



Sharen Wilson Criminal District Attorney



For Immediate Release

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Monday, September 12, 2022

Fort Worth man pled guilty to killing his wife, will serve life in prison

(Fort Worth, TX) – Shalen Gardner, 37, pled guilty to the 2017 capital murder of his estranged wife, Elanceia "Lana" Gardner and agreed to serve a term of life in prison without the possibility of parole for the crime.

Gardner sexually assaulted and strangled his wife at their Fairmount Avenue duplex, while their two children slept in a nearby room. The children found their mother dead around 8:37 a.m. November 2, 2017.

Gardner – whose lengthy criminal history included threatening family members, hitting the family's pet pit bull with a hammer, parole violation, unlawfully possessing a handgun and more – confessed to committing the crime and trying to cover it up.

A letter from Lana's mother, Neia Roland-Hill, was read during the allocution Monday morning.

"We welcomed you into our family as one of our own," the letter to Shalen Gardner stated. "We accepted you as a family member."

"You decided to take away the very person who made life worth living," according to the letter. "She loved you even when you were unlovable." Now the children, who found their mother's body before school that day in 2017, "will never forget how you took their mother's life."

Even so, "God has taken over and we live wonderful lives," the letter stated, adding that not a day goes by that they don't miss their mother. "You may have taken their mother away, but you can never steal their joy, their spirit, their future or happiness or their hope."

Two months before he murdered his wife, Gardner served time in a substance abuse facility. He and his wife were separated and planning to divorce at the time of Lana's murder.

Tarrant County Assistant Criminal District Attorneys Allenna Bangs and Emily Kirby handled the case and plea. CDA Investigator Danny Nutt and Victim Advocate Clara Salvatierra worked on the case as well.

"Intimate Partner Violence is never limited to a single victim; the families of those suffering are so often left behind to pick up the pieces," Bangs said. "Sentences like this are a reflection of how serious the Tarrant County community and the CDA's office pursue IPV predators."