

Ex-Church Usher Found Guilty of Hiring Hitman to Kill His Wife

After a two-month trial, a Detroit jury on Thursday found a suburban businessman guilty of hiring his handyman to kill his wife.

Robert Bashara, 57, was convicted of first-degree murder and four additional charges in the death of his wife, Jane, a marketing executive. He faces life in prison. Prosecutors said Bashara told handyman Joseph Gentz to carry out the killing.

After Jane Bashara's body was found in the backseat of her Mercedes Benz SUV on Jan. 25, 2012, in Detroit, her husband blamed her death on urban street violence, prosecutors said.

Gentz, the handyman, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the killing and is serving 17 to 28 years in prison.

Bashara is also already in prison, serving a sentence of six to 20 years after pleading guilty to trying to have Gentz killed.

During the trial, prosecutors said Bashara spent months trying to find someone to kill his wife before he picked Gentz. The defense argued that Bashara had sought to have Gentz killed because he was the confessed killer of his wife.

The case has captured a national audience, in part because of the bizarre nature of the accusations against Bashara, who is from the wealthy suburb of Grosse Pointe Park.

Prosecutors said Bashara, a former church usher and Rotary Club president, wanted his wife dead so he could engage in a lifestyle of bondage, discipline and sadomasochism with his girlfriend.

