

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Canton Resident Admits to Murder of Girlfriend, Sentenced to Life in Prison
State vs. Jesse Lamar Simmons

November 18, 2021 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Jesse Lamar Simmons, 43, pled guilty on Wednesday, November 17 to malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act, and tampering with evidence.

The charges relate to a shooting that occurred on January 5, 2019, in Waleska. After shooting his girlfriend Tammy Gilbert, 55, Simmons called 911 to report a suicide attempt in their basement apartment.

Upon arrival, Cherokee Sheriff's Office deputies found Gilbert critically injured with a single gunshot wound to her chest and a gunshot graze to her upper arm. When law enforcement arrived, Gilbert was still alive; however, the defendant had not attempted to treat her wounds.

Cherokee County Fire & Emergency Services engaged in lifesaving efforts that continued during the transport to the hospital, but Gilbert died shortly after arrival at the hospital.

Simmons initially told investigators that Gilbert was depressed, had a history of suicide attempts, and had shot herself after the couple argued. He then changed his story, claiming the gun accidentally misfired. Eventually, he admitted to shooting her, adding that she had yelled at him to "get out."

During the investigation, deputies discovered a suspected methamphetamine pipe and the defendant later tested positive for methamphetamine.

Gilbert's family members told investigators that she had been in an abusive relationship with Simmons and feared leaving him would have fatal consequences. The day of the murder, Gilbert told her brother that she was going to leave Simmons and planned to move in with her sister.

"January 5, 2019 started out as one of the happiest days of Tammy's life. That day, she celebrated her daughter's wedding and made plans to finally leave an abusive relationship and break the cycle of violence," said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Ashe, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. "Unfortunately, her happy day ended with unimaginable tragedy when this much loved woman was shot by Simmons, who then went on to lie about his involvement and hide evidence."

After Simmons entered his negotiated guilty plea, members of the victim's family provided victim impact statements that describe the family's "broken heart" and the pain, loss, and anger they continue feel.

Judge Anthony Baker then sentenced Simmons as negotiated to life in prison.

“It was heartbreaking to hear this family describe a life without their mother, sister, grandmother during the plea hearing,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “While his guilty plea will not bring back their loved one, our hope is that this sentence will bring them some closure.”

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence typically follows a pattern, with tension building, followed by a major act of violence, a calm period, and then cycling back to tension building. This cycle of violence can continue over years or even decades. As time passes, the violent episodes often get more serious and may lead to a lethal act.

If you or someone you know is impacted by domestic violence, please contact the Cherokee Family Violence Center, CFVC.org, 770-479-1703 (24/7 crisis hotline). In case of an emergency, call 911.

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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