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Pender County Jury Convicts Man for Murdering His Stepfather

On May 5, 2026, a Pender County jury convicted Michael Thomas Rich of First Degree Murder for the killing of his stepfather, Paul Busovne, and was sentenced to life in prison by Judge Tiffany Powers. Rich was also convicted of Attempted Murder and three felony assaults for assaulting and attempting to kill his mother. He was sentenced to 175-222 months on attempted murder to run concurrent with his life sentence. The Judge arrested judgment on the felony assaults.

On November 13, 2021, Rich was living in a farmhouse on his parents' property on Shiloh Road. Rich had a long history of substance abuse and mental health issues, and his parents were letting him live there to try and help him. When they went to talk to Rich that morning about taking his medication and living there, Rich got angry and he grabbed a knife. Rich stabbed his stepfather nineteen times, killing him. He then chased his mother and attacked her by pushing her and jumping on her, breaking her ribs and clavicle. Neighbors from across the road ran over to help and Rich kept repeating that he acted in self-defense. Rich was taken to the hospital for cuts on his own hand and then was interviewed by detectives with the Pender County Sheriff's Office. He stated to them that it was self-defense and stated that his parents had shot him and left him for dead in the past and they were trying to poison him, none of which was true. After he was interviewed and arrested for murder and attempted murder, he requested to return to the hospital for back pain. Once he was cleared at the hospital, he ran from officers and was quickly caught before getting outside of the hospital.

At trial, the Defendant claimed self-defense, diminished capacity, and that he was not guilty by reason of insanity. The jury heard over a week of evidence and convicted Rich of all charges after forty minutes of deliberation.

"The hard work of the Pender County Sheriff's Office and the DA's Office, along with the bravery of the surviving victim to confront her attacker, allowed this Pender County jury to deliver justice in this case," said District Attorney Jason W. Smith.



Michael Thomas Rich