

# Jury Opts For Life Sentence Following King's Guilty Plea

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Gore agreed to drop a charge of first-degree kidnapping and to delay sentencing for the robbery.

"Tyrone King is a cold-blooded murderer," Gore told the jury in his argument for the death penalty. "He may look too young. He may look too quiet. He may look too angelic. But folks, there is no mistake. He is. He is."

"You know that he did it," Gore said. "Now is the time for you who value human life to decide if Tyrone King forfeited his right to live when he murdered Ronald Evans and stole from him the only thing he had of value, his 1987 Honda."

One by one, Gore asked the jurors to weigh the list of factors they would be required to consider in King's behalf "against the fact that he decided that Ronald Evans' life was worth less than a 1987 Honda."

Then, one by one, defense attorney Michael Ramos reminded the jury that each of those factors told something important about Tyrone King, things Ramos said ought to be considered in addition to the moments leading up to the murder.

"All life has value," Ramos said. "The state wants you to believe that Mr. King's life doesn't have value. But that's not the case. Mr. Gore wants to fine tune his life down to 30 seconds and throw out everything else. But that's not how we value people. His life is more than just that 30 seconds."

A series of witnesses testified in King's behalf at the sentencing hearing Monday, portraying the defendant as a normal, energetic teen-ager who had never been in serious trouble, who loved his family and who helped care for an aging grandfather with arthritis.

Under cross examination, those witnesses also said King dropped out of school in the ninth grade, that he never held a steady job and failed to pay child support for his four-year-old daughter.



WAITING as defense attorneys negotiate a plea arrangement with confessed murderer Bradley Tyrone King are (from left) SBI Agent Kelly Moser, Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson, SBI Agent Mac Warner and District Attorney Rex Gore.

Rev. Shelton Patterson, a Baptist preacher from North Myrtle Beach, described the day King "accepted Jesus Christ" in the Brunswick County Jail shortly after his arrest. Patterson said that in later visits to the jail, King often asked about Bible passages and showed "real spiritual growth."

Recalling these and other statements, Ramos said King "wasn't a bad person," but one who "apparently

made an error in judgment" and "got hooked up with the wrong people." He reminded the jury that King had agreed to testify against his co-defendant in the case.

"That's going to be kind of hard to do if he's sentenced to death," Ramos said.

"This has been an ordeal for all of us. But in every ordeal, something good can come of it," he said. "You have a real chance to show mercy. How many of you

have ever had the life of a human being in your hands?"

"We're all going to die. We're all going to meet the Lord in whatever form we believe He or She exists," Ramos said. "When we do, I believe the Lord will say, 'You had an opportunity to be merciful...Were you?'"

After the decision was read and King was led from the courtroom, Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger said he was pleased with the outcome. Although he had argued for the death penalty, he said he felt the jury had made a "reasonable" decision in imposing the life sentence.

"Under the circumstances they were given, what they did was certainly proper under the law," he said. "I was very pleased with their conduct and attentiveness during the trial." Bollinger also said the plea arrangement will give the state much stronger evidence in the prosecution of King's co-defendant.

"Our primary goals in this case were to convict Bradley Tyrone King of first degree murder and to put him in a position to testify against William Earl Hill," he said.

Under current N.C. Department of Correction policies, King will not be eligible for parole for at least 20 years on the life sentence. He still faces an additional 14-to-40-year sentence on the armed robbery conviction, for which he would be required to serve a minimum of seven years.

"While I feel this is a victory, it's certainly a hollow one," Bollinger said, referring to the family of Ronald Evans. "There was nothing we could do in the courtroom to remove the pain and anguish they are suffering, not only in coping with the death of their son, but also in spending three weeks looking at his killer."

"We have some good results," he said. But it's not going to take their pain away. Although it might give them some closure."

## 14 Squads Fight 1,600-Acre Blaze; Some Homes Evacuated

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sitioned in front of each house in the fire zone or patrolling roadsides, hunting down and dousing spotovers as they popped up. The fire was burning on both sides of N.C. 211 below Midway Road, with frequent spotovers.

"It's just continuous, with the wind like it is," said Logan, who was serving as deputy incident commander on the scene. "It's so smoky we can't see them. When one comes up and we see it, it's almost too late."

Roger Suggs, chief of Supply Volunteer Fire Department, was staffing the Emergency Management mobile unit set up between Brunswick Electric Membership Corp.'s office and the county water plant on N.C. 211.

"It's a madhouse," he said. "We've got 14 fire departments here and about 100 people." The storm, as of 10:30 p.m., had provided little relief, he said, less than one-tenth of an inch of rain.

Heavy smoke and/or danger of fire closed Midway Road and N.C. 211 remained closed between Midway Road and N.C. 133 from 9 a.m. on Tuesday.

It was unanticipated high winds in midafternoon that caused the controlled backfire to literally backfire on state firefighters and send the blaze reeling out of its control lines,

doubling its acreage by Tuesday night.

"We were trying to burn approximately 300 acres on the west flank of the fire, trying to eliminate its source of fuel with a controlled burn," said Laura Barston, a Division of Forest Resources spokesman. "The fire was moving to the north-northeast. Unfortunately, with all those winds..."

At 4:30 p.m. Tuesday the controlled burn "spotted over," crossing N.C. 211 at Midway Road near the Midway Trading Post. It advanced steadily, pushed by midafternoon winds of 20 mph to 25 mph.

"That was not in the forecast," said Barston. "The wind is really a big concern for us right now." Winds were holding steady at 8 mph to 10 mph Tuesday evening. Winds had been expected to continue out of the south-southwest at 10 mph to 15 mph Tuesday night, but were skewed by passing thunderstorms.

More help was on the way—a regional "major" team was expected to be in place by 8 a.m. Wednesday to help with planning the firefighting strategy and handle administrative details such as provisioning and sheltering firefighters and cost accounting.

The American Red Cross arrived on the scene Tuesday evening bringing food and drinks for firefighters, while Archer-Daniel-Midland pro-

vided two larger tankers of water to refill fire department pumpers, and an N.C. Department of Transportation gas tanker refueled fire trucks.

The original wildfire began July 26 when lightning struck in thick, inaccessible woodland between N.C. 211 and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. Firefighters had contained the blaze at about 270 acres until Sunday afternoon, when at 12:45 p.m. it broke through containment lines to the north and spread quickly, pushed by strong winds from the south.

"We had three ground personnel from Brunswick County working on the south end of the fire," said Greg Pate, a Division of Forest Resources spokesman. "A scout plane was monitoring the fire periodically and saw the spotover."

"By the time they could get around to it, it was more than they could handle."

It had burned another approximately 450 acres by the time firefighters were able to contain it. Working as a team Sunday afternoon, forest service firefighters tackled the blaze with tractors and backfires and quenched spotovers with 300-gallon buckets of water dropped by helicopter. Volunteer firefighters watered down the roadsides along N.C. 211 to keep the fire from jumping.



DISTRICT FOREST RANGER Hugh Frazer pauses on the scene of a fire break cut to hold a woods fire that jumped N.C. 211 Monday afternoon after burning 800 acres east of the highway. High winds were playing havoc with containment efforts Tuesday night.

## County To Exercise More Control Over School Board's Spending

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"I don't think we even had any transfers last year of that size (more than 10 percent), but I'll look and see," said Connor. "I don't see it as a problem."

The Brunswick County Board of Education is challenging its \$9.4 million allocation from the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. Though it represented a 17 percent increase over the previous year's allocation, the appropriation was nearly \$5 million less than the school board had requested.

The two boards reached no compromise at a July 23 joint meeting, and the school board appealed to Clerk of Superior Court Diana Morgan. After meeting with attorneys for the two boards, she referred the matter to Superior Court.

Judge William C. Gore, Brunswick County's resident Superior Court judge, referred the civil case to professional mediation. The two boards (or at least enough members to constitute a quorum of each) and their respective attorneys will meet behind closed doors Tuesday, Aug. 10, on the Brunswick Community College campus with Andy Little, of Mediation Inc. in Chapel Hill.

Mediation is standard first procedure for all civil Superior Court cases coming into in the 13th District and eight other judicial districts in-

involved in a statewide pilot project.

"We use it, or try to, with all our Superior Court civil cases," said Steve Foster, trial court administrator for the 13th District.

For a typical case, successful mediation cuts the time required for resolution by approximately four to six months. And cases that go through mediation without resolution are typically set for hearing on a firmer schedule.

"It makes for better utilization of court time," said Foster, predicting that mediation will be adopted as a statewide court procedure in the near future.

During the pilot program's first year in the three-county 13th District, 63 percent of the court's caseload—more than one out of every two cases—was settled through mediation. The district had a 102.4 percent disposition rate for the year ending June 30, with 411 new cases filed and disposition of 421 cases.

The rate was even higher in Brunswick County, where 152 cases were filed and 174 disposed, for a 114.5 percent disposition rate. "Last year we had a 91.3 percent disposition rate," he said.

Mediation is based on the idea of give-and-take by both parties, with neither side winning or losing 100 percent.

"The goal of the mediator is to direct negotiations to "some reasonable settlement," said Foster. "I hope our school board and board of commissioners are able to utilize it to the maximum."

The mediator may talk privately with each party involved, or in the case of the two boards, confer with one board or another, or allow members of a board time to confer among themselves. "He gives them directions for negotiating. If they are not able to reach an agreement, the mediator declares an impasse and the case goes on to Superior Court."

In this case, by a state law which gives the budget appeal process top priority on the court's calendar, it would be heard during the next session, which begins Aug. 16.

During mediation, while the two boards can confer on the framework of a compromise behind closed doors, each must approve any agreement reached by a vote taken in open session.

## Coach Cleared Of Recruiting Charge

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schools to recruit athletes, which is defined as subjecting students to "undue influence" to change schools for athletic reasons.

Lemon said the athletic association needs to clarify its rules regarding recruiting, which NCHSAA officials admit are vague.

"They ought to clear it up for themselves," Lemon said. "They ap-

parently have trouble with it themselves."

Strunk said one of the football players involved in the incident, Charlie Peele, will attend West Brunswick this year. He was practicing with the Trojans early this week.

The other student, Max Crawford, is moving to Polk County with his mother. Strunk said the mother, Vickie Ray, has been looking to

move from Myrtle Beach, S.C., to Polk County since February.

Crawford, who played defensive tackle for West Brunswick's state championship team last year, is the second Trojan football player to relocate to Polk in the last two years.

Last year the NCHSAA ruled there was no illegal recruiting when Chris Mintz, a rising sophomore at West, moved to Polk County. Mintz' father also moved to Polk and was hired by the school system.

Mintz played football, basketball and baseball at West Brunswick. The junior linebacker/tight end is considered one of the top high school football prospects in the state.

## Forecast Calls For Above-Average Rain

A chance of above-average rainfall is in the forecast for the South Brunswick Islands.

The area is expected to receive at least three-quarters inch of rainfall, Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday. Temperatures are expected to be near normal, averaging from the lower 70s at night to around 90 degrees during the daytime.

No local rainfall was recorded for the period of July 27 through Aug. 2.

Canady recorded a maximum high of 96 degrees on both July 29 and 30, and a minimum low of 65 degrees the night of Aug. 1.

An average daily high of 94 degrees combined with an average nightly low of 74 degrees for a daily average temperature of 84 degrees, which is about 3 degrees above average.

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