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TRIAL REPORT

Updated August 27, 2002, 12:45 p.m. ET

Sons, family friend face life for murder



Prosecutors say Terry King, left, was murdered by his sons with the help of a longtime family friend.

By Rochelle Steinhaus
Court TV

Two trials, one gruesome crime.

Forty-year-old printer Terry King was asleep in his Florida home when he was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat and his home set ablaze in an apparent attempt to destroy the evidence.

Now the man's longtime friend and his two young sons, 12 and 13 at the time of the Nov. 25, 2001, killing, will stand trial for his murder.

The trial of Ricky Marvin Chavis, began Tuesday in a Florida courtroom. The victim's sons' trial will follow. The boys are being tried as adults.

Alex and Derek King, now 13 and 14, respectively, confessed to the brutal crime in a tape-recorded interview with police. If convicted, they would receive a mandatory sentence of life behind bars. State law requires that those convicted as adults of first-degree murder receive life without parole.



Ricky Marvin Chavis

Alex King says that he and Chavis — a convicted child molester — were lovers, and that the 40-year-old auto mechanic and air-conditioning repairman told the boys that they could live with him if their father wasn't around.

Father Figure?

"Before I met Rick I was strate [sic] but now I am gay," wrote Alex in one note.

Chavis, who was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison for molesting two teenage boys in the 1984, is slated to stand trial for allegedly sexually abusing Alex

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Alex King

King in October.

Chavis admits to being gay, but claims that he has not been sexually active in years and denies that any relationship between him and Alex King took place.

[Read Chavis' note to Alex](#)
hot document

He has reportedly tried to communicate with Alex several times in prison, but the notes and messages have been intercepted by prison guards. The notes allegedly tell Alex not to change his story and

reiterate his love for the boy.

Family Tree

Terry King, a printer, and Janet French, a former nightclub dancer, never married but lived together and had two sons. In addition to their children, Alex and Derek, French's twins by another man also lived with the couple. French and King broke up in 1992, but the family of six continued living together for the next two years.

According to published reports, French said that because King was unable to support his family, they sent the boys to a crisis home for children in 1994. The following year, all four children were sent to foster homes and French moved out of King's home.



The boys' mother, Janet French, a.k.a. Kelly Marino

Within a month, Alex returned home to his father. Derek was sent to live with Pace, Fla., high school principal Frank Lay and his wife, Nancy. The Lays were a religious family, and Derek would attend church regularly.

But after spending six years with his foster parents, Derek seemed to be too hard to handle for the Lays, who returned him to his father.

Just seven weeks after Derek returned to live in his father's home with his brother, Terry Lee King was murdered.

Storm Brewing

In the weeks leading up to King's murder, Derek apparently didn't like that his father was "pushing Alex around."

By November, the two ran away from home. Alex says he stayed at Chavis' home for most of the week he was away from home. Derek returned on Nov. 24, while Alex returned the following day.

The brothers talked about their problems with their father, according to Derek, who said he promised Alex he would protect him.

The same night, according to the boys, Terry King allegedly threw Alex to the ground.

According to Alex, he said he suggested to his younger brother that they kill their father so that they would not have to live with him



Derek King

anymore. Alex said that Chavis helped him come to the realization that his father mentally abused him, and Chavis had agreed to let the boys with him.

Meanwhile, Terry King was telling his friend that it looked like his boys were "plotting something." According to Lewis Michael Tyson, King reportedly told him that he planned to put the boys in separate bedrooms because he didn't trust them, lock the outside of the bedroom doors with

dead bolts and sleep in the living room.

Just three hours later on Nov. 25, 2001, Terry King fell asleep in a recliner in his living room.

By his own admission, Derek hit his father in the head 10 times. The two admit to setting the house on fire in an attempt to destroy evidence.

But when firemen arrived, the fire had not yet spread to the living room, and Terry Lee King was found dead still sitting in his recliner.

Chavis' Involvement

Derek claims the two spent two nights in the woods before ending up at a convenience store where they ran into a friend of Chavis' who called him.

Chavis picked them up from the convenience store, according to Derek, took them to his motor home in Brentwood, Fla., washed their clothes and then turned them over to police the following day.

In separate interviews with investigators, the boys confessed to the crime and gave consistent, detailed accounts of their father's murder.

Both said that their father rarely struck them, but that he mentally abused them. When asked, they admitted being housed, clothed, fed, and only disciplined by Terry when they had done something wrong.

They were more vague, however, about Chavis' involvement.

Chavis was arrested Dec. 11 and charged with being an accessory after the fact and tampering with evidence. The same day as his arrest, he told investigators that he picked up the boys, made them shower and washed their clothes before turning them over to police the following day. He even admitted that he told Alex and Derek not to mention his involvement or else he would go to jail.

He also confessed that he had told the boys if Terry was gone they could live with him.

When the case was presented to a grand jury, however, he was indicted on much more serious charges — first-degree premeditated murder with a weapon and arson — and would receive a mandatory life sentence if found guilty. The boys, who also face the same charges, would also get a mandatory sentence of life in prison if convicted since they are being tried as adults.



Memorial to Terry Lee King

Boys in Prison

The King brothers aren't the first youngsters to face mandatory life sentences under Florida law.

[Lionel Tate](#) was 12 when he killed 6-year-old friend Tiffany Eunick by imitating wrestling moves he saw on television. He was convicted of first-degree murder as an adult, and was 14 when sentenced to a mandatory sentence of life in prison — prompting a national public outcry that the sentence was too harsh given the defendant's age.

Following Tate's trial, 14-year-old [Nathaniel Brazill](#) was tried as an adult for first-degree for the classroom shooting of teacher Barry Grunow. The jury, however, convicted him of second-degree murder, sparing him a mandatory life sentence but leaving the sentencing range of 25 years to life to the discretion to the judge. Brazill received 28 years.



Lionel Tate:
[Case background](#)



Nathaniel Brazill:
[Full coverage](#)

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