

Acquittal returned in shooting

Jury clears neighbor in fatal dispute

By Jonathan Tressler
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An Horry County jury acquitted a Garden City man of murder after about 12 hours of deliberations that began Wednesday afternoon, according to court officials.

Around 2 a.m. Thursday, the jury returned its verdict for Henry "Luke" Bramlett, finding him not guilty of all charges in the shooting death of Robert "Wayne" Tomlinson in August 2005, assistant 15th Circuit Solicitor George DeBusk said.

The verdict disappointed DeBusk, but Bramlett's lawyer Morgan Martin, of Conway, called it a bittersweet victory for him and his client.

The trial began Monday at the Horry County Courthouse in Conway.

Bramlett was accused of shooting Tomlinson, his former neighbor, 13 times with a .22-caliber rifle during a dispute over the placement of a storage shed on Tomlinson's property.

While he disagreed with the jury's verdict, DeBusk said due process has been served.

"That's the way the jury saw it," DeBusk said Thursday.

He said Tomlinson's family is "very disappointed."

"Well, I think, certainly there is a sense of relief. This has been quite a dark cloud over Mr. Bramlett's head for the last 18 months," Martin said.

"He's [Bramlett] happy with the verdict, but he regrets that it happened. Obviously, this is tragic. A man died."

Bramlett faced a possible sentence of 30 years to life in prison if convicted.

While the prosecution and defense agreed Bramlett shot Tomlinson, Martin argued Bramlett did so in defense of himself and his property.

Prosecutors maintained that Tomlinson was killed in cold blood because Tomlinson offended Bramlett.

The argument revolved around a carport Tomlinson had on his property. Bramlett was annoyed with the placement of the carport because it stood only inches from his property line, violating county zoning.

The argument boiled over Aug. 18, 2005, when Tomlinson confronted Bramlett and Bramlett shot him.