

KILLER GETS 2 LIFE SENTENCES IN WARREN COUPLE'S SLAYING

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Author: AMBER HUNT, Free Press staff writer

For the rest of his life, convicted killer **Xavier Chase** will be able to write letters, watch TV, read books and see visitors.

That's a lot more than he deserves, said family members of three people he killed.

"My son was my life," said Lillian Mitchell, whose son Terry Buchanan was fatally shot in what police described as an ambush in November 2007. "He was my baby and my love."

Chase, 40, was sentenced today to two mandatory sentences of life in prison for killing Buchanan, 36, and his 32-year-old girlfriend, Rema Reed, whom **Chase** previously had dated.

The two were gunned down in the parking lot outside of Reed's Warren apartment building. Reed was inside her car; Buchanan appeared to have been shot on his way to join her. Police said **Chase** was a jilted boyfriend who sought revenge on his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend.

The killer wore a Michael Myers mask from the movie "Halloween." When **Chase** was arrested running away from the scene, police found the mask - with his skin cells inside, DNA experts testified - in a knapsack with his belongings.

It was the second girlfriend **Chase** had killed. He served six years in prison for the 1990 shooting death of his girlfriend, 21-year-old LaDonna Myers, who was six months pregnant with their child. She, too, was found slumped in her car with two bullet wounds to her head.

In that case, **Chase** was convicted of manslaughter, a felony with a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

"I hoped it wouldn't happen again," said Vernessa Myers, LaDonna's sister, who attended **Chase**'s sentencing alongside family members of Reed and Buchanan. "It's sad. There's no justice here."

Chase said nothing in court. His lawyer, Timothy Barkovic, said the jury had only heard a snippet of the real story. Reed had asked his client for help in breaking up with Buchanan on many occasions, he said.

"There's a lot more to the story" than the 10 to 15 minutes prosecutors described during trial, he said, prompting cries and gasps from Buchanan and Reed's family and friends.

Assistant Prosecutor Steve Fox said he was appalled at Barkovic's statement, but he agreed there was more to the story: Reed was afraid of **Chase**, he said, and often asked coworkers and neighbors to walk her to her car.

Jurors didn't hear about the 1990 slaying, either.

"It's almost like it was a dress rehearsal for what happened to Rema Reed and Terry Buchanan," Fox said.

Judge Peter Maceroni dismissed the idea that the shooting might have been justified.

"I don't care what happened outside of those 10 to 15 minutes," he said. "Nothing would justify the taking of two human lives."

Though the life sentences were no surprise -- they're mandatory under Michigan law - they still prompted sighs of relief from friends and family.

Mitchell doubled over in tears. James Reed, Rema Reed's father, smiled.

In a letter to the court, Rema Reed's mother, Charlene Reed, said she was disappointed she couldn't attend the sentencing because she lives in New York. **Chase** was a monster, she wrote.

"I would spit into his face a million times over if given the chance," she said in a letter that Fox read into the court record.

Maceroni said that **Chase**'s life sentence was not meant to be a deterrent, but rather meant as protection so **Chase** could never hurt anyone again. Guards gently hushed the victims' families and they began to applaud.

"Have fun!" called out Somona Walker, 33, one of Reed's neighbors, as **Chase** was led away in handcuffs. "It's over."

Contact AMBER HUNT at 586-826-7267 or ahunt@freepress.com.

ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: **Xavier Chase** appears before Judge Peter Maceroni during his murder trial at Macomb County Circuit Court Friday, Nov. 21, 2008. **Chase** was sentenced today to two mandatory life sentences for killing Terry Buchanan and Rema Reed in Warren in November 2007.

CAPTIONWRITER: (Gary Malerba/Special to the Free Press.)

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