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NEWS RELEASE
JANUARY 24, 2023

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**SJC UPHOLDS CONVICTION OF CO-DEFENDANT IN MIDDLEBORO
MURDER**

BROCKTON – The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) today upheld the murder conviction of the co-defendant in a 1986 homicide, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

In a 23-page decision issued today, the SJC affirmed the denial of a motion for a new trial by Michael Eagles. Eagles and co-defendant Jeffrey Roberio, were convicted separately for the July 29, 1986 murder of 79 year-old Lewis Jennings inside his trailer home in Middleboro. Roberio was convicted of first-degree Murder, and Eagles was convicted of Armed Robbery, Felony Murder, and Murder by Extreme Cruelty and Atrocity. At trial, the evidence showed that the victim had been beaten with a blunt object and strangled with his own pillow case. Jennings suffered a broken spine, ribs, neck and had injuries to his face and defensive wounds on his hands.

“I commend the SJC on their thoughtful decision to keep Michael Eagles in prison,” DA Cruz said. “This was a particularly heinous and senseless murder, and my thoughts are with the Jennings family today.”

In his motion for a new trial, Eagles argued that hair microscopy evidence found on the victim presented through a police expert at trial improperly influenced the jury in their verdicts.

The Commonwealth argued against Eagles’ motion, and the SJC agreed.

“Where the Commonwealth's case strongly supports the defendant's guilt on a joint venture theory of felony-murder, the statistical probability to support (police expert) Godleski's hair comparison testimony likely was not a real factor in the jury's deliberations,” the SJC wrote in their decision.

At the SJC, the case was handled by Assistant District Attorney Arne Hantson.