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# Hopkins woman cleared in shooting

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A Hopkins woman was acquitted of murder Wednesday after she described drawing her revolver in jest and accidentally shooting a man she loved "like a brother."

"I believe in the law," Lucille Patricia Davis, 32, said, trembling with emotion after her three-day trial concluded.

A perplexing element in the story of Charles "Rooster" Jones' death was Ms. Davis' failure to report it. Prosecutors called it "a coverup" and attempted to portray the incident as an act of passion.

But Ms. Davis went on the witness stand Wednesday to tell the jury — all but one of them women — that she simply was too frightened to tell anyone what she'd done to her lifelong friend and neighbor April 8.

That Friday night, Ms. Davis said, she caught a ride to Jones' trailer. She said she carried her revolver because she expected to walk the rural road home later on.

As she prepared to leave, Jones asked her if she was frightened to walk alone "I just swirled around, and I pointed my gun, and I said, 'Here, I keep this with me all the time,'" Ms. Davis recalled "He said, 'No, don't point that at me.' And he slapped my hand, and it went off."

On questioning by her attorney, Jack Swerling, Ms. Davis said she didn't know what to do. After about 10 minutes, she went home.

"Why did you leave the trailer?" Swerling asked.

"I just wasn't together," she responded. "I was scared, crying I was just torn apart."

"What did you do?" Swerling asked.

"I didn't sleep I walked the floor, hoping and praying I didn't kill him."

"Did you think you had?"

"Yes."

Ms. Davis didn't return to the trailer over the weekend, although her oldest son, Jeffrey, testified that his mother asked him several times if he had seen the 31-year-old Jones.

Three days after the shooting, Jones' sister

found his body. Two days after that, Ms. Davis confessed to sheriff's deputies, who had already questioned her twice about Jones' death.

The time frame involved proved crucial for assistant 5th Circuit solicitors Jay Ervin and Jim Morton, who had only circumstantial evidence in the case — some of which may have been destroyed by the slight decomposition of Jones' body.

Several of their witnesses were expert investigators who testified about the lack of gunpowder or burns on the sleeve of Jones' jacket, where a fatal bullet passed on its way to his chest.

Testimony was inconclusive on whether that meant Ms. Davis was across the room from Jones when her gun went off — which would contradict her story — or whether the gunpowder was destroyed by body fluids.

Swerling said after the trial that he was concerned about how the jury would feel about his client's silence for several days after the shooting. "She was walking around in a fog," he said, describing that as "a very human response."

As many as 30 spectators attended the trial.