

Suspect Takes Camera, Leaves Prints

by Sanford Schmidt

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George Lacey

EDWARDSVILLE - An accused murderer removed a video surveillance camera from a house before crashing in but left his fingerprints on the camera, a prosecutor told a jury Wednesday.

George E. Lacey, 36, is accused of first-degree murder, home invasion, armed robbery and unlawful possession of a weapon by a felon. Lacey was convicted in 2015 in St. Clair County of armed robbery and sentenced to eight years in prison.

He allegedly kicked in the door of the home of a Collinsville couple Nov. 19, 2020, and, while an accomplice held a terrified woman down in the kitchen. Lacey went upstairs to steal money from Darius Woods, 24, a marijuana dealer, who had between \$8,000 and \$10,000 stashed, according to Assistant State's Attorney Ryan Kemper.

The prosecutor pointed out how the camera was removed from near the back door and tossed on top of a trash heap in a trash can.

While the woman was being held to the kitchen floor and choked, Lacey allegedly went upstairs to look for money and marijuana, Kemper said. Shortly after that, the female victim heard a gunshot, she testified.

Kemper claimed Woods tried to approach Lacey but Lacey shot him in the chest, killing him.

The intruders then forced the woman to step over Woods who was struggling for life. “He was struggling to breathe. He was making an awful, gurgling sound,” she said.

The woman sobbed deeply Wednesday as she recounted the story and listened to a recording of the 911 call.

The invaders forced her upstairs, where she showed them where between \$7,000 and \$10,000 was hidden in a laundry hamper.

The alleged robbers also took a bag of suspected marijuana before leaving from the front door.

A front door video camera shows two robbers, one of them, allegedly Lacey, leave, wearing a red face covering and a white, long-sleeved T-shirt. The clothing matched the description the female witness gave.

Kemper told the jury that two other nearby video security cameras caught images of a dark truck and two men getting inside. One of the men wore a long-sleeved shirt. Kemper said the tail lights of the truck were not working properly.

When police spotted a suspect truck days later, a third man was seen driving. The driver lied and said Lacey had loaned him the truck. The driver later said Lacey ran out of the house with a big bag of marijuana.

“If anyone says anything about this I’ll kill you,” Lacey said, according to Kemper.