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A body was found in a burning car in Lexington. Years later, the last of 3 sentenced

BY MORGAN EADS

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Witnessing a crime and reporting it can be just as frightening as being the victim of a crime. Here's what you should do if you witness illegal activity. (Nicole L. Cvetnic / McClatchy) BY MCCLATCHY



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A man who pleaded guilty in the death of a 24-year-old whose body was found in a burning car on a rural Lexington road in 2016 has been sentenced to 27 years in

prison.

[Joseph Trevor Dilger was shot](#) and killed on Sept. 4, 2016. He was found in a burning car on Redd Road near Elkchester Road, in a pastoral part of Fayette County not far from Blue Grass Airport.

Jeremy Deshun Leroy Harris, 25, Christie Michelle Hanley, 35, and Justin Scott Slone, 27, [were charged in connection](#) with Dilger's death.

Harris was sentenced last week after pleading guilty but mentally ill to murder, facilitation of second-degree arson, evidence tampering, abuse of a corpse and wanton endangerment, according to court records. Because he's mentally ill, [he can receive treatment while](#) serving his sentence.

Hanley was sentenced to a total of five years in prison, which she has already served, after pleading guilty in 2017 to third-degree arson, evidence tampering and abuse of a corpse, according to court records. Slone pleaded guilty in January of this year to the same charges and was sentenced to a total of six years in prison, according to court records.

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Investigators learned that Dilger would sometimes loan his vehicle to Hanley in exchange for drugs, according to court records. On the day he was killed, Dilger had gotten in the car with Hanley and Harris and said he wanted his car back.

At some point, Harris shot Dilger twice, according to court records. After Dilger was shot, Hanley pulled over, and she and Harris got out and argued.

Hanley's nephew, Slone, picked them up and the three went to a gas station and bought gasoline, according to court records. They went back to the car Dilger was

in on Redd Road, pulled it onto an access road and lit it on fire.

A witness heard a commotion in the area, found the burning vehicle and called for help.

Investigators would later sift through what was left of the burned car, where they found two shell casings. The casings were sent for testing and one of the casings from the car was matched to a casing from a shot fired at a robbery on Aug. 30, 2016, on Village Drive, according to court records.

Witnesses identified Harris as the one who fired shots at the Village Drive robbery, according to court records.

When he was arrested in 2016 and questioned by homicide detectives investigating Dilger's death, Harris said he was already wanted on an attempted murder charge in Memphis, Tenn., according to court records.

In December of 2018, Hanley wrote a letter to Judge Kimberly Bunnell expressing her regret for her role in what happened to Dilger.

"I know I can't fix any of this no matter how much I wish things were different, but I want the family to know their son did nothing wrong and didn't deserve anything that happened to him," Hanley wrote in the letter. "I am sorry, very sorry and will be even after I take my last breath on earth."

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Jeremy Deshun Leroy Harris *FAYETTE COUNTY DETENTION CENTER*



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