

Bomb-maker gets life in prison for 1991 blast that killed officer

By Judy Rakowsky
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Alfred W. Trenkler, who built the bomb that killed a Boston police officer and maimed his partner in 1991, argued for 45 minutes before a packed courtroom yesterday that he was innocent. US District Judge Rya Zobel rejected his claims and sentenced him to a life term in prison.

"I am the sacrificial lamb, wrongly accused," said Trenkler, whose sentence is much heavier than the 15 years and eight months his co-defendant, Thomas A. Shay, is serving. Shay and Trenkler were convicted of conspiracy and explosives charges after separate trials.

The sentence was hailed by relatives of the late Jeremiah H. Hurley Jr. and his partner, Francis X. Foley, who lost an eye in the blast. Law enforcement officials who criticized Zobel's sentence of Shay as too lenient applauded yesterday's finding.

"It will never be over for us,"

said Cynthia Hurley, Hurley's widow. "But this is what we were waiting for and today, we're really, really happy."

Boston Police Commissioner Paul Evans complimented the US attorney's office, Boston homicide detectives and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for their work on the case. "We're not talking revenge here," said Evans. "We're talking justice."

In his statement, Trenkler recounted his Milton upbringing and private schooling, mentioning hobbies and every job he ever had. Countering the motives ascribed to him, Trenkler said he needed neither sex nor money when he met the young Thomas Shay, whom he likened to "a stray dog outside a store."

Trenkler said he had no motivation to build a bomb or to harm Shay's father, as his son did, for insurance money.

"I respect all life, man, animal,

insect and plant," he said.

Trenkler said he and his business were victims of harassment by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Boston police.

He offered condolences to Hurley's survivors and Foley, who later said they wanted no sympathy.

Said Cynthia Hurley: "I didn't appreciate his comments to me." And Foley: "I don't need his sympathies."

When Trenkler finished, Zobel promptly rejected his arguments. "Mr. Trenkler has argued forcefully against the verdict. I accept that verdict," she said.

The device that exploded in Roslindale in 1991, she said, was "an exceedingly powerful bomb."

Zobel found Trenkler had built the bomb, and though it was intended for Shay's father, Thomas Shay Sr., it instead killed Hurley in the driveway of the elder Shay's home in Roslindale.