

Murder trial under way

**By Tom Blackwell
of The Leader-Post**

Lawrence Jury, a homosexual from Hollywood, Calif., left home last May 13 for the last time, headed on a three-week vacation to Texas.

By July 1, the holiday had reached into Canada and included plans to visit Expo '86.

By July 9, it's alleged, Jury was dead, stabbed 24 times and one ear sliced off. His body was discovered in a ditch near Regina.

The night before he had been drinking in Regina bars with Roy Joseph Synette and got into a car with the man moments after Synette threatened two other people with a knife, a witness says.

Synette, charged with second-degree murder in connection with the 37-year-old freelance caterer's death, is being tried this week in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Hairstylist Rick Lomas testified Monday that he and a female friend encountered Jury and Synette, 38, outside a Regina bar last July 8 and accompanied them to two other nightclubs.

Lomas said that at their final stop, Jury was loudly and "grossly" trying to convince him to have sex.

The witness also said Synette claimed he was bisexual, but Lomas said he didn't believe him.

Both men were drunk and when they decided to leave, Lomas offered to drive them to Jury's parked car, he testified.

Lomas said Synette had started repeatedly telling him not to "f--- around" with Jury. Then he pulled out a knife, pointing it at both Lomas and his friend, Carey Schroeder. Finally, Synette drove the weapon into the seat of Lomas's car, the witness told court.

He said Synette's behavior could have been caused by the large amount of alcohol he had consumed.

Hollywood movie industry employee Kenneth Rudolph testified earlier he and Jury lived together for 15 years in a gay relationship similar to a marriage.

Rudolph said when the pair last talked by telephone after Jury left for his holiday, Jury was in Boston and the couple agreed to meet in

Calgary.

They were to see the Stampede then drive to Vancouver for a week-long visit to the world's fair.

Rudolph said he flew to Calgary July 11, but never saw his friend again.

Under cross-examination by defence lawyer Peter Kolenick, Rudolph admitted Jury was a sexual "free spirit" and had got into trouble with the law because of his overt homosexuality.

Earlier Monday, the three-man, nine-woman jury was presented with a list of written admissions signed by Synette's lawyer. He concedes in the document the accused adopted Jury's identity and used his credit card from the morning the killing allegedly happened, July 9, until eight days later.

The defence also admits Synette, described as heterosexual, was seen alone with Jury's car at Rocky Mountain House, Alta. July 11.

In addition, blood-stained items were taken from the vehicle when police found it in Banff July 28, Synette's lawyer concedes.

Defendant admits to killing, cites drunk

By Tom Blackwell
of The Leader-Post

Roy Synette says it was "like a bad movie" when he stabbed to death an American tourist in Regina last July after the man made a pass at him.

Synette admitted at his second-degree murder trial Wednesday he killed 37-year-old Lawrence Jury, a homosexual from Los Angeles on holiday in Canada.

In his defence, Synette said he had been drinking heavily, didn't know what he was doing and never actually intended to slay the visitor, who had picked him up as a hitchhiker.

Synette's Court of Queen's Bench trial, which started Monday, was to be put in the hands of a nine-woman, three-man

jury today after the lawyers and judge delivered their final addresses.

Jury's body, with 24 stab wounds and the right ear severed, was found in a ditch near Regina last July 16.

Evidence Monday and Tuesday indicated Synette and Jury drank at two Regina bars July 8, and got into Jury's car together early July 9. An acquaintance of Synette testified the man admitted he stabbed someone three or four times and took the victim's credit cards.

A fellow inmate at a Regina jail testified Synette told him he got mad at Jury for laughing at him, sliced the American's ear off and stabbed him a number of times.

Synette, a stout drifter from New Brun-

swick, said Wednesday Jury picked him up July 7 near Thunder Bay. Synette said he consumed about 19 beers that day and close to 25 drinks by midnight July 8.

He testified he and Jury parked in Regina, intending to get a few hours sleep and then drive on to Calgary. Synette, who called himself heterosexual, said he suddenly awoke in the car to find Jury's hand on his crotch, fingering his belt buckle.

"From that point I just blew up and got really mad. It was like a bad movie," he said.

"I remember stabbing him four or five times . . . it went fast, really fast."

Synette said it never entered his mind to harm Jury and that he doesn't know what happened. After the killing, he said he

dumped the body beside the Trans-Canada Highway outside Regina then drove on, using the credit card Jury left on the dashboard.

Synette said he can't remember cutting off Jury's ear, and said the other inmate's testimony about the incident was untrue.

He conceded he has about 15 previous convictions on his record, but said none were for violent or weapons-related crimes.

Synette admitted he used Jury's card to fly first-class within Canada twice.

Dr. Saul Cohen, chairman of the Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, testified later that a person who drank the amount of alcohol Synette said he consumed by the time of the stabbing

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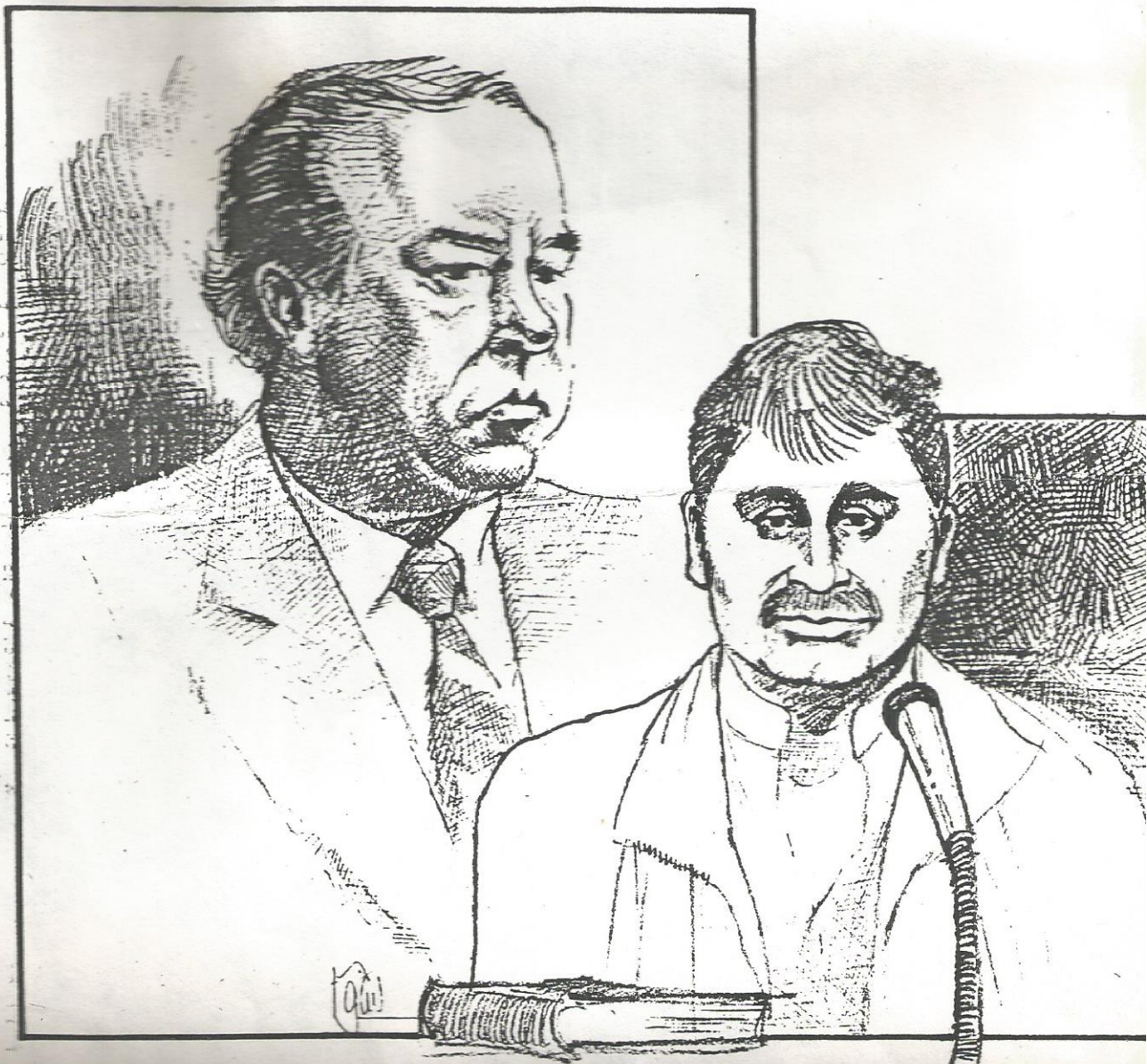
would give "instinctive, animal re-
sponses."

Such a man probably wouldn't be capa-
ble of any "pre-conceived planning or in-
tention," Cohen said.

Psychiatrist Dr. Charles Messer, who
interviewed Synette and obtained written
information from him, said the man has a
"paranoid personality disorder" and has
been an alcoholic since he was 14.

He said a person with those conditions
and the alcohol consumption Synette testi-
fied about would be "out of control" when
faced with a homosexual advance in the
circumstances the accused described.

Messer also said it's common for chron-
ic alcoholics to react violently when awak-
ened.



Leader-Post sketch by Gail Duesierbeck

Dennis Laviolette (right) gave testimony against Roy Synette

Witnesses say they heard defendant admit to murder

By Tom Blackwell
of The Leader-Post

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The prosecution wrapped up its case against Roy Joseph Synette in dramatic fashion Tuesday, calling two witnesses who say they heard Synette confess to murder.

One witness said Synette admitted he knifed an unnamed homosexual male from the United States three or four times.

The other said Synette told him he got angry at Hollywood, Calif., resident Lawrence Jury, then sliced Jury's ear off and stabbed him repeatedly.

Synette, 38, of New Brunswick, is charged with second-degree murder in connection with Jury's death nine months ago.

The prosecution alleges Jury, a gay freelance caterer on holiday in Canada, was killed July 9. His body, missing one ear and inflicted with 24 stab wounds, was discovered July 16 in a ditch by the Trans-Canada Highway just west of Regina.

Synette was to start his defence at the Court of Queen's Bench trial today.

Witnesses have said Jury, 37, picked up Synette as a hitchhiker and drank with him at two Regina bars last July 8. They were seen getting into Jury's car together early the next morning.

The defence has admitted Synette

adopted Jury's name and used his credit card for the following eight days, and that he was seen alone with Jury's car in Alberta July 11.

Dennis Laviolette testified Tuesday that Synette, a two-year acquaintance, stayed with him in Halifax for five days last August.

Synette said he was "on the run" from police after stabbing someone three or four times in the chest and taking his credit cards, Laviolette told the three-man, nine-woman jury.

Synette said the victim "was from the States and was supposed to be homosexual" and that he left the body at the edge of a field, Laviolette testified.

Laviolette, who has 15 criminal convictions, denied under cross-examination that a head injury he suffered last year affected his memory of Synette's visit.

Brian Dodge, who did time with Synette at the Regina correctional centre last summer and fall, said the accused told him about murdering Jury in the man's car July 9.

Synette said he told Jury to stop laughing at him or he would knife him, then sliced off Jury's ear and began stabbing the man, testified Dodge, who is still in jail.

Under questioning by defence lawyer Peter Kolenick, Dodge con-

ceded he has committed more than 30 crimes, including manslaughter and armed robbery.

Dodge denied he told police the story about Synette to improve his chances of being released after a parole board hearing in September.

He also said he never saw documents from Synette's lawyer containing police information on the case.

When asked why he testified against Synette, Dodge said: "Mr. Jury comes from another country, treats him (Synette) well and he gets killed for no reason whatsoever."

Regina General Hospital pathologist Dr. Diane Stephenson, who did the autopsy on Jury's "severely decomposed" body July 17, said the man died from a stab wound that pierced a major vein in his chest.

Jury's 23 other wounds included one that went through his windpipe and hit his vertebrae, Stephenson said. She said it could have taken as long as several minutes for Jury to bleed to death.

Jean Roney, an RCMP crime lab expert, said blood found inside Jury's car, and on clothes and other items discovered beside the highway between Regina and Moose Jaw, could have all come from the same source.



Leader-Post photo by Bryan Schlo

An RCMP officer escorts Roy Thomas Synette out of court Thursday

Drifter gets life term for gay man's murder

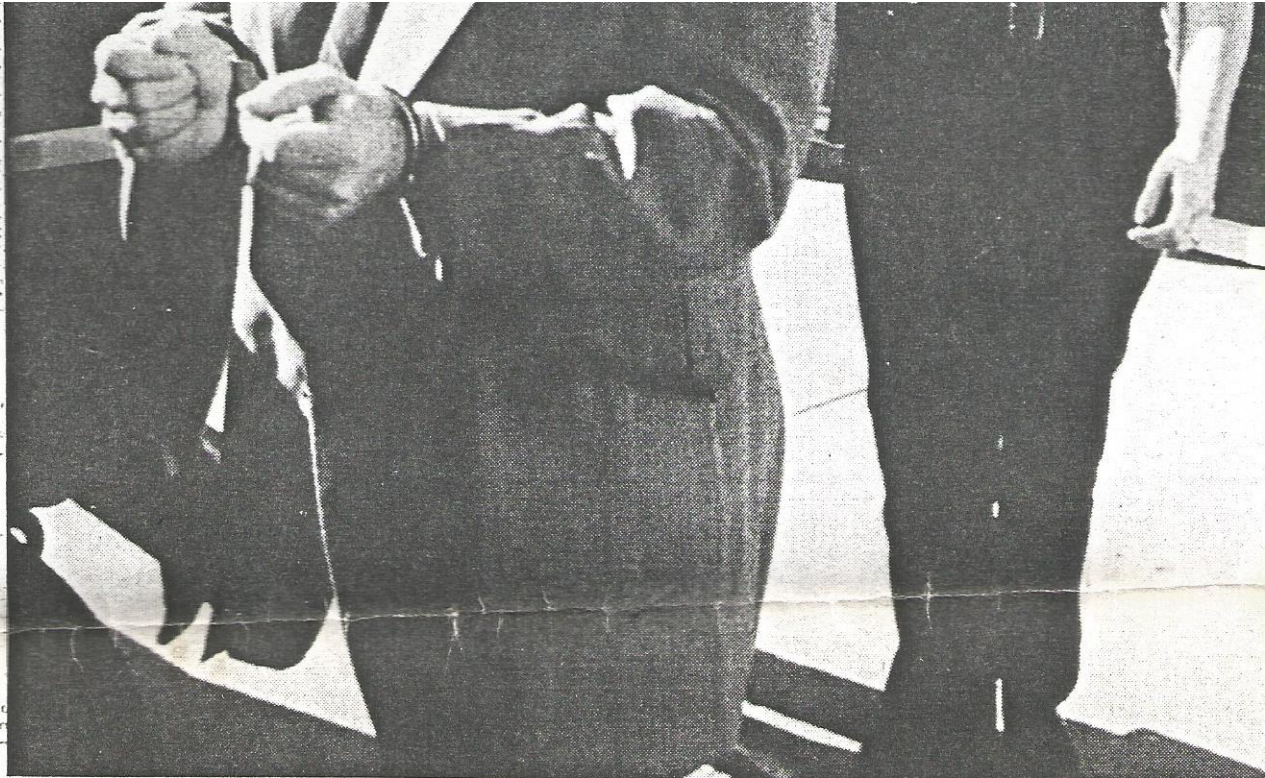
By Tom Blackwell
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Leader-Post photo by Bryan Schloss

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Drifter gets life term for gay man's murder

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A New Brunswick drifter who admitted he brutally stabbed to death an American tourist in Regina last July has been convicted of second-degree murder.

A nine-woman, three-man jury found Roy Thomas Synette, 38, guilty of the offence Thursday after deliberating less than 1½ hours.

Synette, who testified he killed Lawrence Jury, 37, because the Los Angeles man made a pass at him, sat expressionless as the verdict was announced.

Court of Queen's Bench Justice J. G. McIntyre had told the jurors their only choice was to convict Synette of manslaughter or murder.

The judge sentenced the accused to the mandatory life term and ruled he would have to spend 10 years behind bars before being considered for parole.

Defence lawyer Peter Kolenick said afterward it's uncertain

whether an appeal will be launched. His client faces another charge of second-degree murder in connection with the stabbing death of a Vancouver man last June 25.

Jury's 17-year-old daughter Lira, who sat through the four-day trial and said her heart was "just pumping" as the verdict was announced, told reporters she's glad Synette "didn't get away with what he did."

"He hurt me, he hurt everyone."

Jury's gay companion, Ken Rudolph, said in a telephone interview from the couple's home in Hollywood, Calif. he's glad Synette will stay "off the street."

"The fact that it's not OK to kill a gay man just because he's gay is a good thing. It's nice about Regina that a jury there feels that way," Rudolph said.

The knifing occurred early last July 9 in Regina, two days after Jury had picked up Synette as a hitchhiker. Jury's body was found in a ditch just west of the city, with 24

stab wounds and missing one ear.

The defence argued that because Synette had consumed about 10 drinks July 8, and has what a psychiatrist described in court as "paranoid personality disorder", couldn't have formed the intent to commit murder.

Synette said the stabbing happened when Jury unexpectedly awakened him by putting his hand on his crotch. Kolenick argued that action was provocation and provoked another defence to murder.

But the prosecution said the evidence indicated Synette's mind was functioning fully when he struck Jury, and there was no provocation.

Synette said the killing occurred after the pair decided to rest for a few hours before driving on to Calgary.

He admitted he kept Jury's car for several days following the incident and used his credit card numerous times, including flying within Canada twice.

Case puzzles victim's lover

Ken Rudolph is struck by the many things that don't make sense about the bloody stabbing death in Regina last July of Lawrence Jury, his lover for 15 years.

In an interview from his Hollywood, Calif. office, Rudolph described Jury as an "extremely well-liked" individual who made an art of living and left behind many distraught friends and family.

Rudolph said one puzzling aspect of the case is that Jury would pick up a hitchhiker, Roy Synette, and travel with him for two days not realizing the man's potential for violence. Synette was convicted Thursday of murder in Jury's death.

"Lawrence always had a very good insight into people. Obviously he trusted it too much," Rudolph said. "He must have thought he had a handle on the situation, but he did not."

Rudolph also said he's perplexed by a pathologist's testimony that

Jury had no defensive wounds on his hands or arms, suggesting he didn't or couldn't put up a fight.

"He certainly loved life and certainly would have wanted to live."

But most inexplicable to Rudolph seems to be Synette's testimony that he went berserk and struck out at Jury after the Californian unexpectedly put his hand on his crotch.

Jury was a "very sexual being" twice entrapped by undercover vice cops into committing lewd acts in a public washroom, Rudolph admitted.

But with the advent of AIDS, "like everybody else, he totally cut back on that sort of thing," he said. And anyway, Rudolph noted, Jury wouldn't have made advances if it wasn't considered all right.

Either Synette was bisexual, as he told two people in a Regina bar, and knew very well Jury was gay, or the pass never happened, since Jury

would never come on to a straight man, Rudolph said.

Rudolph had planned to meet Jury in Calgary two days after the murder to start a trip to Vancouver's Expo 86. When Jury didn't show up or call, Rudolph said he knew immediately his friend was dead.

On the first day back in Los Angeles, Rudolph, who owns his own TV and movie special effects company, said he had to juggle two calls. On one line was Jury's sister, wondering what had happened to her brother. On the other, moments later, was a Los Angeles policeman to say the body had been found.

Jury's 17-year-old daughter Lira, who attended all four days of Synette's trial, said her father was supposed to be back in California in time for her birthday Aug. 7. They were to travel to Jamaica, and this summer to Europe.

She said her father, who divorced when she was two, was her best friend. Lira said she came to Regina this week because "I had so many unanswered questions."

Jury was flawed but brought love into many lives, Rudolph recalled. "A lot of people missed this guy and haven't got over it yet."

Although he dabbled in catering and interior design, he never stopped long enough to get formal qualifications in any field. He lived off the odd job and money from the sale of 10 acres of land he owned with Rudolph.

"He tried to find a profession that harnessed his unique creativity. In reality, life was his profession. It was his art," Rudolph said. "He was really brilliant at living. I'm sorry that his death was so violent and horrible."

— BLACKWELL