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Belyeu sentenced to death

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Clifton Eugene Belyeu was sentenced Friday to die by injection for his participation in the Dec. 10 stabbing and shooting death of Melodie Bolton of West.

A 54th District Court jury of seven men and five women deliberated about 45 minutes before answering two questions that determined Belyeu's punishment.

The same jury found Belyeu guilty on Wednesday.

The defendant showed no emotion

when District Judge George Allen pronounced that Belyeu be transferred to the Texas Department of Corrections' death row to "await execution."

In choosing death by injection over a life prison sentence, the jurors unanimously found that Belyeu deliberately caused the death of Mrs. Bolton, and that he represented a continuing threat to society.

After the verdict was read, West automobile dealer Jerrel Bolton said he had no comment about the jury's decision.

Jack Church, a salesman at Bolton

Chevrolet who said he was acting as spokesman for the Bolton family, said family members were "definitely pleased with the verdict. They feel that justice has been served. This is the climax of their suffering and pain."

Members of Belyeu's family cried after the verdict. Two of Belyeu's sisters who testified on Belyeu's behalf on Thursday needed assistance to leave the courtroom.

Mrs. Bolton, 35, was found slain in the bedroom of her West home on Dec. 10. Belyeu, 28, and Earnest Ray Moore, 21,

both of Cleburne, were arrested at their Johnson County trailer home about 12 hours after the murder was discovered.

Prosecutors say Belyeu and Moore stabbed Mrs. Bolton six times and shot her in the head at close range with a sawed-off shotgun during a robbery that netted hunting weapons, ammunition and jewelry valued at nearly \$15,000.

During final arguments Friday morning, Assistant District Attorney David Deaconson told the jury that "there's no

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question that it was a brutal, senseless execution and a deliberate act."

Waco attorneys Ken Ables and Fred Horner, appointed by Allen to represent Belyeu, asked the jury to show compassion.

"I'm begging you for mercy... I can understand your verdict being borne out of rage, out of shock, out of fear. But this isn't a time to let those emotions control you," Horner said.

Ables told the jury that there were still too many unanswered questions.

"We still don't know if it was Earnest Moore or Clifton Belyeu who killed Melodie Bolton. We don't know who pulled the trigger on that gun," Ables said.

Ables told the jury he does not believe the death penalty is a proper punishment.

"Most civilized Western nations do not allow capital punishment. It just doesn't work as a deterrent... The Ayatollah Khomeini allows it. Some Third World countries allow it. As a society, should we kill without necessity Clifton Belyeu? Is death the only solution for this problem?" Ables asked.

He urged jurors to "turn the other cheek."

McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell asked the jury to consider the torment of the Bolton family.

"See the tears of Jerrel Bolton... See the love they felt for Melodie Bolton," he said.

"I wondered what (the defense) was going to say good about Clif-

ton Belyeu. They couldn't think of anything except to argue philosophy and compare our system to the Ayatollah and (Adolf) Hitler," Feazell continued.

Feazell said Belyeu's history of criminal action and abusive behavior are indicative of what Belyeu will do in the future.

"(Belyeu) wants to tell you, 'Don't blame me. It was demons. It was Earnest Moore. Don't blame me. Don't hold me responsible.' It doesn't have anything to do with demons like (Belyeu) tells us. I think he's just flat mean," Feazell said.

"If he had wanted to, he could have supported his family. He could have made a living by the sweat of his brow instead of by the blood of others," Feazell said.

He said the murder of Mrs. Bolton "was something (Belyeu) had been working up to for a long time. It was almost as if it was his life's ambition to kill someone."

Jury foreman Don Bays had no comment about the jury's deliberations except to say "there was just too much evidence against (Belyeu)."

Ables said he was disappointed in the jury's decision.

"We argued to try and save a man's life. We felt life in prison would have been an appropriate punishment for this crime," he said.

Death penalties are automatically appealed, and Ables told Allen in court that he would pursue an appeal.

"I think there are two or three areas where we may have some



Staff photo — Steve Earley

Jury foreman Don Bays said there was too much evidence against Clifton Belyeu

pretty strong grounds for an appeal, although I don't want to go into them now," Ables said.

Feazell had praise for the work of Deaconson, Sheriff Jack Harwell, the McLennan County Sheriff's Department and Deputy Truman Simons.

During the final days of the trial, Ables and Horner on at least two occasions told the jury that Feazell would use "showmanship" and "theatrics" to sway them emotionally.

"I don't use theatrics in the courtroom," Feazell said. "I just go in and be myself. If someone believes in what they are doing they can get emotional... I get emotional in all capital murder cases."

Feazell said no date has been set for the trial of Moore. He said the trial is expected to be moved out of McLennan County. Feazell said Allen is looking for another county and district judge willing to accept the change of venue.