

Daniel Cantrell murder case ends with insanity ruling

(Photo: Submitted)

FRANKLIN – Oliver Cantrell spent the final day of his life — April 2 — with his son. The circumstances, however, are among the most tragic anyone can imagine.

By day's end, Daniel Cantrell would stab his father to death.

Daniel Cantrell, 31, had previously been diagnosed with mental illness. Doctors determined that he was fearful of his father and believed that Oliver Cantrell, 65, was plotting to have him tortured and killed, court records show.



When the pair returned to the father's home in Brentwood that day, Daniel Cantrell took a kitchen knife, believing he needed to protect himself from his father, and later used it to stab him twice in the heart.

While Daniel Cantrell's wife, Kristin Cantrell, called an emergency operator for help, Daniel Cantrell sat on the blood-covered floor cupping his father's head in his hands and attempting to revive his father with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

"It's OK," Daniel Cantrell is quoted in court records as saying. "Kristin is here, and she will help you."

Tuesday, Williamson County Circuit Court Judge Timothy Easter ruled that Daniel Cantrell was not guilty of a charge of second-degree murder by reason of insanity. He will be committed to a mental institution.

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After the hearing, David Raybin, Cantrell's attorney, spoke about the relationship between Oliver Cantrell and his youngest son and the tragic circumstances. that led to Oliver Cantrell's death and his son's incarceration.

"Oliver Cantrell was Daniel's best friend," Raybin said. "(Oliver) was his father, but he was also his best friend. (Daniel) was the closest to his own dad. Oliver was aware that his son had mental problems, and Oliver did everything he could to help his son. He was the one who spent the day with Daniel trying to help him. It is tragic beyond description that Daniel killed his own dad, the person he loved the most."

Daniel Cantrell will be transferred to the Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute in Nashville, where he periodically will be examined by doctors in the years ahead, Raybin said.

"For somebody to be found not guilty by reason of insanity, they have to have profound and severe mental illness and also not know the wrongfulness of what they were doing, and he didn't," Raybin said.

The case was an emotional one for Raybin, who went to law school with Daniel Cantrell's mother, Deborah Cantrell.

"The family has been completely devastated by this, but they are a very, very, very strong family and a united family," Raybin said. "They wanted to help each other get through this and help Daniel."

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