

TRENNA L. MANNERS  
DEPUTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

DAVID W. RYDEN  
DEPUTY STATE'S ATTORNEY



AARON M. BURKINDINE  
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

CAYLIN M. RYDEN  
CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATION

**ALISON M. HEALEY**  
STATE'S ATTORNEY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: October 23, 2023**

**Re: State of Maryland vs. Ashley Pearl Zentz**

On Thursday, October 19, 2023, Ashley Pearl Zentz, 34, of Edgewood, was found guilty of First Degree Murder and Motor Vehicle Theft, following a six-day jury trial in the Harford County Circuit Court.

During the trial, evidence was presented before the Honorable Diane Adkins-Tobin that on Friday, February 18, 2022, at approximately 7:56 a.m., Harford County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to a 911 call at 2310 Perry Avenue in Edgewood, Maryland, after 71-year-old Gerald Champ was discovered deceased by his daughter inside his home. Family members had not been able to reach Mr. Champ for days prior to the discovery and further reported his 2003 Ford Explorer to be missing from the residence. An autopsy revealed the homicide occurred as a result of blunt force trauma, with prong-like defects embedded in the skull, including multiple skull fractures, and defensive wounds to his hands and arms.

Detectives Golden and Gividen assumed the case, locating a crowbar in the victim's home, and it was identified as the murder weapon. Through the course of the investigation, suspects were developed, including Ashley Pearl Zentz, who knew the victim and his family for over twenty years. Family members of the victim located the victim's missing Ford Explorer abandoned in Baltimore County near a home invasion in which Zentz and the same co-defendant were involved which occurred within 24 hours of when the victim was believed to have been murdered. A silver Infiniti QX80 stolen during the Baltimore County home invasion was later recovered less than one mile from Zentz's parents' home. Forensic evidence, including DNA, cell phone downloads, and surveillance video, linked Zentz to the Harford County murder and the Baltimore County home invasion.

Following the jury's verdict, Zentz was returned to the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup, Maryland where she is currently serving a sentence for her conviction in the Baltimore County home invasion case. She will be sentenced for the conviction for First Degree Murder of Mr. Champ and Motor Vehicle Theft of his vehicle by Judge Adkins-Tobin on Monday, December 18, 2023.

State's Attorney Alison M. Healey said after the conviction: "I send my sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Champ for their loss. While I know nothing can ever bring him back to them, it is my sincere hope that, despite a long and challenging court process, these convictions will bring them some closure. Our office will continue to fight for justice for all victims of crime in Harford County, and today we are happy that we have brought justice to Mr. Champ's family for this senseless act of violence that took the life of their loved one."

Ms. Healey commends Deputy State's Attorney Trenna Manners for her preparation, advocacy, and most importantly, her vigorous pursuit of justice in this case. She also thanks Detectives Golden and Gividen

**OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HARFORD COUNTY**

410-638-3500 | FAX 410-838-2023 | [WWW.HARFORDCOUNTYSTATESATTORNEY.ORG](http://WWW.HARFORDCOUNTYSTATESATTORNEY.ORG)

20 W. COURTLAND STREET, BEL AIR, MARYLAND 21014

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and the other members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office Patrol and Criminal Investigations Division involved in this case for their hard work and investigation. Finally, she thanks all the State's Attorney's Office Staff that worked together with Deputy State's Attorney Manners to assist in diligently preparing this case for trial.

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