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BEAVERTON WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO MURDER IN DEATH OF ELDERLY NEIGHBOR

HILLSBORO, Ore.- On January 23, 2019, Maria Lucille Meisner pleaded guilty to Murder. A life sentence with a minimum of 25 years was issued by Judge Beth Roberts.

Meisner and Celia Schwab, the unlicensed caretaker for 74-year-old victim Kathryn Breen, were arrested in December of 2016. Neighbors reported a fire in Breen's apartment. Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue found Breen unresponsive on the scene with severe burns covering most of her body. She was rushed to Legacy Emanuel Medical Center where she died of her injuries a month later.

Schwab had removed a significant amount of money from Breen's accounts and had persuaded Meisner, Breen's neighbor, to assist with burning Breen alive, in what investigators believe was an effort to end Schwab's tenure of caretaking.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Megan Johnson and Deputy District Attorney Mark Richman prosecuted the case against Meisner.

Schwab was also charged with murder, but she died of natural causes on September 11, 2017 while the case was pending.

"It was a gruesome betrayal of trust for the defendants to burn an elderly woman alive," Richman said of the case. "This fact was made worse in that the victim lingered with serious burns for a month before she died. We appreciate that Ms. Meisner has stepped forward to take responsibility for her actions. The life sentence with a 25-year minimum offers the community security against similar acts from her in the future."

The Washington County Elder Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Team came together to solve this case. Led by the Beaverton Police Department which spearheaded the investigation, a clear picture of the crime emerged. Agency partners played key roles in ensuring investigative details came to light, including Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, Adult Protective Services, the Washington County Sheriff's Office, and the Hillsboro Police Department.

Meisner will begin serving her sentence immediately in the Oregon Department of Corrections.