

**STATE**

# Transvestite's brother rips jury

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CAMBRIDGE -- The twin brother of a transvestite who died mysteriously in a man's bedroom castigated the jury for acquitting the defendant of murder and convicting him only of assault and battery.

"I have lost all faith in the system, and I think the judge and jury ought to be ashamed of themselves," said Gabriel "Gabrielle" Pickett, who also is a transvestite.

"This sends a message to anyone who dates a (transvestite) that they can beat the person up, and that's OK," he said. "You can say you didn't know, you can say drugs were involved, you can make up any excuse and get away with it."

A Middlesex County Superior Court jury deliberated three days before acquitting William Palmer of murder in the death of Roman "Chanel" Pickett, 23, of Chelsea. However, the 34-year-old computer programmer from Watertown was convicted of assault and battery.

Roman Pickett died in Mr. Palmer's bedroom Nov. 19, 1995. The two spent hours smoking crack cocaine after meeting in a Boston bar.

"I am an innocent man," Mr. Palmer said after the verdict was read Friday. His family wept as he hugged and kissed them.

Witnesses and attorneys in the case referred to Roman Pickett as "she," although the victim was a man who dressed as a woman and planned to become a woman through surgery.

Mr. Palmer's lawyer, Walter Prince, acknowledged his client fought with Roman Pickett when he found out he was a man, but attacked autopsy results concluding the victim was strangled. He said it was possible a heart attack or drug overdose had killed the Chelsea man.

Mr. Palmer said Roman Pickett was alive and breathing when he fell asleep.

Juror Robert Cunningham said he found the medical evidence lacking.

"They didn't do a complete job" on the autopsy, he said before leaving the courthouse.

Mr. Palmer, who has been free on bail since December 1995, is scheduled to be sentenced May 15. He could receive up to 20 years in prison.

"I have prayers for Mrs. Pickett every single night," he said. "I just feel terrible for that woman, but I did not kill" her child.