

CLARK COUNTY COURTS EIGHTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT CLERK OF THE COURT



REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER 200 LEWIS AVENUE, 3RD FLOOR LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89155-1160 (702) 671-4554 Electronically Filed May 26 2011 08:35 a.m. Tracie K. Lindeman

Steven D. Grierson Clerk of the Court

May 25, 2011

Tracie Lindeman Clerk of the Supreme Court 201 South Carson Street, Suite 201 Carson City, Nevada 89701-4702

RE: STATE OF NEVADA vs. CARY PICKETT S.C. CASE: 58191

D.C. CASE: C262523-2

Dear Ms. Lindeman:

Pursuant to your Order Re: Entry of Written Judgment or Order and Record on Appeal, filed May 9, 2011, attached is a certified copy of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order, filed May 19, 2011, in the above referenced case. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at (702) 671-0512.

Sincerely,

STEVEN D. GRIERSON, CLERK OF THE COURT

Heather Lofquist, Deputy Clerk

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FILED ORDR 1 DAVID ROGER 2 Clark County District Attorney 2011 MAY 19 P 2: 12' Nevada Bar #002781 3 ROY L. NELSON, III. Chief Deputy District Attorney 4 Nevada Bar #007842 200 Lewis Avenue 5 Las Vegas, Nevada 89155-2212 (702) 671-2500 6 10C262523 - 2 Attorney for Plaintiff Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and (1422169 DISTRICT COURT 7 CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA 8 THE STATE OF NEVADA. Plaintiff, 9 CASE NO: 10C262523-2 -vs-10 DEPT NO: XVIII 11 CARY J. PICKETT, #0725059 12 Defendant. 13 14 FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER 15

> DATE OF HEARING: April 6, 2011 TIME OF HEARING: 8:15 A.M.

THIS CAUSE having come on for hearing before the Honorable David Barker, District Judge, on the 6th day of April, 2011, the Petitioner not being present, Proceeding In Forma Pauperis, the Respondent being represented by DAVID ROGER, District Attorney, by and through Stephanie Graham, Deputy District Attorney, and the Court having considered the matter, including briefs, transcripts, no arguments of counsel, and documents on file herein, now therefore, the Court makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On February 3, 2010, Cary J. Pickett, hereinafter "Defendant," was charged by way of Criminal Complaint with five (5) counts of Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm seven (7) counts of Robbery With Use of a Deadly Weapon, five (5) counts of

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- 2. On March 10, 2010, pursuant to negotiations, Defendant was charged by way of Information with one count each of Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm, Conspiracy to Commit Robbery, Robbery With Use of a Deadly Weapon, and Possession of a Firearm by an Ex-Felon. On March 11, 2010, pursuant to a written Guilty Plea Agreement, Defendant pled guilty to the same charges.
- 3. On May 10, 2010, Defendant was adjudged a Habitual Criminal and sentenced as follows: as to Count 1 Burglary While in Possession of a Firearm, to a MAXIMUM of SIXTY (60) MONTHS with a MINIMUM parole eligibility of TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS; as to Count 2 Conspiracy to Commit Robbery, to MAXIMUM of SIXTY (60) MONTHS with a MINIMUM parole eligibility of TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS; as to Count 3 Robbery with Use of a Deadly Weapon, to a MAXIMUM of TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS with a MINIMUM parole eligibility of TEN (10) YEARS, Count 3 to run CONSECUTIVE to Count 1; as to Count 4 Possession of a Firearm by an Ex-Felon, to a MAXIMUM of SIXTY (60) MONTHS with a MINIMUM parole eligibility of TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS, Count 4 to run CONCURRENT with Count 2, with EIGHTY-EIGHT (88) DAYS credit for time served.
 - 4. A Judgment of Conviction was filed on May 19, 2010.
 - 5. Defendant did not file a Direct Appeal.
 - 6. Defendant filed the instant petition on January 27, 2011.
 - 7. Defendant's counsel rendered effective assistance.
- 8. Defendant stipulated to habitual criminal treatment as part of his plea agreement.
- 9. Defendant has failed to provide any evidence supporting his claim that two out of seven of his previous felony convictions which were the basis for his treatment as a

¹ Due to clerical errors, an Amended Judgment of Conviction was filed on September 24, 2010.

habitual criminal were constitutionally infirm.

- 10. Even if counsel had successfully challenged two of Defendant's previous convictions as constitutionally infirm, five would have remained for the court to consider. Defendant therefore cannot demonstrate prejudice.
- 11. Since Defendant stipulated to treatment as a habitual criminal, any arguments by counsel against such treatment at sentencing would have been futile. Counsel cannot be deemed ineffective for failing to make futile arguments.
- 12. Defendant's bare allegation that his counsel failed to make mitigation arguments at sentencing is insufficient for relief.
- 13. The totality of the circumstances, including the relevant portions of Defendant's GPA, the plea canvass, and taking into account the presence of counsel, demonstrates Defendant's guilty plea was entered knowingly and voluntarily.
- 14. Defendant's claim that he was improperly sentenced as a habitual criminal is not cognizable in a petition for post-conviction relief since Defendant's conviction was based upon a plea of guilty.
- 15. Defendant has failed to provide evidence for consideration which supports the grounds alleged.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. In order to assert a claim for ineffective assistance of counsel a defendant must prove that he was denied "reasonably effective assistance" of counsel by satisfying the two-prong test of Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 686-87, 104 S.Ct. 2052, 2063-64 (1984). See also State v. Love, 109 Nev. 1136, 1138, 865 P.2d 322, 323 (1993). Under this test, the Defendant must show first that his counsel's representation fell below an objective standard of reasonableness, and second, that but for counsel's errors, there is a reasonable probability that the result of the proceedings would have been different. Strickland, 466 U.S. at 687-88, 694, 104 S.Ct. at 2065, 2068; Warden, Nevada State Prison v. Lyons, 100 Nev. 430, 432, 683 P.2d 504, 505 (1984) (adopting Strickland two-part test in Nevada).

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- 2. The court begins with the presumption of effectiveness and then must determine whether or not the petitioner has proved disputed factual allegations underlying his ineffective-assistance claim by a preponderance of the evidence. Means v. State, 120 Nev. 1001, 1012, 103 P.3d 25, 33 (2004).
- 3. Judicial review of a lawyer's representation is highly deferential, and a defendant must overcome the presumption that a challenged action might be considered sound strategy. State v. LaPena, 114 Nev. 1159, 1166, 968 P.2d 750, 754 (1998) (quoting from Strickland, 466 U.S. at 689, 104 S.Ct at 2052 (1984)). Strategy or decisions regarding the conduct of defendant's case are "virtually unchallengeable absent extraordinary circumstances." Doleman v. State, 112 Nev. 843, 848, 921 P.2d 278, 280 (1996) (quoting Howard v. State, 106 Nev. 713, 722, 800P.2d 175, 180 (1990)).
- 4. Pursuant to NRS 176.165, after sentencing, a defendant's guilty plea can only be withdrawn to correct "manifest injustice." See also Baal v. State, 106 Nev. 69, 72, 787 P.2d 391, 394 (1990). The law in Nevada clearly establishes that a plea of guilty is presumptively valid and the burden is on a defendant to show that the plea was not voluntarily entered. Bryant v. State, 102 Nev. 268, 272, 721 P.2d 364, 368 (1986) (citing Wingfield v. State, 91 Nev. 336, 337, 535 P.2d 1295, 1295 (1975)). Manifest injustice does not exist if defendant entered his plea voluntarily. Baal, 106 Nev. at 72, 787 P.2d at 394. To determine whether a guilty plea was voluntarily entered the Court will review the totality of the circumstances surrounding the defendant's plea. Bryant, 102 Nev. at 271, 721 P.2d at 367.
 - 5. NRS 34.810(1)(a) states in relevant part:
 - 1. The court shall dismiss a petition if the court determines that:
 - (a) The petitioner's conviction was upon a plea of guilty or guilty but mentally ill and the petition is not based upon an allegation that the plea was involuntarily or unknowingly entered or that the plea was entered without effective assistance of counsel.

DAVID ROGER DISTRICT ATTORNEY Nevada Bar #002781 BYROY L. NELSON, III. Chief Deputy District Attorney Nevada Bar #007842

ORDER

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Petition for Writ of Habeas

Corpus (Post-Conviction) shall be, and it is, hereby denied.

DATED this MAY 1 9,2011 of May, 2011.

DISTRICT JUDGE

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OF THE ORIGINAL ON FILE

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