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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 86-Year-Old Cold Case Suspect Sentenced in First Dallas County Murder Conviction Using Investigative Genetic Genealogy

(Dallas, Texas) – Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot is satisfied to announce the first Dallas County murder conviction using Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) to help identify a suspect.

86-year-old Liborio Canales pleaded guilty to the murder of Barbara Carr Villarreal and received a sentence of 20 years in prison. The plea comes nearly 38 years after the brutal crime.

“Investigative Genetic Genealogy is no longer the future of solving violent crimes, it is very much the present. In Dallas, we continue to be a national leader using IGG,” said Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot.

Lead Prosecutor Leighton D’Antoni echoed, “When you are able to develop a tried-and-true formula that brings repeated success solving unsolvable cases, you just don’t want to stop. You want to spread this amazing investigative technique to the whole world. Thanks to the continued support provided to the Dallas County DA’S Office from the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI), we are doing just that for the people of Dallas and will continue for decades to come.”

On November 7, 1986, Barbara Carr Villarreal was stabbed to death in her Garland home. For nearly four decades the crime went unsolved until technological advances allowed for new testing to be done on blood collected at the scene of the crime. Through IGG, the blood collected in 1986 was matched to the DNA of the victim’s brother-in-law, Liborio Canales. Canales was arrested in Lovington, New Mexico, in July of 2023.

At Canales’ sentencing, Barbara’s sister-in-law Jennifer Dunderman spoke on behalf of the family thanking the many Garland Police detectives who “never stopped looking for the person that so violently took Barb,” and the Dallas County DA’s Office for making sure their “93-year-old mother will never again have to worry about who killed her daughter.” Dunderman then tearfully spoke directly to Canales saying, “The life you lived should be considered a gift. You didn’t just kill Barb you killed a little piece of everyone she knew. So many years have passed and the desire for you to suffer the same pain you caused her has passed. It would serve no purpose and will never bring her back.”

Thank you to the many agencies who worked this investigation over the years including the FBI Dallas Violent Crime Task Force, the Garland Police Department and the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office SAKI Cold Case Team. Special thanks to lead prosecutor, D’Antoni, Investigator Jon Wakefield and Victim Advocates Roquel Mahorn and Mackenzie Kile.

“What really stands out to me about this investigation was the never give up attitude by everyone involved over the past four decades. Starting with the dedicated members of the Garland Police Department in the 1980’s to working these last few years hand and hand with the FBI, no one gave up seeking the truth in this horrific murder,” ADA D’Antoni said. “Leads were exhausted and there were plenty of roadblocks, but ultimately we brought Barbara and her family the justice they have waited so long for.”