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Suspected KFC robber in Kingman acquitted

Erin Taylor

Miner Staff Reporter

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A former Kingman resident said he spent seven months and three weeks in jail for a crime he didn't commit.

Curtis Standlee was acquitted by a jury earlier this month of armed robbery. He was arrested last July, two hours after the KFC on Stockton Hill Road was robbed.

Standlee is adamant that police got the wrong guy, but Prosecutor Ken Skousen said the 23-year-old was acquitted because the jury was looking for DNA evidence to tie him to the crime.

Standlee was in the parking lot of the Park Crest Village Apartments on Harrison Street that afternoon when he said he saw the [Department of Public Safety](#) Air Ranger and officers on foot in the area. He said he didn't know that they were looking for the robbery suspect. Standlee at the time thought he was wanted on a parole violation and admits he tried to avoid the officers by running about 40 feet before stopping. He was surprised, however, when he was informed that he was being arrested for the robbery.

He was also surprised when he realized that the arrested officer was his uncle, who did not recognize him.

The suspect in the robbery was described by witnesses as having a beard and a possible tattoo. Standlee had a beard at the time, but said it would have been impossible for the witnesses to miss his full-sleeve of tattoos on both arms.

"I have over 200 tattoos," he said. "That's not a 'possible' tattoo."

Skousen said that the cashier who was robbed noted tattoos but was unable to provide detailed descriptions of them. That's because the clerk, who was under the age of 18, told officials he was too scared to break eye contact with the robber.



Curtis Standlee/Courtesy

Curtis Standlee, who was arrested on armed robbery charges last summer, displays his tattoos. The suspect in the armed robbery was described as having a possible tattoo on his right upper arm. Standlee said it would have been hard for witnesses to miss his two full-sleeves of tattoos as well as the writing on his knuckles.

Skousen said the suspect flashed a gun in his waistband to the terrified cashier.

"He said he was afraid that if he looked away, he would be shot," Skousen said.

Skousen added that three of the witnesses ID'ed Standlee as the robber but admitted that a fourth witness picked another man out of a photo lineup before changing their mind.

Standlee also said that the denomination of cash bills he had on him didn't match the \$100 or so that was reported stolen in the robbery. Skousen disputed that and said that the bills were even folded over in the way described by the cashier when he handed them over.

Skousen added that although no surveillance footage was available from the KFC, there was footage available showing a man matching Standlee's description at Walmart and Del Taco. Skousen believes that Del Taco had actually been the intended target since the man lingered for several minutes without making a purchase but lost his nerve because there were too many customers.

Defense attorney Randall Craig said the man on the surveillance footage looked similar to his client but that it was never proven in court to be the same person.

"This was a case of mistaken identification that at first blush looks like the police did the best they could in the beginning," Craig said.

Skousen said he learned after the trial that jurors were looking for DNA evidence on clothing found in a bag in a bathroom stall at Centennial Park. The clothes matched the description of what was worn in the robbery, but Skousen said the jury wanted DNA evidence to tie Standlee to the clothing.

He said the jury misunderstood the definition of reasonable doubt and were looking for proof positive that Standlee was the culprit.

"One of the jurors said that (Standlee) was so young, and 30 years such a long time, that he had to be absolutely sure," Skousen said.

Standlee was facing 21 to 30 years if convicted at trial. He was offered a plea deal for 9.25 years, but Standlee said he worried that if he did take a deal, his parents, both in bad health, wouldn't be there when he got out.

"It was all or nothing with me since I didn't do it," Standlee said.

Craig said his client never wavered in that belief.

"He adamantly asserted his innocence," he said.

The trial lasted about two days.

"The state did a fine job in presenting their case but the jury just had a different opinion on it," Craig said.

Standlee said he was embarrassed when news of his arrest was publicized in the paper not only because it sullied his name, but also that of an uncle who shares the same name and works in law enforcement.

He was also briefly hospitalized for dehydration after his arrest for what he said was being left in a hot patrol car for too long that July afternoon.

He said his stay in jail left him with depression and anxiety for which he is now seeking therapy.

"It made me experience emotions I wasn't used to," he said. "Sitting in my cell at 10 p.m., midnight, 2 a.m. and wondering if this could be the rest of my life."

He said that he and the other inmates at the jail were treated like they had already been convicted.

"When they hear you're in there for Class 2 robbery, they treat you like a robber," he said.

Standlee credits his cousin, Tami See, for providing him with hope during his incarceration with her weekly visits. He said he wants to put the experience behind him. He plans to enroll in college and become a certified personal trainer.

He now lives out of state and said he has no plans to return to Arizona since he feels local authorities were angered by his acquittal. He also said he knows now how easy it is for someone to be accused of a crime they didn't commit.

"I see a police car now and my heart stops," he said.

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