

The New York Times

NEW YORK NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Man Sentenced to Life Without Parole in Brutal Farm Killings

After speaking with the families of the victims, the Bucks County district attorney did not pursue the death penalty for Sean Kratz.



Investigators searched a property in Solebury, Pa., for missing men in 2017. The bodies of the victims were eventually found on the DiNardo family farm. Credit...Clem Murray/The Philadelphia Inquirer, via Associated Press

By Sandra E. Garcia

Nov. 18, 2019

A man who was convicted in the brutal 2017 killings of three men on a Pennsylvania farm was sentenced Monday to life in prison without parole, after prosecutors dropped their bid for the death penalty.

On Friday, a jury found the man, Sean Kratz, 22, guilty of first-degree murder in the killing of Dean Finocchiaro, 19, after a 10-day trial. He was also convicted of two counts of manslaughter for serving as a lookout while his cousin killed Mark Sturgis, 22, and Thomas Meo, 21.

A judge sentenced Mr. Kratz on Monday to life without parole on the first-degree murder conviction, and to 18 to 36 years for the manslaughter convictions, said Mr. Kratz's lawyer, Charles Peruto.

Capital punishment is legal in Pennsylvania, but the state has not executed anyone since 1999. Prosecutors initially had sought the death penalty for Mr. Kratz, but the Bucks County district attorney, Matthew D. Weintraub, changed his mind after meeting with the families of the victims.

"We all discussed, pondered, prayed over, agonized over, debated — that went into our decision to ultimately grant the defendant life as opposed to asking a jury to sentence him to death," Mr. Weintraub said [at a news conference](#) Monday.

"I will not tell you that everybody was unanimous with their wishes on how to proceed, but there was certainly consensus," Mr. Weintraub added.

Mr. Peruto said that the prosecutors could not pursue the death penalty because they did not have the "aggravating factors that they needed."

Mr. Kratz plans to appeal the ruling of the judge, who denied his request to keep his confession out of the trial. Mr. Peruto said that his client initially confessed to killing Mr. Finocchiaro because of "inept" legal advice.

"We knew it would be almost impossible to get an acquittal when a jury hears you confess," Mr. Peruto said.

Mr. Weintraub said prosecutors learned that Mr. Kratz was hoping to be sentenced to death so that he could become notorious.

"I hope I get the death penalty," Mr. Weintraub said he heard Mr. Kratz say on prison phone calls, "because then I'll get the federal defenders and then I'll be notorious and people will know who I am and I'll go in a blaze of glory and I'll never be put to death anyway."

"Now he doesn't get to be notorious," Mr. Weintraub added.

Mr. Kratz's cousin, Cosmo DiNardo, lured the victims to a farm owned by the DiNardo family in Solebury, Pa., for a supposed drug deal, [the authorities said](#). After four young men from the same area were reported missing, one by one, the investigation transfixed the Philadelphia region.

The authorities discovered that Mr. Finocchiaro's cellular phone had last had service in the area near Mr. DiNardo's family farm. The [bodies of four victims were found](#) on the farm after an extensive search. They had been partially burned in a roaster made out of an oil drum, and had been buried in a 12-foot-deep hole.

[The police already had Mr. DiNardo in custody](#) for lesser charges when they found the bodies. Soon after, Mr. DiNardo confessed to the murders and told investigators that his cousin, Mr. Kratz, had been his accomplice in three of the killings.

The authorities said that Mr. Kratz confessed to shooting Mr. Finocchiaro in the head.

The Finocchiaro family filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the DiNardo family in 2017, according to their lawyer Tom Kline. They wanted to hold Mr. DiNardo's family accountable for "negligently providing the weapon" that Mr. Kratz used to shoot their son, Mr. Kline said Monday.

The .357 revolver Mr. Kratz used was registered to Mr. DiNardo's mother, Mr. Kline said. The lawsuit was held up until the criminal proceedings were done.

"They mourn for their son and the others who died, and are satisfied that now they have some closure knowing that both of their son's killers will be punished," Mr. Kline said in a statement.

In 2018, Mr. DiNardo pleaded guilty to the murders of Mr. Finocchiaro, Mr. Sturgis and Mr. Meo, as well as Jimi Taro Patrick, 19, whose body was also found on the farm, according to the authorities. He was sentenced to four consecutive life sentences.

"Your Honor, I want the four families to know I am so sorry," Mr. DiNardo said at his sentencing. "I hope that they find some peace in knowing that I'm just genuinely — I can't even come to terms with what occurred. I'm sorry."