

Stokes guilty in 3 killings at restaurant

A Philadelphia Common Pleas Court jury yesterday convicted Ralph Trent Stokes of three counts of first-degree murder in the shootings last year of two employees and a letter carrier at Smokin' Joe's Korner restaurant on City Avenue, where Stokes once had been a short-order cook.

Assistant District Attorney Roger King said after the verdicts were returned that the prosecution would seek the death penalty in the case. Deliberations were scheduled to begin Monday.

Stokes, 20, of the 5400 block of Morse Street, was charged in the March 11, 1982, slayings of employees Mary Louise Figueroa, 38, and Eugene Jefferson, 35. They were shot in a walk-in freezer after Stokes allegedly became fearful that they had recognized him while he and a second man, both masked, were robbing the now-defunct restaurant.

Also slain during the robbery was Peter Santangelo, 23, who was delivering mail to the restaurant.

The prosecution's chief witness was an admitted accomplice, Donald Jackson, 28, who testified that he had tried to persuade Stokes not to kill the employees. Jackson has been serving a 30- to 70-year term for robbery and has been awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to three counts of second-degree murder in the incident at Smokin' Joe's Korner.

The defense contended that Jackson himself had committed the slayings and had been accompanied by an unidentified juvenile while Stokes had been home eating lunch with his parents.

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