

Jurors reject a man's plea for a life term in two 1999 execution-style shootings.

SECOND JURY RECOMMENDS DEATH

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Author: JAMAL THALJI, Times Staff Writer

How much good can a man do if he spends the rest of his life inside a 6-by-9-foot cell?

Lawrence Joey Smith tried to convince the jurors deciding his fate that he could do good behind bars - if only they'd let him live out his days there and spare his life for the crimes of murder and attempted murder.

"If you do give me a chance to live the rest of my life in prison," he said. "I guarantee you I'll do my best to do as much good as I can."

It took the jury four hours on Tuesday to decide that life in prison isn't good enough for Smith - that he belongs back on **death row** .

The jury recommended the death penalty for Smith by a vote of 7 to 5.

It was the second time in seven years that a jury decided that Smith, 30, should be put to death for the 1999 execution-style shootings that left Robert Crawford dead and left a bullet in survivor Stephen Tuttle's brain.

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In Florida, juries recommend capital sentences of life or death, and judges impose them. Circuit Judge Lynn Tepper will take the jury's decision into account when she sentences Smith.

Judges rarely deviate from such recommendations, but Tepper won't have her say until April. After the verdict Tuesday, the Crawford family had its say.

"My family lost my brother the night of Sept. 14, 1999," said older sister Katie Crawford, 27, "by way of murder."

Then she cursed at Smith: "Sick bastard."

Loudly, the judge admonished her: "It is improper to address anyone in this manner."

"I apologize your honor," Katie Crawford said. Then she added: "I feel better already."

Then sister Lisa Crawford, 28, spoke:

"Joey Smith is remorseless," she said. "He continues to look at my family with no emotion on his face. I can hardly control my emotions and sadness looking at him."

"Not once has he even expressed his sorrow for what happened. ..."

And as she spoke, Smith sat emotionless, just as he had throughout the trial.

Assistant State Attorney Manny Garcia read a note from Stephen Tuttle, now 24. Tuttle, left disabled by the bullet still lodged in his brain, stood alongside him.

"I was forced to drop out of school," the note said. "I am unable to hold a job. I am unable to maintain relationships. I cannot trust anyone.

"I cannot help but think what my life could have been had Mr. Smith not robbed mine and Rob's childhoods."

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Katie Crawford said her brother's last moments "will haunt me forever."

Authorities say he and Tuttle were taken by gunpoint to a remote stretch of State Road 54 in Land O'Lakes by Smith and co-defendant Faunce Pearce after losing \$1,200 in drug money.

Smith got Tuttle out of the car and shot him in the back of the head. They drove on, not knowing that Tuttle, then 16, had survived because the bullet ricocheted off his fingers before entering his brain.

They stopped again. Then Crawford was let out and, while begging for his life, gunned down at age 17.

"Is it cold? Is it calculated? Is it premeditated? Absolutely," Garcia, the prosecutor, told jurors in his closing Tuesday. "Robert Crawford knew that the second time that vehicle pulled over, he was going to die.

"And Lawrence Joey Smith knew he was going to kill him."

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The families will have to go through this again.

Pearce's conviction and death sentence were overturned in 2006 because of lawyer error. He awaits retrial on charges of first-degree murder and attempted murder. Pearce, 45, will again face the death penalty.

Smith's conviction was upheld, but his death sentence was overturned in 2004 because of judicial error. He represented himself in this new penalty phase, using what he had learned in the prison law library.

He testified Monday about his broken childhood, about the drugs that consumed his life and about the good he has done with fellow prisoners behind bars.

Smith will have one more chance to persuade the judge to override the jury's recommendation at a March 13 hearing.

Then the judge will impose her sentence on April 22.

Reach Jamal Thalji at thalji@sptimes.com or (727) 869-6236.