

# Man gets 4 death sentences in slayings

- By Dana Treen

GREEN COVE SPRINGS — In the middle of a May night in 2004, Gary Bernard McCray Jr. crept down a wooded path behind an Orange Park house and peered inside to make sure his intended victims were there.

Clothed in black and armed with two guns, the 24-year-old Jacksonville man went inside.

“Almost immediately after entering the house, the defendant began his killing spree,” Circuit Judge William Wilkes said Wednesday during McCray’s sentencing for the four murders that occurred that night.

Two of the victims were shot in the eye, one was shot in the upper back and one was shot four times, Wilkes said before he sentenced McCray, now 29, to four death sentences in what was perhaps Clay County’s worst act of violence in recent memory.

Wilkes said McCray waited until 3 a.m. to commit the crimes because he knew those inside would likely be addled by crack cocaine at that time of night.

In September, the jury voted 12-0 to recommend death.

Calling each murder cold and calculated, Wilkes said it was clear he should follow the recommendation.

“May God have mercy on your soul,” he said.

McCray showed little emotion at the hearing, twisting slightly back and forth as he stood listening during the 20-minute proceeding. Wilkes added a life sentence for use of a firearm in all four murders.

McCray was convicted of fatally shooting people he thought had identified him in an earlier drug raid. John Ellis, 51; Phillip Perotta, 53; Robin Selkirk, 45; and John Whitehead, 37, were killed in the Blanding Boulevard drug house. Three of them had been arrested with McCray at the same house months earlier, according to Times-Union coverage of the case.

McCray’s DNA was detected on a black hooded sweatshirt found at the scene. After the murders, he paid friends \$400 to take him to Tallahassee, the Times-Union reported.

After the sentencing, one victim’s twin brother said he was struck that McCray showed no remorse.

“It’s the end of a long process,” James Perotta said. “[Phillip] died, a part of me died.”

The trial, originally scheduled for March 2006, was delayed when McCray was declared unfit to proceed and sent to a psychiatric facility that January.

Other delays happened because of courtroom outbreaks in which McCray yelled objections and demanded his attorneys be fired.

At his trial, McCray took 45 minutes on the stand to list what he saw as unlawful actions and argued that pieces of evidence were illegally obtained.

In late September, jurors deciding on the sentencing recommendation listened to an hour of McCray rambling about how their trial verdict was wrong before they recommended he face the death penalty.