



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 16, 2022

Jury Finds Richard Pyle Not Guilty for the 1991 Cold Case Homicide of Tracy Zandstra

Richard Pyle, 58, of Stockton, California, was found not guilty today by a Butte County jury, of the 1991 Sterling City murder of his girlfriend, and mother of two, Tracy Zandstra, 29. Zandstra's body has never been located.

The trial took place over an eight-day period and started April 25, 2022. The jury heard testimony from Department of Justice DNA experts, who tested a piece of hair, scalp, and blood that was located by a witness a few days after she disappeared from the home she shared with Pyle and her two children in 1991. The tissue was later identified as Zandstra's. Additionally, the jury heard from another witness, who described Pyle saying a day or two before the disappearance, "If I'm alone with her, I'm probably going to kill her."

The jury also heard from Nicole, the daughter of Tracy, who was 6 years old when her mother disappeared. She identified samples of her mom's handwriting, and confirmed that a card received by law enforcement from Pyle, purporting to be from Tracy some months after her disappearance, did not match Tracy's handwriting.

Finally, the jury heard prior testimony from Robert Zandstra, who was 12 years old at the time of his mother's disappearance. Robert's testimony was not live, as he had been murdered in Yuba County two weeks before the trial. Robert's prior testimony described waking up as a child in the Pyle home, coming downstairs and being forced by Pyle to assist in chopping up his mother's body, and putting her into bags to be buried. He also described being forced to clean up the blood left behind in the Pyle home.

The trial concluded with argument of counsel followed by deliberation on Friday, May 13th. The jury reached their verdict of not guilty on May 16, 2022. Pyle was discharged from custody. He had been arrested for the cold-case murder in 2019.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey, stated, "our hearts go out to Tracy's family and hope by giving them a voice in this trial, the family will receive some long awaited peace and closure."