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District Attorney



17th Judicial District
Adams & Broomfield Counties
District Attorney's Office

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Adams County Jury Convicts Defendant Who Murdered His Friend and Buried His Body In Makeshift Concrete Tomb Under Basement Stairs

Defendant purchased construction supplies at a hardware store to build tomb, conceal body

Adams County—Today, 17th Judicial District Attorney Brian S. Mason announced the First-Degree Murder conviction of Russell Montoya, Jr., 39. An Adams County jury convicted Mr. Montoya of First-Degree Murder and Tampering with a Deceased Human Body on Thursday after a four-day trial.

On November 8, 2019, Shane Nelson, 38, visited the home of his childhood friend, Russell Montoya, Jr. in unincorporated Adams County. During a verbal altercation, Montoya brandished a handgun and fired four shots over the course of approximately 12 seconds. Two of the shots struck Nelson in the chest and one in the head. Nelson fell to the kitchen floor where he later died.

In the days following Nelson's death, Montoya pieced together a plan to dispose of the victim's body. Montoya purchased materials at a local hardware store and then created a makeshift tomb under the stairs of his unfinished basement. Ultimately, Montoya fully encased Nelson's body in concrete and attempted to mask the odor that emanated from the area.

"The gruesome nature of this crime is beyond words," said District Attorney Brian Mason. "I'm grateful to the jury for enduring through the presentation of the evidence and for returning a just verdict."

On November 13, 2019, Montoya confessed to one of his daughters when she expressed suspicions about his behavior and the conditions of his home. The daughter notified the Adams County Sheriff's Office, and the SWAT team executed a search warrant at Montoya's home on November 14, 2019. Montoya was arrested and the tomb containing Nelson's body was discovered.

On April 15, 2021, an Adams County jury convicted Russell Montoya, Jr. of FIRST-DEGREE MURDER and TAMPERING WITH A DECEASED HUMAN BODY. Montoya received a life sentence without the possibility of parole for the first-degree murder charge and a 12-year sentence for the tampering with a deceased human body charge. Senior Deputy District Attorney Christopher Rossi and Deputy District Attorney Troy Moyer led the prosecution of this case.

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District Attorney Mason assumed the oath of office on January 12, 2021. The 17th Judicial District Attorney's Office prosecutes and seeks justice in criminal felony, misdemeanor, and traffic cases for the citizens of Adams and Broomfield counties.

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