

R.I.

by Paul Dirmeyer



# Lawyers fight to save man from electric chair

United Press International  
TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Less than 24 hours before Stephen Todd Booker's scheduled execution, his lawyers fought in federal and state courts Wednesday to spare him from the electric chair for raping and murdering a 94-year-old woman.

Last-minute petitions for a stay of execution were pending in both the Florida Supreme Court and the U.S. District Court in Tallahassee.

Booker, 30, is scheduled to die this afternoon at Florida State Prison for the 1977 slaying of Lorine Demoss Harman, who surprised him burglarizing her Gainesville apartment.

The late appeals centered on a defense claim that Booker's first lawyer inadequately represented him during his trial by not presenting evidence demonstrating he was mentally incompetent.

Booker's 90-pound victim, described by a judge as "active, alert and spry," was beaten, wounded with a knife, raped and then fatally stabbed. Her body later was found in her ran-

sacked bedroom. Court papers show Booker, who had a juvenile record in New York, admitted using a variety of drugs since age 13, and was disciplined for violence while in the military and convicted of an armed robbery in Florida.

Two of three court-appointed psychiatrists declared him competent to stand trial. The third was unable to reach an opinion.

Testifying against himself during the sentencing phase of his 1978 trial, he told the jury, "A defendant found guilty of such a crime should receive the

death penalty." He also testified he had "no recollection" of his activities the day of the murder.

Booker's conviction and death sentence were affirmed by the Florida Supreme Court in 1981 and Gov. Bob Graham signed a death warrant for him on March 22, 1982, but his execution then was stayed by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The appeals court subsequently rejected Booker's appeal and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review his case on Oct. 17. Graham then signed the current warrant.

## Jury focuses on murder

# Feminist found innocent

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GRETNA, La. — California feminist Ginny Foat was found innocent Wednesday in the 1965 tire-iron slaying of Argentine businessman Moises Chayo. The courtroom erupted in screams and shouts as the six-man, six-woman jury returned the verdict after deliberating for two hours.

Defense attorneys in closing

As the verdict was announced, Foat's mother, Virginia Galluzzo, shouted, "Thank you."

Arguments characterized Foat's chief accuser, her ex-husband, as a drunken and vengeful liar, but prosecutors claimed the California feminist was a crafty murderess trying to hide from a violent past.

Foat was besieged by jurors who hugged her and asked for her autograph. She wrote on one piece of paper, "My love, my appreciation, my thanks for helping me to continue my belief in our system. Ginny Foat."

As the verdict was announced, Foat's mother, Virginia Galluzzo, shouted, "Thank you," and the rest of the courtroom let out a loud shriek. Foat dipped her head and cried.

"It's the first time I've had to tell my story to the people," Foat said, adding that previously when she had told her story to

police and prosecutors who did not believe her.

Foat's sister, Emilia Guidi, said, "She's finally free. It was the last time he (Sidote) could do this to her."

Jurors said they reached the verdict on their first vote and one juror, Melba Sowell, said "I didn't decide until we sat down and considered all the facts."

Defense attorney Robert Glass said, "I always had doubts, but this is a person who deserved to be free."

While defense attorneys attacked the character of John Sidote, her ex-husband and star prosecution witness, prosecutors urged jurors to concentrate on the facts of the case instead of Sidote's alcoholism, prison record and violent behavior against Foat.

Sidote, the second of Foat's four husbands, was granted immunity in exchange for his testimony. He is serving a 25-year prison term in Nevada for a parole violation stemming from an unrelated killing.

Tom Porteous, an assistant prosecutor, questioned Foat's memory "blackout" the night Chayo died and Foat and Sidote left New Orleans.

"I can tell you why she (Foat) can't remember anything about that evening," Porteous said. "(It is) because they had just perpetrated the murder of Moises Chayo."

"The past is the one thing Virginia Foat cannot hide from any longer. Miss Foat's past is her downfall. The crime she committed, she must be

punished for."

Foat, 42, whose emotional testimony spanned two days, claimed Sidote physically and sexually abused her and blamed her for Chayo's death in retaliation for their failed marriage.

Defense attorneys said Foat, former president of the California chapter of the National

Organization for Women, could be convicted only if jurors believed the "lies" of Sidote — a man who had "the red glow of the devil."

"Ginny Foat is innocent and John Sidote is a crazy person and a liar — a person whose word cannot be trusted, whose accusation means nothing," Glass said.

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