

## **JURY CONVICTS ALTON COLEMAN OF AGGRAVATED MURDER \ HE COULD FACE ELECTRIC CHAIR**

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CINCINNATI -- **Alton Coleman**, the ninth-grade dropout linked to eight murders committed during a Midwest crime spree last summer, was convicted Wednesday of the aggravated murder of a woman and could face the electric chair.

His accomplice, Debra Brown, 22, was convicted of the murder by a separate jury Tuesday, but she escaped a possible death sentence because jurors found her not guilty of aggravating circumstances in the slaying.

**Coleman**'s jurors took 3 1/2 hours to find the Waukegan, Ill., native guilty of two separate counts of aggravated murder, one count of attempted aggravated murder, and one count each of aggravated robbery and aggravated burglary in connection with the July 13, 1984, attack on Marlene Walters, 44, and her husband, Harry, 46, in the Cincinnati suburb of Norwood.

The jury opened the way for **Coleman**, 29, to be sentenced to death, finding him guilty of four "specifications," or aggravating circumstances. The jury found that **Coleman** acted with "prior calculation and design" and that he committed the murder "as part of a purposeful attempt to kill two or more persons."

IN MICHIGAN, **Coleman** and Brown are suspected of kidnapping a Detroit woman June 24, beating and robbing a Dearborn Heights couple June 28, robbing two Detroit men June 30, and robbing and beating a Detroit couple July 2.

Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Richard Niehaus has set a Friday sentencing hearing for **Coleman**, after which the jury, still sequestered, will recommend **Coleman**'s punishment.

**Coleman**, enthusiastic Tuesday when asked his reaction to news that Brown had escaped death, was quieter in the wake of his conviction.

**Coleman** fidgeted before the verdicts were read and stared balefully at the jurors as they confirmed their verdicts aloud. He declined comment as he was led from the courtroom, surrounded by nearly a dozen sheriff's deputies.

ON MONDAY, **Coleman**, acting as his own lawyer, orchestrated a startling courtroom scene as he led Brown into confused and contradictory claims that she had murdered Marlene Walters while **Coleman** was elsewhere. Brown, once described by the FBI as **Coleman**'s "slave," had declined to co-operate with her defense attorneys and did not testify in her own behalf.

Marlene Walters' murder was the first for which **Coleman** and Brown have been tried. She was found bound and gagged in the basement of her home, struck repeatedly with a blunt object, which prosecutors said was either a crowbar or a pair of vise-grip pliers.

Her husband, Harry, found handcuffed lying next to her, suffered severe skull and brain injuries in the attack, but survived. He testified during the separate trials for **Coleman** and Brown that **Coleman** struck him in the head with a long wooden candlestick holder.

Reaction in the Walters family to **Coleman** 's verdict was "relief that it's almost over," said son Daniel Walters, 26. But he added that the family had been very disappointed by the verdict that spared Brown from death.

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Caption: Photo

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