

Immigrant sentenced to life without parole in Nevada murders

RENO, Nev. (AP) — A Salvadoran immigrant has been sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for the murders of two of the four Nevada residents he admitted killing in a plea deal that spared him from a death penalty trial.

A Washoe County district judge sentenced Wilber Ernesto Martinez Guzman, 23, on Monday for the fatal shootings of an elderly Reno couple during a two-week crime rampage in January 2019.

He's scheduled to be sentenced Thursday in Douglas County for the killings of two Gardnerville women and on Friday in Carson City on charges related to property he stole from his victims and sold at a pawn shop there.

Martinez Guzman, who authorities say entered the U.S. illegally at age 16, pleaded guilty to all the crimes last year after prosecutors announced they had agreed to a plea-bargain agreement in October.

Martinez Guzman had worked as a landscaper for all four victims — Jer-

ry David, 81, and his wife, Sherri David, 80, in Reno; and Constance Koontz, 56, and Sophia Renken, 74, who lived in rural Douglas County.

In addition to four life terms without parole, he faces more than 200 years in prison for multiple burglary, larceny, weapons and stolen property charges.

The case drew attention at the time from then-President Donald Trump, who said it showed the need to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. He invited the Davids' daughter and great-granddaughter to attend his State of the Union address as his guests in February 2019.

Washoe County District Attorney Chris Hicks said the decision to drop pursuit of the death penalty last fall came as a result of a direct appeal from families of the victims who didn't want the case to continue for years longer.

"I'm happy that he'll spend the rest of his life in prison and I hope that he spends all of that time thinking about what these family members told him



Wilber Ernesto Martinez Guzman enters the courtroom in Washoe County District Court in Reno on Monday. ANDY BARRON/THE RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL VIA AP

today," Hicks told the Reno Gazette Journal after Judge Connie Steinheimer sentenced him Monday in Reno.

The judge heard testimony from family of the Davids, who were well known in the Reno Rodeo community. Both served

on the rodeo association board and Jerry was a past president.

One of his rodeo belt buckles that Martinez Guzman sold at the Carson City pawn shop provided a key clue in the early stages of the investigation of the string of killings that had

the community on edge for weeks.

Kari Powning, the Davids' granddaughter, said she still becomes distraught whenever she sees a Reno Rodeo license plate.

"It is humanly impossible to suffer a tragedy of this magnitude and ever by the same," Powning testified.

Prosecutors announced they would seek the death penalty shortly after Martinez Guzman was arrested on Jan. 19, 2019, and a Washoe County grand jury indicted him on four murder counts.

Last May, the Nevada Supreme Court ordered a Washoe County judge to dismiss the charges related to Douglas County because the grand jury in Reno lacked proper jurisdiction to indict him for those crimes. Still pending at the time of the plea deal in October was a defense motion to declare Martinez Guzman ineligible for the death penalty based on his limited mental capacity.

Martinez Guzman shot all victims with a .22 cali-

ber revolver he stole from the Davids' barn on their ranch property in southwest Reno days earlier, prosecutors said.

Steve David, their son, said his father told him someone had broken into their barn several times and that he suspected the thief was a landscaper he'd fired in July 2018.

Other family members who testified Monday recounted the couple's boundless generosity, including teaching underprivileged children and paying some of their medical bills.

Sherri Perry, named after her aunt, said she and others considered their ranch a second home, a safe haven from outside troubles while growing up.

"We called it 'Aunt Sherri and Uncle Jerry's Home for Wayward Teens,'" she said.

"They would take us in when we were too much to handle," said Perry, who remembers Uncle Jerry took her to father-daughter dances because she didn't have one. "If I hadn't had that, I don't know what would happen to my life."

Space junk on 5,800-mph collision course with moon



Impact craters cover the surface of the moon, seen from Berlin, Germany, on Jan. 11. AP PHOTO/MICHAEL SOHN

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The moon is about to get walloped by 3 tons of space junk, a punch that will carve out a crater that could fit several semi-tractor-trailers.

The leftover rocket will smash into the far side of the moon at 5,800 mph (9,300 kph) on Friday, away from telescopes' prying eyes. It may take weeks, even months, to confirm the impact through satellite images.

It's been tumbling haphazardly through space, experts believe, since China launched it nearly a decade ago. But Chinese officials are dubious it's theirs.

No matter whose it is, scientists expect the object to carve out a hole 33 feet to 66 feet (10 to 20 meters) across and send moon dust flying hundreds of miles (kilometers) across the barren, pockmarked surface.

Low-orbiting space junk is relatively easy to track. Objects launching deeper into space are unlikely to hit anything and these far-flung pieces are usually soon forgotten, except by a handful of observers who enjoy playing celestial detective on the side.

SpaceX originally took the rap for the upcoming lunar litter after asteroid tracker Bill Gray identified the collision course in January. He corrected himself a month later, saying the "mystery" object was not a SpaceX Falcon rocket upper stage from the 2015 launch of a deep space climate observatory for NASA.

Gray said it was likely the third stage of a Chinese rocket that sent a test sample capsule to the moon and back in 2014. But Chinese ministry officials said the upper stage had reentered Earth's atmosphere and burned up.

But there were two Chi-

nese missions with similar designations — the test flight and 2020's lunar sample return mission — and U.S. observers believe the two are getting mixed up.

The U.S. Space Command, which tracks lower space junk, confirmed Tuesday that the Chinese upper stage from the 2014 lunar mission never deorbited, as previously indicated in its database. But it could not confirm the country of origin for the object about to strike the moon.

"We focus on objects closer to the Earth," a spokesperson said in a statement.

Gray, a mathematician and physicist, said he's confident now that it's China's rocket.

"I've become a little bit more cautious of such matters," he said. "But I really just don't see any way it could be anything else."

Jonathan McDowell of the Harvard and Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics supports Gray's revised assessment, but notes: "The effect will be the same. It'll leave yet another small crater on the moon."

The moon already bears countless craters, ranging up to 1,600 miles (2,500 kilometers). With little to no real atmosphere, the moon is defenseless against the constant barrage of meteors and asteroids, and the occasional incoming spacecraft, including a few intentionally crashed for science's sake. With no weather, there's no erosion and so impact craters last forever.

China has a lunar lander on the moon's far side, but it will be too far away to detect Friday's impact just north of the equator. NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter will also be out of range. It's unlikely India's moon-orbiting Chandrayaan-2 will be passing by then, either.

"I had been hoping for something (significant) to hit the moon for a long time. Ideally, it would have hit on the near side of the moon at some point where we could actually see it," Gray said.

After initially pinning the upcoming strike on Elon Musk's SpaceX, Gray took another look after an engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory questioned his claim. Now, he's "pretty thoroughly persuaded" it's a Chinese rocket part, based not only on orbital tracking back to its 2014 liftoff, but also data received from its short-lived ham radio experiment.

JPL's Center for Near Earth Object Studies endorses Gray's reassessment. A University of Arizona team also recently identified the Chinese Long March rocket segment from the light reflected off its paint, during telescope observations of the careening cylinder.

It's about 40 feet (12 meters) long and 10 feet (3 meters) in diameter, and doing a somersault every two to three minutes.

Gray said SpaceX never contacted him to challenge his original claim. Neither have the Chinese.

"It's not a SpaceX problem, nor is it a China problem. Nobody is particularly careful about what they do with junk at this sort of orbit," Gray said.

Tracking deep space mission leftovers like this is hard, according to McDowell. The moon's gravity can alter an object's path during flybys, creating uncertainty. And there's no readily available database, McDowell noted, aside from the ones "cobbled together" by himself, Gray and a couple others.

Ex-cop pleads guilty in rough arrest of woman with dementia

DENVER (AP) — A former Colorado police officer shown on body camera video roughly arresting a 73-year-old woman with dementia and later seen joking about it with colleagues pleaded guilty to assault Wednesday in a plea deal opposed by the woman's family.



This video from the Loveland Police Department body camera footage shows Karen Garner on the ground while being arrested in 2020. LOVELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT VIA AP

Austin Hopp faces up to eight years in prison when he's sentenced in May for second-degree assault, although the judge also has the discretion to sentence him to probation or a halfway house. He had faced a mandatory prison sentence of between 10 and 32 years under an original, more serious assault count he was charged with.

Hopp arrested Karen Garner in 2020 after she left a store without paying for about \$14 worth of items in Loveland, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Denver. Police body camera video shows that after she turned away from him, he grabbed her arm and pushed her to the ground, still holding the wildflowers she had been picking as she walked through a field.

The footage shows that when Hopp had Garner pushed against the hood of his car, she tried to turn around and repeated that she was trying to go home. He then pushed her back against the car and moved her bent left arm up near her head, holding it, saying, "Are you finished? Are you finished? We don't play this game."

A federal lawsuit that

Garner filed claimed he dislocated her shoulder. The city settled the lawsuit for \$3 million, money which her family said will pay for the around-the-clock care she has needed after her condition deteriorated following her arrest.

Speaking on behalf of Garner's extended family, Garner's daughter-in-law Shannon Steward told Judge Michelle Brinegar that the family never wanted a plea deal, which she said tend to be used when there is a lack of evidence or an inability to prove a case.

She noted the entire arrest and its aftermath was captured on video, including police station surveillance video in which Hopp and others talk about the arrest as they watch the body camera footage, sometimes laughing or joking about it. At one point, she said Hopp told the others to listen for the "pop" during the part of footage when Garner's shoulder was allegedly dislocated.

Assistant District Attor-

ney Matthew Maillaro said the plea deal had nothing to do with whether prosecutors could prove their case but was the result of multiple factors, including whether there should be a mandatory prison sentence or whether the court should decide the sentence.

"This is not sweeping this under the rug," he said.

Brinegar said pleas are offered in most cases, and she accepted Hopp's.

Hopp had also been charged with attempting to influence a public servant, a felony, and official misconduct, a misdemeanor. Those charges were not included in the plea deal.

Another officer who arrived to help Hopp after Garner was handcuffed was charged with failing to stop or report his actions and official misconduct, all misdemeanors. Daria Jalali's lawyer told a judge Tuesday that she was in discussions with prosecutors on a possible resolution to her case, the Loveland Reporter-Herald reported.

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