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Woman cleared of murder

By JAN TUTEN
Camden Bureau

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A circuit judge ruled Friday that an Elgin woman who killed her estranged husband last December was not guilty of murder.

Patricia L. Grimm, 40, of Pine Straw Lane near Elgin, was cleared of the charge of murdering her husband after Circuit Judge Walter Bristow determined she acted in self-defense.

Ms. Grimm shot her husband, Lindsay Branham, 36, to death Dec. 26 after he threatened to kill her, said her attorney, Jack Swerling.

Branham had been living in the Harbison community near Columbia since the couple separated in early December, investigators said.

On the night of the incident, he was waiting at the Elgin home when Ms. Grimm, a registered nurse, arrived. He had closed the blinds and began approaching her threateningly, saying, "I'm going to kill you," she told investigators.

"He came at her, hit her, and she shot him. He kept coming, and she shot him again. He came again, and she shot him a third time," said Swerling.

Branham was shot three times during a struggle, and one shot severed his aorta, said 5th Circuit Assistant Solicitor William Tetterton. Ms. Grimm notified authorities of the shooting, he said.

Swerling said Ms. Grimm had separated from her husband after several abuse incidents.

According to a statement Ms. Grimm gave sheriff's deputies, she had bought a .38-caliber pistol for protection because of the abuse incidents. She told an investigator that her husband threatened and beat her, and she started shooting.

"He had made several threats about killing her," Swerling told the judge Friday.

"Witnesses were going to verify the threats and that she was afraid and had asked him to back off and leave her alone," the lawyer said.

Tetterton said Ms. Grimm also had asked relatives for help in getting Branham to stop physically and sexually abusing her.