of 40 years to life.

Ferguson was arrested on Thursday, August 3, 2023, by the Anaheim Police Department after his adult son called 911 shortly after 8 p.m. to report his mother had been shot after she told his father “Why don’t you point a real gun at me?” Ferguson had also simulated pointing a gun at his wife of 27 years using his fingers during an argument at dinner with his wife and son at a nearby Mexican restaurant shortly before the murder.

Ferguson was released from custody by the Orange County Sheriff’s Department the next day after posting the court’s adopted bail schedule of \$1 million. In September 2024, Ferguson had his bail revoked and was taken back into custody after his court-ordered alcohol monitor reported that he had consumed alcohol in violation of the terms of his release and a judge determined that he had lied about his unlawful consumption of alcohol. He was subsequently released after posting a \$2 million bond.

Ferguson has served as an Orange County Superior Court Judge since 2015. Prior to being elected to the Orange County Superior Court, he served as a prosecutor in the Orange County District Attorney’s Office beginning in 1983.

Immediately upon being notified that a former employee of the Orange County District Attorney’s Office had been arrested on suspicion of murder in Orange County, the District Attorney’s Office contacted the California Attorney General’s Office to request a conflict check. After a thorough review of the situation, the Attorney

General's Office on Tuesday, August 8, declared the Orange County District Attorney's Office does not have a conflict and could prosecute the case.

Police recovered 48 weapons – including rifles, shotguns, and handguns, and more than 26,000 rounds of ammunition – from his home during the execution of a search warrant.

“The second he pulled the trigger and killed his wife Judge Jeffrey Ferguson knew he was just like the violent criminals he has sent to prison and left his son to desperately try to pump the life into his dying mother's body while he went outside to text his friends,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “This was not an accident. Ferguson was trained to never point a gun at anything he didn't intend to destroy. On August 3, 2023, he took his gun out of his ankle holster and pointed it at exactly what he wanted to destroy – his wife of 27 years – and then he pulled the trigger and destroyed everything. We believed all along there was sufficient evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to prove this was a murder, but our criminal justice system does not rest on our belief. Justice rests in the hands of 12 strangers who were taken from their everyday lives and given the immense responsibility to weigh the evidence and determine guilt or innocence. We are grateful for the jury's careful consideration of the facts. I would like to thank Senior Deputy District Attorney Seton Hunt of the Homicide Unit and our entire trial team for their hard work in prosecuting this case.”

Senior Deputy District Attorneys Seton Hunt and Casey Cunningham are prosecuting this case.

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