



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

SJC UPHOLDS CONVICTION IN SAVAGE COLD CASE SOLVED 15 YEARS LATER

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The SJC today upheld the conviction of James Ridge, a South Boston man convicted in 2004 of a 1987 double murder indicted as part of District Attorney William Keating's review of unsolved homicides in Norfolk County.

“The families of Heather Buchanan and Jay Schlosser waited a long time for justice,” District Attorney Keating said. “We are very pleased with the SJC's ruling that the judge, the police work and the prosecution in this case were sound and this conviction remains in place.”

James Ridge, DOB 10-26-48, was found guilty by a Norfolk Superior Court jury at roughly 4 p.m. on June 29, 2004. The jury had begun deliberation just before 9:30 a.m. Ridge was indicted by a Norfolk County Grand Jury in April 2002 for the June 25, 1987 murders of Jay Schlosser and Heather Buchanan in the Westwood home Schlosser was renting at the time.

They were bound and gagged with duct tape before being shot in the head.

During the 5 days of testimony, evidence depicted a scene of Ridge and two others going to Westwood looking to recoup some of the \$30,000 Ridge and his family had lost in an ill-fated business scheme involving raising a supposed sunken treasure ship.

When the man who had involved Ridge in the ill-fated investment was not in the home, Ridge killed the young couple with whom that man had been staying after they recognized him.

Before killing Buchanan, Ridge was alleged to have said “Ladies First.” Before killing Schlosser, who had turned 28 the day before, he allegedly said: “Happy (expletive) birthday,” then pulled the trigger.

Buchanan's sister, in her victim impact statement, told the court that there were really three victims to this murder including her father. Duncan Buchanan, then 57, died of a heart attack while driving to identify his daughter's body.

Ridge's co-defendants James Rakes and his sister Patricia Rakes were set to be tried together in October 2005. Patricia Rakes, who had acted as the decoy to get the couple to open the door to the apartment, pled guilty to two counts of manslaughter after the trial jury was impaneled. She was sentenced to 7 to 10 years in State Prison. James Rakes was convicted of first degree murder by a jury on Nov. 2, 2005 and sentenced to life without parole.

Any and all defendants mentioned are legally innocent until proven guilty.