

Man found guilty of ex-senator's son's murder

✓ *Murder* *Simon 4.3.05*
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A San Francisco jury Wednesday convicted a 21-year-old man in the shooting death of the son of former state Sen. Bruce McPherson, more than three years after he was killed in a botched street robbery.

Clifton Terrell Jr. was found guilty of first-degree murder after an attempted robbery with a firearm that resulted in the Nov. 17, 2001, death of Hunter Bohan McPherson, 27, as he walked home with his girlfriend in San Francisco's Portrero Hill district.

McPherson refused to hand over his wallet to Terrell and was shot in the chest, the prosecution argued. Terrell also was found guilty of robbing McPherson's girlfriend, Alexa Savelle.

Minutes after the verdicts were read Wednesday afternoon, San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris hugged a smiling Bruce McPherson, as she said "Great, great."



McPherson
Shot during robbery in 2001 in San Francisco.

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Assistant District Attorney Harry Dorfman, who prosecuted the case, said he plans to ask the judge to impose a life sentence without parole. The jury, which deliberated for a week, found the murder carried special circumstances because it was committed during an armed robbery. Sentencing is scheduled for May 6.

McPherson is a Santa Cruz Republican who last month accepted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's nomination to replace Kevin Shelley as secretary of state. He is expected to win legislative confirmation after hearings, which will be scheduled after Shelley steps down Friday.

In a statement from the family, read by prosecutor Dorfman, the McPhersons said "despite the verdicts handed down today, no verdict could possibly

lessen the loss of our son."

As a legislator, McPherson supported gun control laws.

It continued, "This is another very sad example of how drugs and guns don't mix."

When Terrell took the stand in the two-week trial, he testified he had been in a three-day drug-induced haze and his attorney blamed the murder on an accomplice, Dwayne Reed. Reed testified against Terrell, after making a deal with the prosecution.

One of Terrell's defense attorneys, Ira Barg, maintained during the trial that when his client confessed to his mother, he was just repeating lies told him by Reed and San Francisco police.

The six-man, six-woman jury acquitted Terrell on two other robbery counts he faced in an unrelated assault on that same November night, and the jury foreman told Judge John K.

Stewart they remained "hopelessly deadlocked" on two other robbery charges in yet a third incident that same night.

Stewart sent the jury back for further deliberations, and asked that no one in the court display emotion. Stephen Scherr, another member of Terrell's defense team, said he would have no comment on the verdicts while the jury was continuing its deliberations.

Bruce McPherson sat in the front row of the courtroom, next to his wife, Mary, who wore dark sunglasses. Before the jury returned, he stared hard at Terrell. But the couple remained nearly emotionless after the guilty verdict was read. Prosecutor Dorfman turned to them and gave a slight smile.

Savelle, however, broke down in tears during the reading and Mary McPherson leaned over to comfort her.

Terrell displayed no visible emotion, but a woman who sat with his supporters ran out of the courtroom sobbing.

After refusing to give up his wallet to a lone robber, McPherson was shot once in the chest with a chrome-colored handgun as he was accosted just before 2 a.m.

Prosecutors said Terrell and his accomplice, Reed, 25, were crack cocaine dealers who lived in a nearby housing project.

The prosecution's strongest evidence was a tape-recorded phone call Terrell made to his mother while in police custody. He tearfully told her he had accidentally killed a "senator's son" and begged for her forgiveness.

The case had dragged on for years after an unusually long 13-month-long preliminary hearing, at which Savelle pointed to Reed when asked who

shot McPherson. But Savelle quickly added that she couldn't say for sure.

Rather than bring both Reed and Terrell to trial, the district attorney's office decided to cut a deal with Reed to bolster its case. In exchange for his testimony at the trial, Reed was released from jail Feb. 18.

Hunter McPherson was a popular basketball and baseball player at Harbor High School in Santa Cruz. In his senior year, he was elected "friendliest guy at school." He graduated in 1997 from the University of California-Berkeley.

When he was killed, McPherson was an account executive for BizDevEx, a San Francisco sales and business-development company.

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