

QUICK VERDICT STILL LEAVES A DESOLATE DAD - MAN GUILTY OF KILLING A MOTHER AND 4 KIDS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, December 9, 2004

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Every year, William Parker Sr. would gather his three children to celebrate the Christmas season at his Detroit home. The family wouldn't emerge until it was time for the children to return to their mother's home to go back to school.

This year, though, Parker will be alone.

Parker has Detroit **Roger Thompson** to blame for the holiday solitude. Thompson killed Parker's three children, one of his own and the children's mother last spring, in what police, prosecutors and a medical examiner have called one of the most gruesome and disturbing crimes in Detroit history.

Thompson, 36, was convicted Wednesday in Wayne County Circuit Court of five counts of first-degree, premeditated murder. He will be sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole on Dec. 22, three days before Parker will spend Christmas Day mourning - and trying to heal.

"I just have to take it one day at a time," Parker said. "I can either get busy living or get busy dying. The choice is up to me. I don't think Lisa and them would have wanted me to sit around being miserable."

Parker was referring to Lisa Shelton, his 33-year-old ex-wife and mother of his children, who was strangled by Thompson. Parker's children - William Parker Jr., 16; Wrandell Parker, 14, and WaNee Parker, 12 - were fatally beaten, as was AuShanai Thompson, 9, Thompson's daughter.

Their bodies were discovered April 1 in a home on the 100 block of Minnesota. Shelton's 13-year-old sister, Christina, was at home during the attack but was spared.

The girl said she was locked in a closet for 31 hours during the ordeal. She was able to break free and tell a neighbor that her family needed help. The Free Press is not publishing Christina's last name because of her age.

Christina did not attend the three-day trial. Her doctor testified that she has been treated at a psychiatric facility since summer and was medically unable to tell her story.

Still, the jury of four men and seven women needed only about three hours to reach their verdict of guilty. Judge Leonard Townsend praised them for using common sense.

"I would have come to the exact same conclusion you did," Townsend told the jurors. "The evidence was overwhelming."

During the trial, Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Dorsey IV described how the children's bodies were found bound and bloodied from being beaten with a pipe.

Thompson told police the massacre began with an argument with his on-again, off-again girlfriend, Shelton, about a coat he stuffed under his pillow before going to sleep.

Thompson said he grabbed Shelton around her neck and choked her. Then he moved on to the children.

" **Roger Thompson** did this because he was in his comfort zone - he was at home and not worried about someone coming in and interrupting him," Dorsey said.

"It took time to strangle Lisa Shelton. It took time to beat those children in their heads - 35 blows between them. He had the time to think about it and he didn't stop."

Thompson's defense attorney, Susan Reed, argued that there was no physical evidence linking Thompson to the crime.

Dr. Cheryl Loewe, a Wayne County medical examiner, testified that though she's seen dozens of bodies in her career, the scene on Minnesota is one that still haunts her when she goes home at night.

"It was one of the most brutal scenes I have ever seen - even for an experienced medical examiner," Loewe said.

Parker said he intentionally avoided hearing Loewe's testimony because he knew it would be too much to bear. But on Wednesday, the jury asked the judge to hear a portion replayed, and Parker stayed in the courtroom.

"What I heard today is unexplainable," Parker said, crying.

"I just feel numb all over. They say you're supposed to forgive and forget, but I don't think I can forgive him for this."

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Caption: Photo WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

Life in prison awaits **Roger Thompson** . His victims were discovered after a girl broke free from 31 hours in a closet. (the following photograph appeared on page 1B of the State edition) **Roger Thompson** in court in April with attorney Susan Reed.

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

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Index Terms: conviction ; Roger Thompson; trial ; homicide ; multiple ; child victim ; four ;
Detroit

Record Number: 0000059841

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