

TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2009

Fort Bend Herald

AND TEXAS COASTER

www.fbherald.com

ROSENBERG-RICHMOND, TEXAS

50 CENTS

Zavala guilty of killing wife

BY DON MUNSCH

dmunsch@fbherald.com

A jury of six men and six women took a little more than an hour to deliberate and bring back a conviction for a Richmond man standing trial for murder in the 494th District Court Monday.

Victor Zavala Jr., 41, was found guilty in the March 2006 stabbing death of his wife, Karen Goodspeed-Zavala, 47, also of Richmond. The sentencing phase will be in September, and Zavala could face five to 99 years or life in prison and a fine not to exceed \$10,000, said District Attorney John Healey, who watched the proceedings Monday. Chad Bridges and Jill Stotts were the prosecutors.

"We're very thankful for the jury's

hard work, and we think they came to the right verdict," Bridges said Monday afternoon, shortly after the verdict.

Defense attorney Logerie Foster made no comment, other than to say the defense planned to appeal. Attorneys Stephen Doggett and Winston Cochran also were on Zavala's defense team.

Healey said Zavala elected to go to the judge for punishment, which "is fine with us." A judge meting out punishment eliminates any possibility of a hung jury in punishment, Healey said.

"My understanding was that the state had been given strategic concessions on the admissibility of evidence at the guilt/innocence stage in exchange for allowing the defense to

consider the possibility of changing the election of punishment," Healey said.

The state and defense conducted closing arguments Monday afternoon before the jury deliberated. Stotts went first for the state, explaining how Zavala stabbed Goodspeed-Zavala 13 times and that his statements about what happened that day — March 23, 2006 — did not match the evidence. She explained how self-defense could be used as a legal defense, but the law of self-defense would not apply in this case, she said.

"You will not find that (Zavala) acted in self-defense," she said.

She showed a PowerPoint presentation of an illustration of the crime scene — the kitchen — and how Za-

vala's explanation of the confrontation between he and his wife did not add up. She also said Zavala's other actions on that day — such as his kicking in doors at the apartment and taking the cell phone away from Goodspeed-Zavala — demonstrated Zavala's state of mind during the incident. She also mentioned the victim's wounds, including her defensive wounds.

Doggett and Foster used self-defense as a defense in their final arguments. Doggett said he didn't think inconsistencies in statements Zavala made about what happened amounted to lies. Bridges, during his closing arguments, repeatedly told the jury Zavala lied about his role in the incident. The defense rolled out its theory of dissociative amnesia in its closing arguments.