

# ATLANTIC COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

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**Theodore F. L. Housel**

**Prosecutor**

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## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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**MAYS LANDING** – An Atlantic County jury convicted a Ventnor man of murder today for the June 3, 2008 bludgeoning death of his friend who was found dead in his Egg Harbor Township condominium two weeks later, Atlantic County Prosecutor Ted Housel announced.

In addition to murder, Mark Little, 45, of 800 Burk Court, was found guilty of unlawful possession of a weapon and theft by unlawful taking for stealing the victim's luxury car. The jury acquitted the defendant of felony murder, which is the murder during the commission of another crime, robbery, and theft of Lawson's credit card. The defendant faces up to life in prison when sentenced next month for killing 63-year-old Howard Lawson, a retired postal worker. Little must serve a minimum of 30 years in prison without the possibility for parole, according to First Assistant Prosecutor Murray Talasnik, who handled the state's case.

Jurors deliberated for several hours over three days before reaching a verdict at 10:30 a.m. this morning. Moments after the jury foreman stood up and said "Guilty" to the first count - murder, the victim's sister-in-law burst into tears and clutched tissues. Victim/Witness Coordinator Jackie Simonson comforted her.

At 5:52 p.m. on June 17, 2008, Egg Harbor Township police responded to the victim's 82 Catherine Court home for a wellness check. Upon arrival Egg Harbor Township Sgt. Robert Gray discovered Lawson's decomposing body in his third-floor bedroom. The Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit responded and conducted the investigation along with Egg Harbor Township police. Atlantic County Medical Examiner Dr. Hydow Park performed an autopsy on Lawson and determined the victim died of blunt force trauma to the head. The murder weapon was never recovered.

During the three-week trial several law enforcement personnel testified as well as the man whom the defense attempted to point to as the potential killer. The prosecution called 30 witnesses and had over 150 exhibits in what was primarily a circumstantial evidence case, Talasnik stated.

The defendant also testified. He stated that Lawson was his friend and would never do anything to harm him.

On cross-examination Talasnik confronted the defendant with the fact that he and the victim exchanged 111 phone calls in the six weeks leading up to the victim's death, yet he never called Lawson after June 3, 2008. The reason, Talasnik said, was that Little knew the victim was dead because he had killed him. Andre Hardy testified for the state. He told the court that Little, a man he barely knew, lent him Lawson's car and never attempted to get it back from Hardy. Hardy also testified that he called Little and told him he could have the car back but Little told him to keep it.

On June 20, 2008, Little was arrested and charged with theft of the victim's car and credit card. Further investigation resulted in Little being charged with homicide in October of 2008 and he was indicted in December of 2008.

Little has remained in the Atlantic County Justice Facility in lieu of bail since his October 2008 arrest. Superior Court Judge Albert Garofolo revoked bail following Little's conviction and will impose sentence on May 21.

**Anyone with information involving serious crimes is asked to call the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office at 609-909-7800 or go to the Prosecutor's Office Web site at <http://www.acpo.org/tips.html> and provide information by filling out the form anonymously on the Submit a Tip page. People can also call Crime Stoppers at 609-652-1234 or 1-800-658-8477 (TIPS) or visit the Crime Stoppers Website at <http://www.crimestoppersatlantic.com/>. Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those who commit crimes in Atlantic County.**