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MAN ACQUITTED IN BEATING DEATH

JOHN ALLARD, Staff Writer

A Pelion man was acquitted of murder and conspiracy charges Friday night in the beating death of a Georgia man in January near the West Columbia Police Department.

A Lexington County jury found Terry Laminack, 31, not guilty after deliberating 5 1/2 hours, said his attorney, **Jack B. Swerling**. Jurors heard conflicting testimony about who killed the Georgia man.

The victim was not identified until Nov. 30, when the Georgia Bureau of Investigation matched the fingerprints with those of John Lee Thompson, 25, said State Law Enforcement Division Lt. James Springs. Knox McMahan, 11th Circuit deputy solicitor, said Thompson died on Jan. 24 after he was beaten in the head inside a house across the street from the West Columbia Police Department. The attack occurred while Thompson was lying unconscious on a bed.

Thompson's blood-alcohol level was 0.29, nearly three times the level at which someone can be charged with driving under the influence, McMahan said. There also were traces of cocaine in his body.

A co-defendant in the case, Joel A. Price, of 1050 Center St., was sentenced Friday night to 12 years in prison for voluntary manslaughter, McMahan said. Price pleaded guilty to that charge last week.

McMahan said he will dismiss murder and conspiracy charges against a third defendant, Johnny Hawkins Jr., primarily because a witness said Hawkins, who lived with Price, had not hurt anyone.



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