

Coldiron gets life in Billings slayings

[Kris Wernowsky](#) • kwernowsky@pnj.com • January 15, 2011

Wayne Coldiron uttered two words before a judge told him he'd spend the rest of his life in prison.

Given the chance to speak to the court, Coldiron said, "No, sir."

A jury found him guilty of first-degree murder Friday in the July 9, 2009, robbery that resulted in the deaths of Byrd and Melanie Billings.

Circuit Judge Nick Geeker sentenced him to two-consecutive life sentences in the couple's death and 15 years on a home invasion charge.

Coldiron chatted casually with a courtroom deputy before his attorneys arrived for the sentencing. He stood between West Palm Beach attorney Gregg Lerman and Pensacola attorney Sharon Wilson as the verdict was read.

He bowed his head as the five-man, seven-woman jury's decision was read. Family members and friends of the Billingses nodded in approval.

The verdict draws to a close the second of the five trials expected in the couple's murder.

Coldiron was one of the five men who entered the house during a robbery. The home invasion turned deadly when Leonard Patrick Gonzalez Jr. gunned the couple down in front of at least one of their nine adopted special-needs children.

Coldiron's defense in the weeklong trial centered around the theory that he was pressured into participating at the last minute and that he was threatened by talk of the involvement of Mexican drug lords if he spoke about what had happened.

"They threatened to shoot my old lady," Coldiron said in an interview with Escambia County sheriff's investigators, which Assistant State Attorney John Molchan played for the jury on Thursday.

Coldiron was told that the group was doing collections of drug money. Gonzalez told others there was up to \$13 million in the home.

In reality, the men made out with a small safe that contain children's prescription medication, paperwork and jewelry. A safe located elsewhere in the house contain \$164,000 from the Billingses' auto- financing company.

