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Life Without Parole for Murder During Armed Robbery

Name: James Louis Barnes, Jr
Age: 21
Court: 359th District Court, Judge Hamilton presiding
Charges: Capital Murder
Plea: Not Guilty
Verdict: By jury: Guilty on 11/17/2023
Sentence: By judge: Automatic Life without Parole 11/17/23

Chief Prosecutor Joel Daniels: "With his actions, Mr. Barnes unleashed violence and chaos in our community, killing an innocent, good, hardworking father and husband for no reason at all. This level of depravity warrants the extreme sanction of life in prison without the possibility of parole."

Chief Prosecutor Laura Bond: "This defendant got the justice he deserves because of the sheer grit and determination of the surviving victim to identify the defendant combined with the proactive, collaborative, and thorough investigation by law enforcement."

District Attorney Brett Ligon: "Barnes has squandered away his life by robbing and killing innocent people. He will spend the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole which is fitting. He took his last breath as a free man when he took the last breath of Mr. Flores."

On Monday, November 13, 2023, Montgomery County District Attorney's Office Chief Prosecutor Joel Daniels and Chief Prosecutor Laura Bond selected a jury for the offense of Capital Murder in the State of Texas v. James Barnes, Jr. in the 359th District Court, Judge Kathleen Hamilton presiding.

During the trial, Chief prosecutors Daniels and Bond presented evidence that Barnes was involved in an attempted aggravated robbery in Waller County hours before robbing a taco stand in Magnolia. During the robbery in Magnolia, Barnes killed one of the owners of the business, Mr. Miguel Flores. Mr. Flores' wife, the other owner of the business, was also present, but she escaped after a desperate struggle.

Barnes fled from the murder scene before police could arrive. Fortunately, a diligent sergeant from the Magnolia Police Department stopped the suspect for speeding shortly after the murder. A subsequent search of the suspect by the sergeant led to the discovery of the shell casings which linked back to the murder scene. The sergeant also found clothes connecting Barnes to the attempted robbery that occurred just before the murder. Mr. Flores' DNA was later found to be present on those same pants, along with a pair of boots located in Barnes' vehicle.

At trial, the jury heard the emotional testimony of the surviving victim about the identity of the male who shot and killed her husband. The jury heard from numerous witnesses, including experts on ballistics and DNA. At the close of evidence on Friday, November 17, 2023, the jury convicted Barnes, Jr. of Capital Murder after a short deliberation. The sentence in this case was an automatic life sentence without the possibility of parole as determined by the judge. Although not presented at trial, Barnes was pending other serious cases and suspected in multiple other robberies.

This conviction and sentence were made possible because of the swift action by law enforcement and the close collaboration between the Magnolia Police Department, the Waller County Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, and the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office.