

Pastor Found Guilty In Murder-For-Hire Case

Written by Brian Rogers
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After a Houston pastor's wife was shot execution-style in her garage last year, police suspected her husband.

They later came to charge the pastor, his son and the woman who was dating both men.

Pastor Tracy Bernard "T.B." Burluson distracted Pauletta Burluson with a shouting match so his 21-year-old son could creep up and shoot her in the head for part of her life insurance money, prosecutors said Monday.

"He manipulated his son, who was easily manipulated," prosecutor Kari Allen said Monday in opening arguments of Burluson's capital murder trial. The 46-year-old faces life in prison without parole if convicted.

Defense lawyers for Burluson said a web of skulduggery, including an affair Burluson had with a woman his son was in love with, led to the slaying.

Attorney Laine Lindsey said William Fuller was trying to frame his father for the shooting so he

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could date Burleson's mistress, Tyonne Palmer.

"William ended up dating Ty after the shooting," Lindsey told jurors. Fuller, who is charged with murder, is expected to testify against his father.

Lindsey also suggested an even more nefarious plot alleging that Palmer, 32, orchestrated the shooting to be with the pastor whose church burned down a week earlier. Palmer also is charged with capital murder, accused of picking up Fuller after the shooting and helping him destroy the murder weapon.

\$60,000 policy

Jurors in state District Judge Susan Brown's court spent several days listening to the first half of Burleson's recorded statement to police.

The pastor is accused of convincing his son to shoot his 56-year-old wife as she sat in the family's garage on May 18, 2010.

For more than two hours, he can be heard saying he was not involved.

"I'm giving you the truth," Burleson said. "I did not shoot my wife."

Jurors also heard there was a life insurance policy on Pauletta Burleson totaling about \$60,000. They will hear the rest of the statement today.

Police investigating the shooting said a neighbor heard a gunshot about 10:15 p.m.

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An hour later Burluson called police to report that he had just arrived home to find his wife was dead.

He said the couple argued in the driveway, then he went to a convenience store for chips and candy, neither of which were found in his car, according to court records.

Police did discover, however, that the store he said he went to closed at 10 p.m. that night.

A confidential informant later told police Fuller admitted to shooting his stepmother in exchange for money from his father, court records show. He also said he often fought with his stepmother.

No charges in fire

Before the shooting, Fuller was diagnosed with sickle cell anemia. He was living with Palmer, who acted as a caretaker.

He is expected to testify that he fell in love with her, but his father became involved with her first. Then, after the shooting, Palmer also began dating Fuller.

Investigators said she was dating both men at the same time.

After being arrested, Fuller led police to the murder weapon that he said he tried to burn with Palmer.

During his taped interview, the pastor also denied any wrongdoing involving a fire that destroyed his Fifth Ward church, the First New Mount Calvary Baptist Church, the week before the shooting.

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No charges are expected to be filed in the connection with the fire.

Burleson's trial is expected to last a week.{jcomments on}