

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jasper man pleads guilty to voluntary manslaughter in Icehouse killing, sentenced to prison
State vs. Gary Matthew Allen

September 1, 2022 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Gary Matthew Allen, 34, of Jasper, pled guilty on August 19, 2022, to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 20 years, with the first 15 years to serve in prison.

Charges stem from an assault at the Canton Icehouse on July 28, 2019, in which Allen punched Leon Paul Danzis, 48, of Winder, GA, in the face causing Danzis to fall onto the concrete floor, where Allen punched him in the face a second time. Danzis died shortly after arriving at the hospital from blunt force trauma to the head.

During the plea hearing, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Randall Ivey reviewed the facts of the case as determined by witness interviews and surveillance cameras inside the establishment. On the date of the assault, Allen and another man were playing pool with two other individuals at the Canton Icehouse. Danzis, his son, and a co-worker arrived about 45 minutes later and sat near where Allen was playing pool. Allen interacted with Danzis and his companions multiple times during the evening.

The surveillance video shows that just prior to the assault, Danzis and Allen spoke alone in the doorway to the poolroom, several feet away from the others in the room. Moments later, Allen punched Danzis in the face while Danzis was looking in the other direction. The blow caused Danzis to fall onto the concrete floor, and as he lay unconscious Allen punched him a second time. Danzis' companions intervened, and a brief fight broke out.

An autopsy performed by the GBI determined the cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head resulting from the physical assault. Toxicology of Allen hours after his arrest showed he had a blood alcohol level of .123, well above the legal definition of intoxicated.

“Determining the ‘why’ of Mr. Allen’s actions that night is virtually impossible when you consider the level of his intoxication at the time of the assault. While the defendant’s memory of the event appears to be foggy, surveillance video provides a clearer picture of what actually occurred, showing the defendant blindsiding Mr. Danzis, striking him twice in the face, leading to a tragic and needless loss of life,” said Deputy Chief ADA Ivey, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State.

During the plea hearing, Danzis’ sister provided a victim impact statement, describing her brother Leon as her hero. She said he had tremendous charm, was very caring, and had friends everywhere he went.

Superior Court Chief Judge Ellen McElyea thanked the victim’s sister and the whole family, acknowledging their loss and pain. She added that she understands the defendant’s actions have also caused his own family to suffer as well. She then sentenced the defendant as negotiated to 20 years, with the first 15 years to serve in prison. During probation, Allen must

complete 200 hours of community service and may have no alcohol, drugs, or firearms. He must submit to a substance abuse assessment and follow all recommended treatment. He is also forbidden to have contact with the victim's family.

“Just over three years ago, an evening of fun at a local establishment turned deadly when this intoxicated defendant lost his temper and attacked another man, leaving him fatally wounded on the bar's concrete floor,” said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “While the defendant's consumption of alcohol likely played a role in the death of Leon Danzis, the real blame rests solely on the shoulders of Gary Allen who made the decision to drink excessively and attack an innocent man. Our hearts go out to the family of the victim, and we hope that this sentence provides a measure of closure for them.”

This case was investigated by the Canton Police Department and prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Randall Ivey, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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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