

TV vet killed wife, 83, to stop her becoming a 'decrepit old hag'

By Lydia Willgress

A RETIRED vet who had appeared in television ads killed his 83-year-old wife because he did not want her to become a "decrepit old hag" after her dementia worsened, a court was told.

Philip Williamson, 88, pushed his wife, Josephine, down the stairs and then strangled her at their home in Lower Earley, Berkshire.

He told Reading Crown Court yesterday that Mrs Williamson, a former PE teacher, had become increasingly reliant on him and he did not want her to go into care. He admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and was given a two-year prison sentence, suspended for two years.

The court heard the couple had been married for 62 years when something "took over" Williamson and he pushed his wife down the stairs. It is understood he had promised to care for his wife but reached a "crisis point" when he was diagnosed with terminal stom-

ach cancer in June last year. Michael Roques, prosecuting, said Mrs Williamson would become anxious when she was not in the presence of her husband. "It was his duty to look after his wife and take full responsibility



Philip Williamson, 88, pushed his wife, who had dementia, down the stairs. He said he did not want her to go into care

ity for her day-to-day care," he said. Williamson also phoned his GP surgery to say he was feeling overwhelmed.

Mrs Williamson's body was discovered by detectives at the detached house in November last year after Williamson called NHS Direct and said her death was "unexpected". She had multiple lacerations to her scalp and bruising to her lower jaw, neck, arms and legs. The

court heard that Williamson, a grandfather of six who was battling depression, then stabbed himself in the stomach with a six-inch knife. He also left a voice-mail message for his daughter to tell her to call police and that respite care was no longer needed.

Williamson was taken to Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital but later said he wished he had died.

He was sectioned under the Mental Health Act in December last year after admitting that he had previously thought of killing Mrs Williamson but resisted doing so by making cups of tea. He told police: "I did not want her to become a decrepit old hag. I loved her too much for that." Nadia Chbat, defending, said Williamson has been "acting under a depressive illness".

Judge Johanna Cutts, sentencing, said she wanted Williamson to spend his final months with his family, adding that she accepted that he saw his drastic action as the "only way to limit or prevent" his wife's suffering.

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