

Man found guilty in Augustan's murder

■ *Rudolpho Garcia convicted in the execution-style slaying of Michael Nipper*

By **Toni J. Heinzl**
Staff Writer

A Richmond County jury convicted Rudolpho Garcia of murder and robbery Thursday in the execution-style slaying of an Augusta man Jan. 14.

The jury deliberated 80 minutes to find the Hephzibah man guilty of murder, armed robbery and possession of a firearm in the slaying of Michael Nipper, 31.

Mr. Garcia, 37, faces two life sentences plus five years when Chief Superior Court Judge William M. Fleming Jr. sentences him in a few weeks.

The prosecution said Mr. Garcia shot the unarmed Mr. Nipper during a drug deal at a carwash on Peach Orchard Road to take cocaine and money from the vic-

tim. Mr. Garcia and his girlfriend, Debra Darlene Goff, then dumped the body on a dirt road off Interstate 20 in Aiken County and drove to a Columbia motel, where they shot up some of the cocaine taken from the victim, authorities said.

Mr. Garcia told police that Ms. Goff, 33, of Hephzibah, was the killer.

Ms. Goff, who will be tried later, told police Mr. Garcia was the triggerman, but her statements were not admissible at his trial.

Assistant District Attorney Joe

Neal Jr. told the jury Mr. Garcia lied to police when he told them he had never before met Mr. Nipper.

Prosecution witness Wayne Morris, a friend of Mr. Nipper, said Mr. Garcia and Ms. Goff met Mr. Nipper at his house in fall 1994 to arrange drug buys.

"Rudy wanted to hook up with Mike for cocaine," Mr. Morris said.

The victim died from a bullet to the left temple that penetrated his brain, medical examiner Joel Sexton said. Mr. Nipper was also shot

twice in the stomach and once in the back of the neck, with the pistol pressed to the skin, the doctor said.

Defense attorney Peter Johnson said after the verdict he still believes his client.

**PLANTATION
SHUTTERS**



by
Tim Barlow
30 Years