

BALLARD, John R. (W/M)

DC# 181741

DOB: 09/03/68

Twentieth Judicial Circuit, Collier County Case # 01-1353

Sentencing Judge: The Honorable Lauren Brodie

Attorney, Trial: Michael Orlando & Joe Rineila – Assistant Public Defenders

Attorney, Direct Appeal: Paul Helm – Assistant Public Defender

Date of Offense: 03/07/99

Date of Sentence: 05/23/03

Circumstances of Offense:

Jennifer Jones and Willie Patin lived in an apartment together, and were planning to move to Texas on Monday, March 8, 1999. Friends of Jones and Patin noted that John Ballard was an acquaintance of Jones and Patin, and he was frequently a guest in the apartment several times prior to and also including the weekend prior to March 8th. It was well known that Jones sold marijuana out of the apartment and considerable sums of money were typically present in several locations in the apartment.

Ariana Harralambus, a friend of Jones and Patin tried to contact the couple on March 8th, but was unsuccessful. She was concerned and called Jones' father to help her investigate. They gained access to the apartment by prying the sliding glass door open and discovered Jones' body in the master bedroom and Patin's body in the spare bedroom.

Forensic technicians lifted several fingerprints from the bed frame and several hairs were found clutched in the hands of both Jones and Patin. Both Jones and Patin died of blunt force trauma to the head.

Subsequent to the murders, law enforcement personnel questioned Jones and Patin's acquaintances, including Ballard. Forensic analysis determined that the fingerprints found on the bed frame belonged to Ballard, and the hairs found in the victims' hands were consistent with the hair of Ballard. Ballard hypothesized that Jones and Patin were robbed and killed by others who knew about the money that was frequently kept in the apartment. Ballard also told investigators that he witnessed a drive-by shooting. During the week prior to the murders, several shots were fired into the apartment's windows.

Prior Incarceration History in the State of Florida:

Offense Date	Offense	Sentence Date	County	Case No.	Prison Sentence Length
11/06/1986	BURG/DWELL/OCCUP.CONVEY	11/16/1987	PALM BEACH	8612093	6Y 0M 0D
11/03/1986	BURG/DWELL/OCCUP.CONVEY	11/16/1987	PALM BEACH	8612194	6Y 0M 0D
11/05/1986	TRAFFIC IN STOLEN PROPERTY	11/16/1987	PALM BEACH	8612194	6Y 0M 0D
06/14/1987	BURGUNOCCSTRUC/CV OR ATT.	11/16/1987	PALM BEACH	8707019	6Y 0M 0D

Trial Summary:

06/14/01 Indicted as follows:
Count I: First-Degree Murder (Jennifer Jones)
Count II: First-Degree Murder (Willie Patin)
Count III: Armed Robbery

04/04/03 Jury returned guilty verdicts on all counts of the indictment

04/11/03 Jury recommended death by a vote of 9-3

05/23/03 Sentenced as follows:
Count I: First-Degree Murder (Jennifer Jones) – Death
Count II: First-Degree Murder (Willie Patin) – Death
Count III: Armed Robbery – 15 Years

Appeal Summary:

Florida Supreme Court – Direct Appeal

FSC# 03-1012
923 So.2d 475

06/06/03 Direct Appeal filed
02/23/06 FSC reversed convictions and vacated sentences
02/24/06 Mandate issued

Case Information:

On 06/06/03, Ballard filed a Direct Appeal with the Florida Supreme Court, citing the following errors: failing to prove the charges, failing to find a discovery violation regarding the fingerprint comparison chart, finding that the defense failed to prove the mitigating factors of brain damage and impaired capacity, and failing to have aggravating circumstances determined by the jury. On 02/23/06, the FSC reversed the convictions, vacated the sentences, and remanded to the Circuit Court for a judgment of acquittal.

The FSC determined that the evidence presented at trial, specifically the fingerprints and hairs, were legally insufficient to support the convictions.

Law Enforcement / Prosecution Statements:

In a statement to the St. Petersburg Times, Assistant State Attorney Michael Provost still thinks Ballard was guilty of murder:

I don't want to make it sound like sour grapes, but we thought we had enough evidence to convict and the jury did, too. There was one hair you could identify in that whole apartment and it happened to be John Ballard's and it happened to show up in her hand. I don't think that's probable unless he's a really unlucky guy. Same with the fingerprint.

In a statement to the Naples Daily News, Provost said, "We certainly knew that it was a close case going in. I'm disappointed, mostly for the victims' families."

Defense Statement:

In a statement to the St. Petersburg Times, Assistant Public Defender Michael Orlando says that Ballard was a victim of pressure:

"You're dealing with the intensity of the courtroom in this particular case. All these things tend to put a lot of pressure on jurors."

Current Status:

On 02/24/06, Ballard was released from Union Correctional Institution.

Collier County Sheriff's Office officials have said Ballard is the primary suspect in the November and December 1999 slayings of Glenn Soos, Ballard's brother-in-law, and Allie Walsh, who had been his sister's roommate. Detectives consider both cases to be open and active.

Report Date: 08/07/06 JFL