



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

Mrs Justice McGowan

REGINA

-V-

MICHAEL WEIR

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Leonard Harris was 79 years of age. His wife Trudie was 78. On 28 January 1998 you broke into their flat in Whittington Court to burgle. The flat was occupied but that did not deter you. You beat them senseless and left them lying on the floor. Trudie was so terrified that she soiled herself. Leonard Harris crawled outside and help was summoned.
2. You ransacked the flat and stole their jewellery. You ripped a watch off Leonard Harris' wrist leaving the marks of the bracelet strap as you forcefully removed it.
3. The injuries are to be seen in the photographs, in summary they show that they were beaten repeatedly around the face and head. Leonard Harris was confined to hospital and never regained consciousness. He had a weak heart. He died of the injuries you caused on 16 June 1998.
4. Knowing how much harm you had caused them, on 25 March 1998 you broke into the flat occupied by Rose Seferian and her family. She was alone in the flat.

She was 83 years of age. Again, you beat her, to an extent that blood spatter was found on the ceiling. You ransacked the flat and stole her jewellery, again ripping rings off her fingers. They were very valuable items but doubtless you pawned or sold them for a fraction of their true value.

5. She remained in hospital until the 9 April 1998 when she died of the injuries you caused.
6. I have heard the statements made by members of their families. It is impossible to understand the extent of their grief but it is not difficult to understand their sense of loss and outrage. They have lost their parents: elderly people living quiet lives and deserving a peaceful retirement. They died terrified: killed for items of jewellery.
7. You left very little evidence behind but you were traced. In October 1998 you were charged with the murder of Leonard Harris. You were tried and convicted but the law at the time required that DNA samples taken in a case which resulted in an acquittal should be destroyed. The DNA sample used for comparison had been inadvertently held by the police. Your conviction was overturned by the Court of Appeal and an attempt to appeal to the House of Lords was out of time.
8. Scientific means of detection have improved greatly since then and by 2018 evidence linking you to both murders was available in proper form. You were arrested, interviewed and denied involvement.
9. On 14 November 2019 you were convicted of both murders.
10. Having been convicted in 1999 of the murder of Leonard Harris you were sentenced to life imprisonment. As was the practice at the time, the trial judge then made a recommendation to the Home Secretary that you should serve 18 years.
11. I have to sentence you for two murders committed in 1998 at a time when the sentencing regime was very different. I must first determine what the minimum term to be imposed under the current law would be.
12. Each of these offences was a murder committed for gain, that attracts a starting point of 30 years for one murder after trial.

13. The aggravating features are;

- (a) That they were all vulnerable victims;
- (b) There was also the multiple assaults to Gertrude Harris;
- (c) The suffering prior to death in the cases of both Leonard Harris and Rose Seferian;
- (d) The taking of items of significant sentimental value in both burglaries and
- (e) Relevant previous convictions

14. The mitigating features are;

- (a) No intention to kill either victim;
- (b) No premeditation in relation to the assaults themselves although having assaulted Mr and Mrs Harris you went on to use significant violence again when committing the offence at 36 Marlborough Court.

15. The sentence for murder is life imprisonment.

16. The combination of the two offences with the aggravating factors and the only real mitigation coming from the absence of an intention to kill means that the total minimum term would have been in excess of 35 years.

17. I must then consider what the position would have been at the time of the commission of the offences. The recommendation in this case for one of these murders was 18 years, that was higher than the norm, notwithstanding the absence of an intent to kill. A term of 30 years would have been considered appropriate in exceptional cases. In my view this would have been seen as an exceptional case and such an exceptional recommendation could have been made.

18. The 30 year recommendation is the lower and accordingly I pass a life sentence on each of the two counts of murder and order that the minimum term is one of 30 years on each, less 319 days served making a total sentence of 29 years and 46 days. You are now 51 years of age. You are sentenced to prison for life. At the end of that term you may apply to the Parole Board to consider an

application for release. They may or may not consider you safe to be released.
You may never be released.

19. You have served a total of 905 days on remand which will count against the minimum term, if that calculation is wrong it can be altered administratively.