

# Sheriff



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## **GOOD SAMARITAN DIES THREE MONTHS AFTER ATTACK**



Joseph Sparks' Car



John Wannamaker

An 81-year old Mary Esther resident who was viciously attacked during a carjacking July 6<sup>th</sup> has died. Family members and a physician say the death is the result of a beating the elderly victim suffered at the hands of 32-year old John Paul Rashad Wannamaker of Fort Walton Beach.

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office is investigating after being notified by a family member that retired Air Force member Joseph A. Sparks of Argyle Court died Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, around 8:15 p.m. His death comes just a few days short of his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday and following numerous surgeries connected to his injuries.

An autopsy will be conducted and the Sheriff's Office, which is continuing its investigation, could seek to amend its aggravated battery charge to an open count of murder.

The event that led to the beating began on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 when Sparks pulled into the parking lot of the Food World at 251 Mary Esther Cut-off around 7 a.m. to buy groceries. Investigators say Wannamaker approached and asked Sparks to help "jump" the dead battery in his car. Sparks agreed to help and took Wannamaker to the nearby McDonald's. Once there, however Wannamaker said his car had been towed and asked the victim to drive him to his home off Lovejoy Road. Sparks again agreed, but on the way, Wannamaker began demanding money. Sparks stopped on Dates Avenue and Wannamaker hit him during a struggle over the car keys. Both men got out of the car and Wannamaker continued to physically batter Sparks before taking off in his 2007 Ford Fusion. He then crashed the car into a tree approximately 200 yards away.

Wannamaker was taken into custody September 21<sup>st</sup> after being called in as a suspicious person at the Electric Cowboy in Destin. Okaloosa County deputies and a K-9 unit located and arrested Wannamaker on charges of carjacking, robbery by sudden snatching, aggravated battery on a person 65 or older, leaving the scene of an accident with injuries, and not having a valid driver's license.

Wannamaker is also charged with fraudulent use of a credit card. Investigators say shortly after the carjacking, he used Sparks' credit card to buy a \$400 gift card at the Wal-Mart in Fort Walton Beach.

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