

Man gets 5 years in attacks

BR resident apologizes for firing randomly at vehicles

BY JOE GYAN JR.

Advocate staff writer

A 28-year-old Baton Rouge man was sentenced to five years in prison Tuesday and ordered to undergo psychological and substance abuse treatment for firing randomly at three occupied vehicles in the pre-dawn hours of Oct. 12, 2010.

Jason Robert Wyrick, who graduated cum laude from Louisiana Tech University in Ruston and had been working as a chemical engineer in Baton Rouge until a few months before the incidents, pleaded guilty in June to charges of aggravated assault with a firearm, aggravated criminal damage to property and illegal use of weapons.

Wyrick apologized Tuesday to the victims, who were not in state District Judge Bonnie Jackson's courtroom.

"I'm so ashamed of what I did," he said. "I'm deeply sorry for my actions."

Jackson remarked that Wyrick's actions on that early Sunday morning did not square with how he had led his life up to that point.

"This case painted the picture of two Jason Wyricks," she said.

"That is 100 percent correct, your honor," replied Wyrick, who was flanked by attorneys, James Manasseh and Andre Belanger.

The judge said Wyrick became addicted to prescription pain medication he was taking for a back injury.

"You let it all get away from you," she said.

Jackson, who stressed that the addiction did not justify or excuse his actions, also noted that Wyrick was using cocaine, marijuana and alcohol during that time period.

The judge said Wyrick's victims were "terrified," and two are suffering post-traumatic stress.

East Baton Rouge Parish sheriff's officials have said Wyrick encountered his first victims — a man and a woman riding south in a sport utility vehicle — on Acadian Thruway near Perkins Road.

As Wyrick passed the couple in a Ford Escort, he "flipped them off" and showed them his weapon, the officials said.

Wyrick fired at the couple's SUV after they reached Jefferson Highway near Drusilla Lane and Interstate 12.

The vehicle was not struck.

The second victim was a woman who was driving a car on Jefferson Highway and Essen Lane when Wyrick shot at her car, sheriff's officials said.

Her car was hit once.

The woman told detectives she first heard shots while stopped at a traffic light on Essen Lane near I-12.

The woman, who was stopped behind the SUV that was fired upon at Jefferson and Drusilla, said the shots might have been intended for the SUV, officials said.

The third victims were a man and woman who had recently left LSU and were riding in a car on Airline Highway near Jefferson Highway.

The couple's car was struck several times, but the man and woman were not hit, authorities said.

Jackson ordered Wyrick to pay \$2,800 in restitution and a \$1,000 fine.

He also will be placed on active supervised probation for five years upon his release from prison.

Wyrick pledged to "improve my life," telling the judge, "I will make you proud and I won't let you down."

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