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NEWS RELEASE

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Jury Finds George Jones Guilty of 1978 Westward Tavern Murder

PHOENIX, AZ (October 26, 2012) – A palm print on a beer bottle helped a Maricopa County jury find George Jones (D.O.B. 9/12/57) guilty of the murder of Duane “Bud” Gruette in a case that remained unsolved for 34 years. The murder occurred during a robbery of the Westward Tavern in South Phoenix. Under Arizona’s felony murder statute, Jones faces a possible sentence of 25 years to life in prison.

“After more than three decades, we can at last hold this defendant accountable for a senseless murder and the immeasurable grief he has caused a family by robbing them of their loved one,” said Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery. “This verdict underscores the commitment of law enforcement in Maricopa County to see that justice is done in each and every case, no matter how long it may take,” he added.

On July 18th, 1978 George Jones and at least one other person entered the Westward Tavern at 2807 West Buckeye Road in Phoenix armed with at least one handgun. They ordered patrons to lie down on the floor and give up their money, wallets and purses. Bud Gruette was unable to get down onto the ground because of back injuries. A struggle ensued and one of the robbers threw a beer bottle at Gruette. He was then fatally shot twice in the back with a .38 revolver and the assailants fled. Investigators recovered a palm print on a beer bottle from the scene.

In April 2011, the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) identified a match between the palm print on the bottle and fingerprints collected from George Jones during a subsequent involvement with law enforcement. On February 2nd, 2012, a Maricopa County Grand Jury indicted Jones on one count of First Degree Murder. Following a 4-day trial, the trial jury delivered a guilty verdict October 25th, 2012 after deliberating for less than a day.

George Jones is scheduled to be sentenced by the Honorable Warren Granville on November 27th.

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