

Jury recommends death penalty in slaying of Oakland Park man

Boca Raton man convicted of killing 72-year-old Oakland Park man

By Tonya Alanez and Jaideep Hardikar | South Florida Sun Sentinel
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FORT LAUDERDALE - The jury of 12 had already convicted the Boca Raton man of hog-tying, beating, strangling and robbing a 72-year-old man in his Oakland Park home.

On Wednesday, they recommended a death sentence for Eric Kurt Patrick, 46.

Patrick targeted Steven Schumacher, an openly gay man who frequented the Cubby Hole bar in Fort Lauderdale, for robbery, police said.

The 10-time convicted felon confessed to the September 2005 slaying, saying he beat Schumacher because he came onto him.

Patrick stiffened slightly upon hearing the death recommendation.

His 70-year-old mother, Ingrid Franke, sat silently.

The day before, she had testified to the "unmerciful" beatings she and her sons regularly suffered at her drunken husband's hands.

For her: black eyes, bruised face, broken arm. For her boys: welt-inducing, belt-strap whippings.

But for seven of the 12 jurors, accounts of Patrick's childhood of "systematic, brutal, sadistic treatment" did not outweigh the brutality of the murder.

Patrick methodically hog-tied Schumacher, knocked three teeth out of his mouth, pummeled and strangled him, and left him to die in his bathtub, said prosecutor Shari Tate.

"This was not a quick death," she said, gesturing toward a gruesome picture of Schumacher's raw, bloodied head.

The jury reached its decision in about three and a half hours.

Circuit Judge Ilona Holmes will hold another hearing on Aug. 21 and 22 before scheduling a sentencing date.