

William Balfour Found Guilty

Jury Convicts Jennifer Hudson's Former Brother-in-law Of Murder

BY MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press

CHICAGO — A Chicago jury on Friday convicted Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson's former brother-in-law of murdering her mother, brother and 7-year-old nephew in what prosecutors' described as an act of vengeance by a jilted husband.

Hudson, who expressed her undisguised disdain for William Balfour when she took the witness stand and who endured weeks of excruciating testimony about the October 2008 killings, was visibly overcome with emotion as the verdict was read. Hudson's eyes filled with tears and she shook her head and bit her lip. Afterward, she looked over at her sister, Julia Hudson, and smiled.

Balfour, who faces a mandatory life prison sentence, showed no emotion.

Jurors deliberated for three days before reaching their verdict against Balfour, a 31-year-old former gang member who was the estranged husband of Hudson's sister at the time of the triple murders.

With no surviving witnesses to the Oct. 24, 2008, slayings or fingerprints, prosecutors built a circumstantial case against Balfour by calling 83 witnesses over 11 days of testimony. Witnesses said he threatened to kill the entire family if Julia Hudson spurned him.

Balfour's attorneys proposed an alternate theory: that someone else in the crime-ridden neighborhood on Chicago's South Side targeted the family because of alleged crack-cocaine dealing by Jennifer Hudson's brother, Jason Hudson. During the 30 minutes in which they called just two witnesses, however, they presented no evidence to support that theory.

Public defender Amy Thompson said she would appeal the verdict.

"It has always been our position and it still is that William Balfour is innocent of these murders," Thompson said.

Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez reiterated to reporters what prosecutors had told jurors: that the evidence against Balfour was overwhelming.

Jurors said their deliberations were cordial and that Jennifer Hudson's celebrity didn't influence them.

The verdict came shortly after jurors sent the judge a note saying they were split, though they did not say they were hopelessly dead-



Juror Jacinta Gholston, left, speaks at the Cook County Criminal Courts Building on Friday, May 11, 2012, after the jury convicted William Balfour on all counts in the murders of Jennifer Hudson's family members.

locked. Jurors said afterward that it took some of them more time to piece everything together, and that a key was cellphone records showing Balfour was in the area when the killings happened.

Jennifer Hudson, who was in Florida at the time, attended every day of the two weeks of testimony, sobbing when photos of her relatives' bloodied bodies were displayed to jurors during closing arguments.

Alvarez said Hudson would not speak to the media about the verdict but would release a statement "at the appropriate time."

Hudson, 30, rose to prominence as a 2004 "American Idol" finalist. But she became a bona fide star for her performance in the film adaptation of the musical, "Dreamgirls," for which she won the 2007 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

Hudson was the first witness prosecutors called to testify, and during her more than 30 minutes on the stand she talked about her murdered family members and spoke endearingly about her nephew, Julian King, whom she called Tugga Bear. She said she knew Balfour since the eighth grade and always deeply disliked him.

Balfour had lived in the Hudsons' three-story Englewood home after marrying Julia Hudson in 2006. He moved out in early 2008 after falling out with his wife, but witnesses told jurors he often stalked the home.

The killings occurred the morning after Julia Hudson's birthday, and prosecutors said he became enraged when he stopped by the home and saw a gift of balloons in the house from her new boyfriend.

After his estranged wife left for her job as a bus driver on the morning of Oct. 24, 2008, prosecutors said Balfour went back inside the home with a .45-caliber handgun and shot Hudson's mother, Darnell Donerson, 57, in the back; he allegedly then shot Jason Hudson, 29, twice in the head as he lay in bed.

Prosecutors said Balfour then drove off in Jason Hudson's SUV with Julian — Julia's son, whom she called Juice Box — and shot the boy several times in the head as he lay behind a front seat. His body was found in the abandoned vehicle miles away after a three-day search.

The defense tried to counter the portrayal of Balfour as an embittered husband by noting Julia Hudson continued to have sex with him until just days before the killings.

In heated closings Wednesday, Thompson, almost shouting, said prosecutors had failed to prove their case. Prosecutor James McKay shot back that the defense was exploiting a popular misunderstanding that circumstantial evidence is lesser evidence.

Haitians Hope Ore Finds Will Spur Economy

TROU DU NORD, Haiti (AP) — Its capital is blighted with earthquake rubble. Its countryside is shorn of trees, chopped down for fuel. And yet, Haiti's land may hold the key to relieving centuries of poverty, disaster and disease: There is gold hidden in its hills — and silver and copper, too.

A flurry of exploratory drilling in the past year has found precious metals worth potentially \$20 billion deep below the tropical ridges in the country's northeastern mountains. Now, a mining company is drilling around the clock to determine how to get those metals out.

In neighboring Dominican Republic, workers are poised to start mining the other side of this seam later this year in one of the world's largest gold deposits: 23 million ounces worth about \$40 billion.

The Haitian government's annual budget is \$1 billion, more than half provided by foreign assistance. The largest single source of foreign investment, \$2 billion, came from Haitians working abroad last year. A windfall of locally produced wealth could pay for roads, schools, clean water and sewage systems for the nation's 10 million people, most of whom live on as little as \$1.25 a day.

"If the mining companies are honest and if Haiti has a good government, then here is a way for this country to move forward," said Bureau of Mines Director Dieuseul Anglade.

Carroll Shelby Dies In Texas At Age 89

DALLAS (AP) — Carroll Shelby, the legendary car designer and champion auto racer who built the fabled Shelby Cobra sports car and injected testosterone into Ford's Mustang and Chrysler's Viper, has died. He was 89.

Shelby's company, Carroll Shelby International, said Friday that Shelby died the night before at a Dallas hospital. Doctors have not released a cause of death.

"We are all deeply saddened, and feel a tremendous sense of loss for Carroll's family, ourselves and the entire automotive industry," said Joe Conway, president of Carroll Shelby International, Inc. and board member. "There has been no one like Carroll Shelby and never will be. However, we promised Carroll we would carry on, and he put the team, the products and the vision in place to do just that."

Shelby was one of the nation's longest-living heart transplant recipients, having received a heart on June 7, 1990, from a 34-year-old man who died of an aneurysm. Shelby also received a kidney transplant in 1996 from his son, Michael.

The 1992 inductee into the Automobile Hall of Fame had homes in Los Angeles and his native east Texas.

Cheaper Gas Drives Wholesale Prices Lower

WASHINGTON (AP) — A big decline in gas and energy costs drove a measure of U.S. wholesale prices lower in April. Outside that drop, prices barely rose.

The Labor Department said Friday that the producer price index dropped 0.2 percent last month from the previous month. It was the first decline since December and the biggest one-month drop since October.

Wholesale gas prices fell 1.7 percent last month. That accounted for half the drop in energy costs, which was the only major category to decline.

The index measures price changes before they reach the consumer.

For the 12 months that ended in April, wholesale prices have risen just 1.9 percent. That's the smallest 12-month change since October 2009. And it's down from a peak year-over-year increase of 7.1 percent last July, when higher gas and food costs pushed up wholesale prices.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, the so-called core index rose 0.2 percent last month. The core index has increased 2.7 percent during the 12 months that ended in April, down only slightly from March.

Modest wholesale inflation reduces pressure on manufacturers and retailers to raise prices. That helps keep consumer prices stable, which boosts buying power and drives economic growth. Consumer spending makes up 70 percent of economic activity.

Lower inflation also gives the Federal Reserve room to hold interest rates at record-low levels.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said that until core inflation falls to lower levels, he does not expect the Fed to launch other efforts to boost growth.

Syria

Suicide Attacks Add Wild Card Element

BY BASSEM MROUE
AND BEN HUBBARD
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — The latest suicide bombings in the Syrian capital showed an increasing ruthlessness: The attackers struck during rush hour, setting off one blast to draw a crowd before unleashing a much bigger one, killing 55 people and leaving the street strewn with rubble and mangled bodies.

For many, the al-Qaida-style tactics recall those once familiar in the country's eastern neighbor, Iraq, raising fears that Syria's conflict is drifting further away from the Arab Spring calls for political change and closer to a bloody insurgency.

"Syria is slowly but surely turning into another Iraq," said Bilal Y. Saab, a Syria expert at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

The presence of al-Qaida militants and other extremists adds a wild card element to the Syria conflict that could further hamper international efforts to end it. While world powers and U.N. observers in Syria can pressure the government and the opposition to stick to special envoy Kofi Annan's peace plan, they have no means of influencing shadowy Islamic militants who often don't claim their own attacks.

Western officials say there is little doubt that al-Qaida-affiliated extremists have made inroads in Syria since the popular uprising against President Bashar Assad began 14 months ago. But much remains unclear about their numbers, influence and activities inside Syria.

"We do have intelligence that indicates that there is an al-Qaida presence in Syria, but frankly we don't have very good intelligence as to just exactly what their activities are," U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told reporters in Washington on Thursday.

Panetta said he didn't know whether al-Qaida was connected to the latest bombings in Damascus. Amateur videos posted online provide occasional glimpses of extremist activity.

One video posted this week shows a suicide attack that reportedly took place on May 2 in the northern town of Idlib. In the footage, a white van speeds toward an army checkpoint and erupts into a huge ball of flame as it nears the soldiers, sending their bodies flying.

In February, al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri called on Muslims in neighboring countries to join the uprising, saying Syria's rebels must not rely on the West.

Syria's uprising started in March 2011 with mostly peaceful protests inspired by successful revolts elsewhere calling for political reform. The Syrian government re-

sponded with a brutal crackdown, prompting many in the opposition to take up arms to defend themselves and attack government troops.

The U.N. said weeks ago that more than 9,000 people have been killed. Hundreds more have died since.

Thursday's twin blasts in Damascus were the fifth in a string of major attacks in Syrian cities that have clouded the picture of a fight between the opposition and the regime. It was the deadliest yet, in part because it happened on a key thoroughfare during rush hour, while previous bombings were on weekends.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blasts, although a shadowy militant group calling itself the Al-Nusra Front has claimed past attacks through statements posted on militant websites. Little is known about the group, although Western intelligence officials say it could be a front for al-Qaida.

Throughout the conflict, the government and its foes have tried to tar each other with accusations of links to the terror network.

On Friday, Burhan Ghalioun, head of the opposition Syrian National Council, accused the government of cooperating with al-Qaida to carry out the Damascus attacks, using the violence as a way to taint the uprising.

A day earlier, Syria's Ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari, told the U.N. Security

Council in New York that al-Qaida, backed by unnamed foreign governments, was behind the attacks.

Late Friday, the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group and a strong Assad ally warned that attacks like Thursday's could tear Syria apart. Sheik Hassan Nasrallah told supporters via videolink that the same hands that "destroyed and killed in Iraq ... want to destroy Syria today."

Syria's rebels — vastly outnumbered and outgunned by Assad's armed forces and security apparatus — have adopted insurgency tactics, regularly ambushing military checkpoints and convoys.

But Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey differentiated Thursday between extremists and the opposition.

"We do know that there have been extremist elements that are trying to make inroads in Syria," he said. "That is to be distinct from the opposition. I'm not tying those together."

Sometimes, the line between them is unclear.

On Friday, the pro-government TV station Ikhbariya said police shot dead a man driving a truck filled with 1,500 kilograms (3,300 pounds) of explosives. It broadcast video of a police general showing two U.N. observers a minibus holding four large metal containers rigged with explosives.

In the driver's seat, a bearded, bloodied man wore what appeared

to be an explosive belt.

"It was similar to the terrorist attack that targeted Damascus yesterday," the general told the observers.

The videos could not be independently verified, and the opposition often accuses pro-Assad media of staging events. Nor was it clear what group — if any — the would-be bomber belonged to.

With Fondest Memories

We remember those who have passed away and are especially dear to us.

On Saturday, May 26th we will publish in print and online at Yankton.net a Memorial Day section devoted to those who are gone but not forgotten.

Aneta Burrows

Dec. 30, 1960-Nov. 8, 2002

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- May God cradle you in his arms, now and forever.
- Forever missed, never forgotten. May God hold you in the palm of His hand.
- Thank you for the wonderful days we shared together. My prayers will be with you until we meet again.
- The days we shared were sweet. I long to see you again in God's heavenly glory.
- Your courage and bravery still inspire us all, and the memory of your smile fills us with joy and laughter.
- Though out of sight, you'll forever be in my heart and mind.
- May the light of peace shine on your face for eternity.
- May God's angels guide you and protect you throughout time.
- You were a light in our life that burns forever in our hearts.
- May God's graces shine over you for all time.
- You are in our thoughts and prayers from morning to night and from year to year.
- We send this message with a loving kiss for eternal rest and happiness.
- May the Lord bless you with His graces and warm, loving heart.
- I have written my own message and it is included.

To remember your loved one in this special way, send \$10.00 per listing.

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