Convicted murderer of A&M graduate waits for sentencing

ROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

A drifter convicted of murder in beating death of a 24-year-old &M graduate who had been workas an intern reporter at a local wspaper faces sentencing in Sep-

At the conclusion of a five-day ench trial Friday, a judge convicted year-old Rodney Woidtke, for-

merly of Bakersfield, Calif., of killing Audrey Cardenas, who had been in Belleville only 11 days when she disappeared June 19, 1988.

A week later her and had a large of Sept. 28. Woidtke could face a 20- to 60-year sentence.

In closing arguments earlier Friday, defense attorney Brian K.

A week later her nude body was found in a dry creek bed by a custodian at Belleville Township High School East. Cardenas come to Illinois to work as an intern at the Belleville News-Democrat.

presided over the trial, set a sentenc-

Trentmann said police made Woidtke a scapegoat in the slaying and failed to fully examine the possibility of other suspects.

"They picked up this poor transient who clearly has a mental prob-Judge Richard A. Aguirre, who lem and threw him in the slammer," Trentmann said

raped the victim only after police accused him of being homosexual, and made the assertion to defend himself against the characterization.

Woidtke was not charged with rape. The victim's body was badly decomposed and authorities could not determine whether she had been

sexually assaulted. News-Democrat Publisher Gary Woidtke is the killer.

"I'm somewhat disappointed and disillusioned with the verdict," Berk ley said. "There are too many unanswered questions for me. From what I know of the case and the evidence, things just don't add up."

But Scott Mansfield, assistant St. Clair County state's attorney, said

Berkley said he is not convinced Woidtke knew too much about the crime scene to be innocent - including the position of the pipe used in the murder.

> "I think the evidence shows clearly that the defendant is a troubled person, full of sexual delusions, feelings of sexual inadequacies, with a burning desire to find a woman and have a relationship," Mansfield

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