

Convicted murderer of A&M graduate waits for sentencing

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

A drifter convicted of murder in the beating death of a 24-year-old A&M graduate who had been working as an intern reporter at a local newspaper faces sentencing in September.

At the conclusion of a five-day bench trial Friday, a judge convicted 28-year-old Rodney Woitdke, formerly 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 nude body was found in a dry creek bed by a custodian at Belleville Township High School East. Cardenas came to Illinois to work as an intern at the *Belleville News-Democrat*.

Judge Richard A. Aguirre, who presided over the trial, set a sentencing date of Sept. 28. Woitdke could face a 20- to 60-year sentence.

In closing arguments earlier Friday, defense attorney Brian K. Trentmann said police made Woitdke 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 problem and threw him in the slammer," Trentmann said.

He said Woitdke claimed he had raped the victim only after police accused him of being homosexual, and made the assertion to defend himself against the characterization.

Woitdke 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

Berkley said he is not convinced Woitdke is the killer.

"I'm somewhat disappointed and disillusioned with the verdict," Berkley 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

Woitdke 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 said.

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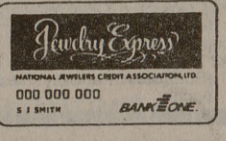
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1.78	5,275 ⁰⁰	8,500 ⁰⁰	.71	1,595 ⁰⁰	3,150 ⁰⁰		
1.61	8,800 ⁰⁰	8,900 ⁰⁰	.64	1,980 ⁰⁰	1,275 ⁰⁰		
1.43	5,550 ⁰⁰	8,900 ⁰⁰	.62	1,985 ⁰⁰	2,350 ⁰⁰		
1.17	2,950 ⁰⁰	4,900 ⁰⁰	.51	1,965 ⁰⁰	1,975 ⁰⁰		
1.11	2,650 ⁰⁰	4,700 ⁰⁰	.48	3,300 ⁰⁰	1,850 ⁰⁰		
1.09	3,075 ⁰⁰	4,900 ⁰⁰	1.43	1,240 ⁰⁰	6,800 ⁰⁰		
1.05	2,475 ⁰⁰	4,300 ⁰⁰	1.24	1,160 ⁰⁰	7,100 ⁰⁰		
1.05	2,595 ⁰⁰	4,375 ⁰⁰	1.01	95 ⁰⁰	4,300 ⁰⁰		
1.05	2,595 ⁰⁰	4,375 ⁰⁰					
1.03	3,850 ⁰⁰	5,900 ⁰⁰					
1.03	2,950 ⁰⁰	4,600 ⁰⁰					
1.03	2,225 ⁰⁰	3,900 ⁰⁰					
1.01	3,375 ⁰⁰	3,800 ⁰⁰					
1.01	3,150 ⁰⁰	5,900 ⁰⁰					
1.00	2,050 ⁰⁰	3,600 ⁰⁰					
1.00	2,480 ⁰⁰	3,500 ⁰⁰					
1.00	1,875 ⁰⁰	3,600 ⁰⁰					
.95	3,325 ⁰⁰	6,450 ⁰⁰					
.91	3,595 ⁰⁰	6,500 ⁰⁰					
.91	3,150 ⁰⁰	5,900 ⁰⁰					
.85	1,975 ⁰⁰	2,975 ⁰⁰					
.81	2,250 ⁰⁰	3,800 ⁰⁰					
.77	1,325 ⁰⁰	2,175 ⁰⁰					
.76	1,360 ⁰⁰	2,275 ⁰⁰					
.76	1,290 ⁰⁰	2,100 ⁰⁰					
.76	1,250 ⁰⁰	2,150 ⁰⁰					
.76	1,300 ⁰⁰	2,475 ⁰⁰					
.72	1,265 ⁰⁰	2,425 ⁰⁰					
.72	1,235 ⁰⁰	2,300 ⁰⁰					
.70	1,195 ⁰⁰	2,150 ⁰⁰					
.70	1,390 ⁰⁰	2,300 ⁰⁰					
.69	995 ⁰⁰	1,495 ⁰⁰					
.66	895 ⁰⁰	1,475 ⁰⁰					
.64	595 ⁰⁰	975 ⁰⁰					
.58	575 ⁰⁰	975 ⁰⁰					
.55	695 ⁰⁰	1,100 ⁰⁰					
.55	890 ⁰⁰	1,475 ⁰⁰					
.53	895 ⁰⁰	1,475 ⁰⁰					
.53	795 ⁰⁰	1,365 ⁰⁰					
.52	950 ⁰⁰	1,700 ⁰⁰					
.51	1,095 ⁰⁰	1,850 ⁰⁰					
.51	695 ⁰⁰	1,095 ⁰⁰					
.51	795 ⁰⁰	1,275 ⁰⁰					
.50	795 ⁰⁰	1,275 ⁰⁰					
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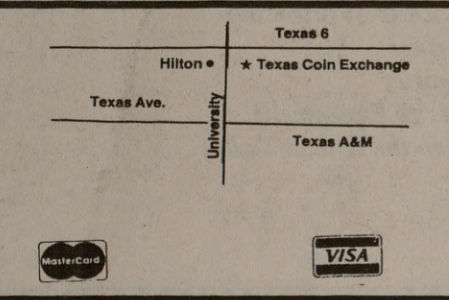
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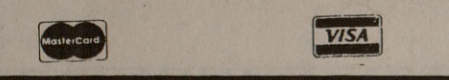
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