

Gregory guilty, may face death

By FRANK FERNANDEZ, Staff writer

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DAYTONA BEACH -- A jury will recommend next week whether William Gregory should be put to death after finding him guilty on Thursday of first-degree murder in the shotgun slayings of his ex-girlfriend and her boyfriend in 2007.

Gregory did not appear to move or flinch as the clerk read the first guilty verdict for killing Skyler Meekins, 17. Then Gregory nodded his head slightly as the second guilty verdict was read for killing Daniel Dyer, 22. Gregory shot the couple with a shotgun as they slept together on Aug. 21, 2007. Meekins and Gregory had a daughter, Kyla, now 4.

The jury must now decide whether to recommend that the 28-year-old Gregory be sent to death row or spend the rest of his life in prison. Circuit Judge William A. Parsons will make the final decision, and while he is not bound by the jury's recommendation he is obligated to give it great weight.

The 10 women and two men on the jury took just under two hours and 40 minutes to reach their verdicts.

Some of Meekins' and Dyer's family members and friends softly cried as a clerk read the guilty verdicts.

"There were a lot of people that worked together on this," said Meekins' father, Charles "Hap" Meekins. "We all pulled together and the end results were good."

"Justice, we got justice," said Skyler Meekins' brother, Colton, 20.

Dyer's mother, Teresa Dyer, said she would celebrate the verdict on Thursday.

"We all expected to hear it," she said. "It's as it should be."

Dyer's sister, Jennifer Dyer-Auriemma, 27, clasped hands with Flagler County Sheriff's Office Detective Kim Davis as the verdicts were read.

"I'm not surprised by the verdict, but of course we were nervous about it," Dyer-Auriemma said.

None of Gregory's family appeared to be in the courtroom for the verdicts. Meekins had broken up with Gregory and started dating Dyer. That didn't deter Gregory, who even while locked up in the Flagler County jail on a probation violation, repeatedly called Meekins, trying to talk to her and find out what she was doing and if she was seeing any other men. When Gregory was

released from jail on July 2, 2007, he kept calling her and showed up at her house unannounced at least twice.

On the night they were murdered, Dyer and Meekins were sleeping in her grandparents' home off John Anderson Highway near Flagler Beach. It was the first time Meekins and Dyer had spent the night together without any other friends around.

Gregory was familiar with Meekins' grandparents' house; he had lived there with Skyler for almost a year after Kyla's birth but left after the couple broke up.

Sometime between 1 and 1:30 a.m. Aug. 21, Gregory crept into the house. He took a 12-gauge semi-automatic shotgun from a hall closet and loaded two shotgun slugs from the ammo kept on a shelf. Then Gregory walked across to the other side of the house and into Meekins' bedroom and shot the pair. Gregory left the shotgun -- along with his fingerprints -- on the floor near the bed.

Gregory went home to Flagler Beach and called 9-1-1 at 4:17 a.m. on Aug. 21 seeking to turn himself in because he said he had violated his probation by doing drugs the day before. But an officer said there was no warrant for his arrest and told Gregory to check with his probation officer. Later that morning, Gregory again called 9-1-1 and this time was taken into custody.

Prosecutors Jacquelyn Roys and Mark Johnson argued that Gregory's phone calls to 9-1-1 were just an attempt to establish an alibi.

Gregory's defense attorney, Garry Wood, argued the fingerprints didn't prove anything since Gregory had previously lived in the house. Wood called Gregory's grandmother, Mary Lou Wilson, who testified that Gregory had been at home in Flagler Beach five miles away from Meekins' home when the couple were killed. But Johnson questioned why Wilson had not provided that information to police when they first went to the house seeking Gregory's clothes.

Roys said Gregory could not let go of Meekins. Within the week before the slayings, Gregory called Meekins' new boyfriend and sarcastically thanked him, Roys said.

"I want to personally thank you for ruining my life. I want to personally thank you for ruining my family," Roys said during her closing argument. "That's what William Gregory said to Daniel Dyer within the week before William Gregory went over and thanked him. How did he do that? He did that by putting a shotgun an inch from Daniel Dyer's face while he lay in bed with his girlfriend holding her. He pulled the trigger in Daniel Dyer's face. And then he moved the gun to Skyler's as she lay there, touching her face with the muzzle of that gun and again pulled the trigger. That's William Gregory's version of thanking Daniel Dyer for being the man that Skyler wanted, for falling in love with the wrong person."

But the verdict won't bring back Meekins and Dyer.

"We can put this behind us now, but it doesn't change anything," Charles Meekins said.

"He's gone," Dyer-Auriemma said. "There's nothing bringing him back now. Billie is going to get what he deserves."

Her husband, Jason Auriemma, said they named their 1-year-old son Anthony Daniel after her brother.

"He looks like her brother a little bit," Jason Auriemma said.