

Union Township man convicted on all charges in 2013 murder, dismemberment of girlfriend

A Union County jury has returned guilty verdicts on all charges filed against a Union Township man who murdered and dismembered his girlfriend nearly four years ago before scattering her remains in at least two locations in North Jersey, acting Union County Prosecutor Thomas K. Isenhour announced Wednesday.

Matthew Ballister III, 47, was convicted on counts including first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree desecration of human remains, third-degree hindering apprehension, and several other related charges in connection with the death of 43-year-old April Wyckoff of Cranford. The verdict was reached after a brief period of jury deliberation Wednesday morning following a six-week trial before state Superior Court Judge Stuart Peim.

A joint investigation involving the Union County Homicide Task Force, Union Police Department, and Union County Sheriff's Office resulted in Ballister being arrested and charged with murder on Thursday, October 24, 2013 – two days after Wyckoff had died at his hands, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutors Scott Peterson and Jillian Reyes, who prosecuted the case.

Three days after the arrest, following an intensive search involving more than 200 municipal, county, and state law-enforcement representatives combing through multiple areas in Essex, Hudson, and Union counties, human remains were recovered on Raymond Avenue near the Pulaski Skyway in Newark

and positively identified as belonging to Wyckoff, Peterson and Reyes said. The rest of her body was never found.

Union County Medical Examiner Dr. Junaid Shaikh testified at trial that dozens of sharp- and blunt-force pre-mortem injuries were inflicted on Wyckoff's head and legs prior to Ballister running her over with his Hummer in the driveway of his home on the 300 block of Mercer Avenue in Union Township. During the 12 hours that followed, Ballister disposed of Wyckoff's body, abandoned her car in Newark, purchased approximately \$75 in cleaning products at the Home Depot in Watchung, and returned home to start cleaning.

"There are no words to fully and accurately describe the depths of depravity associated with this crime," Prosecutor Isenhour said. "We hope that today's verdict lends some degree of solace and closure to the friends and family of April Wyckoff."

Ballister spent the four years leading up to trial lodged in Union County Jail on \$5.5 million bail. His mother, 74-year-old Eleanor Schofield of Mountainside, remains charged with fourth-degree hindering apprehension for allegedly interfering with the investigation by attempting to assist in his efforts to conceal evidence of the crime.

Sentencing in the case has been scheduled for Friday, December 15, 2017 before Judge Peim, at which time Ballister will face a term of up to life in state prison without parole.

The Prosecutor's Office would like to again thank the Union Police Department, Union County Sheriff's Office, Union County Emergency Response Team, Cranford Police Department, Mountainside Police Department, United States Park Police, New Jersey National Guard, New Jersey State Police, New Jersey State Park Police, Bergen County Sheriff's Office, Essex County Prosecutor's Office, Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, Jersey City Police Department, Newark Police Department, Perth

Amboy Police Department, and members of the 109th graduating class of the John H. Stamler Police Academy for assisting in the investigation and search for Ms. Wyckoff's body.