

Juan Gonzalez, who killed ailing mom, out of jail

Newsday - Long Island, N.Y.

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Date: April 4, 2012

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For the first time since he smothered his bedridden mother and tried to kill himself in May, a Brentwood man was free Tuesday afternoon, the beneficiary of a rare and merciful plea deal.

Juan Gonzalez, 70, had been charged with second-degree murder in the death of his mother, Teresa Gonzalez, 98. He pleaded guilty last month to second-degree manslaughter, and Suffolk County Court Judge James Hudson sentenced him Tuesday to 6 months in jail and 5 years' probation, giving him credit for time served.



About four hours later, Gonzalez shuffled out of the jail with a walker and badly fitting slippers and searched for his late-arriving daughter while trying to ignore news reporters.

When one asked about his mother, he responded, "My mother is . . ." and gestured toward the sky, his voice trailing off.

Until he killed her, Gonzalez was his ailing mother's only caregiver, feeding and bathing her even as his own health faded, said his attorney, Michael Brown of Central Islip.

He suffered from diabetes, joint pain and other maladies. Then, when he got a letter from his doctor informing him that a spot on his hand was skin cancer, his poor English led him to believe he was going to die soon and no one would care for his mother, Brown said.

After she died, he tried to kill himself by taking all the insulin he had and slashing his wrists. He was unconscious for four days and, as a result of the insulin overdose, he wrecked his kidneys and now needs dialysis at least three times a week.

At his sentencing Tuesday, Gonzalez, speaking through a Spanish interpreter, thanked Hudson, prosecutors and Brown.

Hudson, who typically lectures and advises defendants at length, curtly imposed the sentence in this case with no additional remarks.

"It was something that happened that was beyond me," Gonzalez said in court. "I expect to never come back here again."

No one else expects him to return, either.

District Attorney Thomas Spota said Gonzalez was a hardworking, decent, law-abiding man who became a citizen decades ago after his family immigrated from Peru.

"While we don't ever condone the taking of another person's life, we support this sentence," Spota said. "He was essentially overwhelmed. He prayed for the strength to do what he was going to do."

"He's extremely remorseful," Brown said. "He felt he had no choice, no options, but to do what he did."

Spota said his office verified everything Brown offered about his client and concluded that mercy was justified.

"This is a very appropriate case for justice, but in a strong sense, for mercy as well," Spota said.

Between his physical problems and having to live with what he did to his mother, Spota said he didn't envy Gonzalez.

"It's going to be tough for him," he said.