

# Jury has King murder case

*Ennie - murder*

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SANTA CRUZ — A Superior Court jury began deliberations Thursday afternoon in the Robert Spedding murder trial.

Spedding, 30, a summit-area construction worker, is accused of ordering Ernie King to jump to his death from a fast-moving pickup truck after trying to rob King on June 24, 1988. He is charged with first-degree murder.

King, 38, of Live Oak, was a graduate student at San Jose State University. He was married, with two young sons.

According to testimony at Spedding's trial, King suffered from tunnel vision and could not drive. He regularly rode to and from school with a classmate who lived at the

summit.

From there, King would either call his wife to come pick him up or obtain a ride from one of the commuters who used a lot near the phone booth on Summit Road near Highway 17.

On June 24, 1988, King approached Spedding and several of Spedding's drunken co-workers for a ride.

Testimony showed that Spedding struck King and knocked him to the ground.

Assistant District Attorney Christine McGuire alleges that Spedding then ordered King into the back of a pickup truck and that he demanded money as the truck roared out of the lot onto Summit Road.

When King produced an empty

wallet, Spedding ordered him to leap to his death, McGuire argued in her closing argument to the jury Thursday.

Defense attorney Mitchell Page argued that Spedding struck King because he at first mistook King's vision problem for a homosexual advance.

But, Page argued, Spedding then helped King up and offered him a ride, which King accepted.

He argued that King became scared as the truck swerved through the curves at a high rate of speed and tried to jump to safety. He argued that King made a fatal mistake.

The jury received the case about 3 p.m. and adjourned at 5 o'clock. It will resume deliberations this morning.