

Janitor sentenced to 50 years for killing Placerville principal

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

A Placerville elementary school janitor on Friday was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison for gunning down the school's beloved principal.

John Luebbers, 45, was convicted April 24 of first-degree murder in the Feb. 2, 2011, shooting of his 20-year friend and golfing partner, Louisiana Schnell School Principal Sam LaCara, 50.

El Dorado Superior Court Judge James R. Wagoner imposed the mandatory sentence of 25 years to life on the murder count, plus a 25-year sentencing enhancement for use of a firearm during the killing.

According to testimony in the trial, Luebbers, the school's lead custodian, became livid over interviews for a night janitor. Luebbers, who had been golfing with LaCara just days earlier, preferred one candidate and the principal and school district preferred another.

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