

## Carjacking Suspect Is Found Not Guilty; Man Was Figure in Prince Jones Case

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A Largo man whom Prince George's County police Cpl. Carlton B. Jones allegedly thought he was following the night he fatally shot a college student in Fairfax County was acquitted yesterday of charges that he tried to murder another county officer.

After deliberating for about 90 minutes, a Circuit Court jury in Upper Marlboro acquitted Derrell Lamont Gilchrist, 26, of carjacking Cpl. Raymond S. Redden in a Landover parking lot July 13.

The jury acquitted Gilchrist of nine charges, including attempted murder. After the jury forewoman read the third "not guilty," Redden stormed out of the courtroom, slamming a heavy wooden door. About a dozen county officers followed him out.

Gilchrist, who had been jailed since July 25, wept and embraced his attorney, Douglas J. Wood. Because of a parole violation in an unrelated case, Gilchrist will probably not be released until next week, Wood said.

"I think the police were looking forward to a conviction, because that would have made Carlton Jones's actions appear more justified," Wood said. "I think they got the wrong guy. They certainly were overanxious to see Derrell convicted."

In his closing argument, Wood said police did not follow leads that could have led to other suspects. Wood did not call any witnesses during the trial.

Police and police union officials did not return phone calls seeking comment.

According to one account given by county police, in September 2000, Jones thought he was pursuing Gilchrist, whom he believed to be dangerous, when he was actually following 25-year-old Prince Jones. He following Jones from Hyattsville into Fairfax County and shot him in self-defense, according to county police, because Prince Jones twice backed his sport-utility vehicle into the officer's vehicle.

Fairfax County prosecutors and the U.S. Justice Department investigated the shooting but did not bring charges.

Relatives of Prince Jones have filed a civil lawsuit against Carlton Jones and Prince George's County. A conviction against Gilchrist would have bolstered the county's defense, Wood said.

Yesterday's quick acquittal marked the second time in six months that charges against Gilchrist for assaulting a county police officer ended without a conviction. On July 11, Prince George's State's Attorney Jack B. Johnson dropped two first-degree assault charges against Gilchrist.

Johnson said he dropped the charges because Carlton Jones had initiated the investigation that led to the allegations. Because Jones had been found guilty by the police department of filing a false report in a 1997 case, Johnson said he could not vouch for Jones's credibility.

Johnson also said it would have been difficult to explain to jurors why police did not file charges against Gilchrist until three months after the alleged assault. The charges were filed after Prince Jones was shot.

Two days after the earlier assault charges against Gilchrist were dropped, Redden was carjacked in a parking lot as he prepared to get into his unmarked, police-issued Grand Marquis.

Underscoring the importance of the case for county law enforcement, the case was prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney David Whitacre, chief of the major crimes section.

During the three-day trial, Redden testified that he saw two men emerge from the woods. One man pulled out a handgun and put a bandanna over his face while the second man veered off, he said.

Redden testified that the first man stuck the gun in his side and ordered him to lie down. Redden said he grappled with the gunman, who fired one errant shot. Redden fell to the ground, he testified, and the two men sped away in his car.

The car stopped a little more than a mile away. Three civilians testified that they saw two men run away.

Wood focused on discrepancies in the police investigation. For instance, Redden initially described the first man as being about 5 feet 8 inches tall, 150 to 205 pounds, of medium build and dark-complected.

Redden testified that he identified Gilchrist from a photo array about a week after the carjacking. Gilchrist is 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighs 230 pounds and is medium-complected.

Martina Davis, a county police fingerprint specialist, testified that she matched three fingerprints from the rear driver's side windshield of the Grand Marquis to Gilchrist's fingerprints.

Wood asked her about articles by experts who wrote that fingerprint identification is highly subjective. Davis replied that she had not read the articles.

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