

Jury finds Arvie innocent

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JENNINGS — A 31st Judicial District Court jury returned a verdict of not guilty Friday in the manslaughter trial of a former Jeff Davis Parish undercover narcotics contract agent.

The eight-woman, four-man panel deliberated three hours before acquitting ██████████, 25, of Lake Charles, of the March 1990 shooting of ██████████, 20, of Jennings.

██████████ was originally charged with second-degree murder, but Assistant Attorney General Julie Cullen amended those charges to manslaughter prior to jury selection.

██████████ allegedly shot ██████████ three times in the back with a .38 caliber Taurus snub-nose revolver near his residence at the corner of West Division and Andrew streets.

Authorities confirmed at the time that ██████████ was employed by the Jeff Davis Parish Sheriff's Office, but there was confusion as to whether she had actually been commissioned by the agency.

In testimony this week, it was revealed that ██████████ was recruited from the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office, where she had previously worked as an undercover agent, having made between 200-300 cases.

On the evening of March 16, 1990, ██████████, code-named ██████████, made a purchase of cocaine at Jack's Bar in Jennings. She had in her pocket "crack" cocaine, what remained of the "buy money" and her first Jeff Davis Parish Sheriff's Office payroll check.

According to testimony, ██████████ gave ██████████ a ride home and an argument ensued over whether

██████████ would share the drugs with him. ██████████ ordered ██████████ out of the car and the argument continued.

██████████ allegedly grabbed ██████████'s front pocket, ripped it off and began to run. ██████████ fired four shots, striking ██████████ three times. The pocket material, cash, drugs and payroll check were found still in Miller's hand.

On Thursday, defense co-counsel Glen Vamvoras and ██████████ moved to suppress testimony from Lt. Kenny Guidry of the Jennings Police Department. District Judge William Knight denied that motion and the defense then filed emergency motions for a supervisory writ and for a companion stay with the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeal in Lake Charles.

But the appellate court also denied the motions, clearing the way for closing arguments Friday.

In closing, Cullen told the jury that ██████████, as an undercover agent, had been doing a favor to society.

"I'm not trying to attack her for that," said ██████████, "... but something happened. Everybody has to act within the law. She (██████████) crossed over that line."

Cullen conceded ██████████ was a drug user who committed a robbery upon ██████████.

"What he did was not a nice thing to do," said Cullen. "But did he deserve to die for it?"

"You cannot — policeman, doctor, lawyer or Indian chief — you cannot shoot someone in the back running away," said Cullen. "They are posing no threat to you."

In his closing, defense attorney Vamvoras painted ██████████ not as a perpetrator, but rather as a self-defending victim of ██████████

drug-induced wrath.

"This tragedy had two victims," said Vamvoras. "██████████ was a victim of this crack cocaine menace which ██████████ — he was trying to stem — but ██████████ committed no crime."

[Not surprisingly, Vamvoras said he was "delighted" after the verdict.

"We felt like ██████████ needed to be vindicated and we're just happy that we were able to do it," he said.] "It took an intelligent jury that understood the technicalities by which our system operates. These people obviously took their instructions seriously, they weighed the evidence and I was very pleased with their ability to see what it takes to convict somebody of a crime in this country."