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Two Convictions by Travis County Juries Last Week

Last week separate Travis County juries returned guilty verdicts in two different criminal cases.

The first verdict came on Thursday, July 25, 2019 in the 427th District Court in an Assault Family Violence case where the defendant, Thomas Charles Lenzy, age 42, was found guilty of assaulting a woman in February of this year at the Red Roof Inn. Officers responded to calls from the Red Roof Inn and found the victim in a hallway with a fresh injury to her eye and extensive damage to the room in which she had been staying with the defendant. When officers arrived on scene, Lenzy was exiting the building and told officers that the victim's injury had occurred when she threw the door against the wall causing it to hit the wall and then strike her in the face as it sprung back towards her. Officers found broken lampshades in the hotel room along with a broken doorjamb and observed that the phone had been ripped out of the wall and thrown to the ground. Officers said that the victim's cell phone also had been destroyed.

Following Lenzy's arrest, the State obtained jail calls and letters the defendant had made to the victim. In his communication with the victim, Lenzy told her not to come to court and to call the District Attorney's Office and state that he had not hit her. The victim did not appear in court for Lenzy's trial. The State introduced other phone calls the defendant made from jail to a pastor in which he made several admissions. Over the Defense's objection that the calls were privileged communications between Lenzy and a clergyman, the Court allowed the calls into evidence. The State was able to show the jury that the pastor had facilitated communication between the defendant and the victim while Lenzy was in jail and that the pastor had advised the victim to state that Lenzy had not hit her.

The jury convicted Lenzy of felony Assault Family Violence Enhanced with a Prior Conviction for Assault Family Violence. Lenzy had prior prison trips for additional offenses, which made him a Habitual Offender with a punishment range of 25 years to Life in prison. Following the verdict, the Defendant entered to an agreed sentence of 20 years in prison and waived his right to appeal. Prosecutors James Winters and J. Michael Ohueri represented the State at trial.

Another Travis County jury found Jereme Rucker guilty of Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon in the 147th District Court late last week. Rucker stood accused of pulling a knife on a Jiffy Lube employee in March of this year at the South Lamar location. During trial, prosecutors Jeremy Sylestine and Logan Campbell produced evidence that the victim had seen Rucker arguing with a group of fellow transients while she was getting ready to close the shop. The victim went outside to try to diffuse the altercation when Rucker turned towards her with a knife. After pointing the knife at the victim, Rucker began to walk towards her and said he was going to cut her. The victim was able to lock herself inside the shop and call the police. Rucker represented himself at trial with the assistance of defense attorney Bill Browning, whom the Court appointed on its own motion to advise Rucker during the trial. Following the guilty verdict, Rucker was sentenced to a term of community supervision recommended by the Jury during the punishment phase of the trial.

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