

# Machacek guilty in Hulbert murder

By M.B. Dillon  
staff writer

A Washtenaw County jury found Christopher Machacek, 18, of Ypsanti Township guilty Sept. 14 of first-degree murder in the death of Mary Anne Hulbert, 13, of Canton Township.

The seven-man, five-woman jury deliberated for six hours after an 11-day trial.

Circuit Judge Henry Conlin set a sentencing date of Friday, Oct. 7. First-degree, or premeditated, murder carries a penalty of life imprisonment without parole.

A withdrawn, pale Machacek sat expressionless as the jury foreman announced the verdict. Machacek's mother and Hulbert's grandmother, the only immediate family members of the defendant and victim in the courtroom, cried as the verdict was read. The victim's father, Joseph Hulbert, lives in Farmington Hills.

Machacek and Steve Stamper, also an 18-year-old Ypsanti Township resident, were charged with open murder after the Dec. 30, 1986 slaying of Hulbert, a seventh-grader at Stevenson Junior High School, Westland. Stamper's trial began Monday.

## military news

Tapping the military news pipeline:

• **COMPLETES TRAINING**  
Cadet William Rayner Jr., son of William Rayner of Farmington, has completed an Air Force ROTC field training encampment at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. He is a student at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

• **HE'S PROMOTED**  
Richard Plezia, an Air Force reservist from Farmington Hills,

was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant colonel.  
He is a surgeon with the 927th Tactical Hospital. This military unit is part of the 927th Tactical Airlift Group, an Air Force Reserve unit headquartered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Plezia has been a member of the Air Force Reserve for three years. When not in uniform, he is a surgeon at the Veterans Administration Medical Center, Allen Park.

In taped statements to sheriffs, both youths admitted to being at the scene. They blamed each other for the shooting. Machacek and Stamper have been held without bond since Jan. 7, 1987, when Hulbert's bullet-ridden body was found in a Superior Township field by hunters.

The youths, both 16 at the time of the killing, were ordered to be tried as adults by a Washtenaw County juvenile judge.

Margie McGarry, Hulbert's grandmother, said sitting through the trial "was terrible."

"I didn't think anyone who heard the tape could have let him go," she said, wiping away tears. "It was scary to think they could have gotten away with something like that. That was the bad thought, that they could do it again — and the fact that they showed no remorse."

DEFENSE ATTORNEY Richard Digion said Machacek had nothing to say upon hearing the verdict. "I did most of the talking. I told him not to worry — that we should be reversed on appeal on a number of grounds, even if it was difficult to regard that as consolation," he said.

Digion — who told the jury his client

was at most guilty of accessory after the fact — said he was surprised by the conviction.

"I think a lot of people are surprised I thought the fact that they (yours) were out so long was a good sign."

Prosecutor Robert Cooper described Machacek's taped statement as "the song of the executioner" in his closing argument. Only the executioner would be able to recount the order and pattern of shots fired, as Machacek did in his statement, said Cooper.

Machacek shot Hulbert because she was pregnant by him and therefore "a problem," Cooper contended. An autopsy showed Hulbert was mistaken in her reported belief that she was pregnant.

ACCORDING TO Machacek's taped statement, Hulbert called Stamper the afternoon of Dec. 30. Shortly afterward, Machacek and Stamper picked her up in Stamper's truck. Machacek said Stamper drove to a field. Stamper blindfolded Hulbert, stood her against a tree and fired at her repeatedly. Machacek said he stayed in the truck during the shooting, "tripping out" and not knowing what to do.

Machacek said he agreed to help Stamper drag Hulbert's body into some bushes before they returned home. Machacek said he could think of no reason why Stamper killed Hulbert.

Cooper argued that Machacek and Stamper collaborated in humiliating, beating, terrorizing and stripping Hulbert of her dignity.

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"She was summarily executed, and all of this because she mistakenly believed she was pregnant by Christopher Machacek and had become, in their minds, 'a problem,'" said Cooper.

"Neither displayed any remorse or guilt in dragging Mary Hulbert to a brush line where she was left to die. They simply didn't give a damn."

ENTERED INTO evidence were two of Stamper's rifles. State police were able to identify just two fingerprints on a semi-automatic rifle — both Stamper's.

Digion called the alleged motive absurd. "It's clear as daylight that this girl had slept with many men. Steve Stamper's relationship with this girl was clearly established."

Cooper's claim that Machacek "wore the shoes of the executioner is nonsense," Digion argued. "My client is admitting to something really bad. It's cold. But it's the coldness of an accessory, of a kid."

"Obviously Mary's death is as tragic as any death in mankind. But equally tragic would it be to convict an innocent man on innuendo and unreasonable assumptions," he said.

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