

THURSDAY

Aug. 7, 1986
Waco, Texas

Waco Tribune-Herald

A COX NEWSPAPER

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Jury finds Belyeu guilty

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A 54th District Court jury deliberated about 45 minutes Wednesday before finding Clifton Eugene Belyeu guilty of capital murder in the Dec. 10 slaying of Melodie Bolton of West.

Two acquaintances of Belyeu and his wife testified Wednesday afternoon during the opening of the punishment phase that Belyeu beat his wife on several occasions and professed to be demon-possessed.

Belyeu, 27, of Cleburne, faces either the death penalty or a life prison term.

The same jury of seven men and five women that found Belyeu guilty of the stabbing and shooting death of Mrs. Bolton will answer two questions that will determine Belyeu's punishment.

The jury will be asked if Belyeu committed the murder deliberately with the reasonable expectation that Mrs. Bolton's death would result, and if there is a probability that Belyeu will commit criminal acts of violence that would con-

stitute a continuing threat to society.

If the jury answers yes to both questions, District Judge George Allen will sentence Belyeu to the death penalty. If the jury answers no to either question, Allen will sentence Belyeu to life in prison.

McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell called five witnesses during the punishment phase Wednesday afternoon. Feazell said testimony will continue Thursday, and it would be late Thursday or Friday before the jury

begins deliberations on Belyeu's punishment.

As spectators filed into the courtroom Wednesday to listen to final arguments, McLennan County Sheriff's Department deputies used a hand-held metal detector to inspect the spectators — including members of the Bolton and Belyeu families and members of the news media — for concealed weapons.

In arguments Wednesday, Assistant

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Belyeu faces life prison term, death penalty for conviction

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District Attorney David Deaconson asked the jury to remember the crime scene photographs.

"Look at her facial expression: utter fear and anguish in her eyes," he said. "The fear of not only knowing she had just been stabbed but also of seeing a shotgun up against her head. . . . She was totally passive; they executed her."

Waco attorneys Ken Ables and Fred Horner, appointed by Allen to represent Belyeu, asked the jury to consider that it was Belyeu's co-defendant, Earnest Ray Moore, who actually stabbed and shot Mrs. Bolton.

"The knife was found under the passenger's seat, where Moore was sitting," Horner said. "The state has never shown that Clifton Belyeu was in possession of the sawed-off shotgun or knife."

Horner said Belyeu was broke, and was faced with the responsibility of a wife and four children. Although Belyeu may have intended to burglarize the Bolton residence, he said, "that doesn't make him a killer."

"I can see Clifton in the garage getting (Jerrel Bolton's) guns, and Moore in the bedroom, and for some reason going crazy and killing Mrs. Bolton," Horner said.

Ables asked the jury not to let the photographs sway them.

"You've seen photo after photo after photo. Slide after slide, show-

ing Melodie Bolton's body. . . . Simply because someone was murdered does not prove the state's case," Ables said.

Feazell held aloft the sawed-off shotgun believed to be used to shoot Mrs. Bolton, and at one point directed the barrel of the weapon into Belyeu's face for several seconds.

Feazell termed the murder "senseless" and said Mrs. Bolton's life was "snuffed out because someone wouldn't go to work for his money."

He said the actions of Belyeu and Moore Dec. 10 demonstrated they were prepared to use violent force during the burglary.

"What's a sawed-off shotgun for? Dove hunting? A sawed-off shotgun is for killing people," Feazell said.

Feazell held up two pairs of blue jeans in front of the jury: one seized from Belyeu, the other from Moore. He pointed out that blood stains were found on the left side of Belyeu's jeans and on the right side of Moore's jeans.

"Left side, right side. Side by side. Partners in crime. They shared in the loot," he said.

During the punishment phase, Sharon Sinclair of Johnson County told the jury she met Belyeu and his wife, Donna, in July 1985.

She said she became friends with Mrs. Belyeu and saw her with "a black eye and so bad off she could hardly walk."

Mrs. Sinclair said Belyeu told her he wanted to change his life

and wanted to stop beating his wife, but he also "told us he was demon-possessed."

She said Belyeu complained that other people thought he was crazy. Mrs. Sinclair said Belyeu also believed he might be crazy.

Richard Goddard, the Cleburne area man who previously testified that he rented a trailer home to Belyeu, said that between October and December 1985 he saw Mrs. Belyeu beaten on several occasions.

Goddard said that after seeing Mrs. Belyeu with two black eyes, he had a conversation with Belyeu, and "he said he was going to try and change, but he was possessed by demons."

The jury learned that Belyeu was convicted of robbery in Collin County in 1979.

Lt. B.J. Moulder of the Johnson County Sheriff's Department testified that during the search of Belyeu's trailer Dec. 10, he found firearms and frozen meat that later was identified as being stolen in a November burglary in Johnson County.

Mike Wise of Joshua told the jury that the sawed-off shotgun believed used in the slaying of Mrs. Bolton was stolen from his residence Nov. 25. He said the shotgun was in one piece when it was stolen.

The two co-defendants are being tried separately because Belyeu has a prior felony conviction and Moore does not. No trial date has been set for Moore.