

Jury finds Meriden man not guilty in killing of New Britain teen

By Lauren Sievert and Mary Ellen Godin, Record-Journal staff

A 12-member jury found Meriden resident Jonathon Gibbs not guilty Friday of murder and lesser charges in the June 2013 killing of a New Britain teen over the sale of a pair of sneakers.

Gibbs, who had been in prison since his arrest a year ago, was released within 15 minutes of hearing the verdict.

His family cheered and celebrated in the parking lot outside of court after the verdict was read. Attorney Norm Pattis represented Gibbs, and said the verdict was the “right outcome for a good kid.”

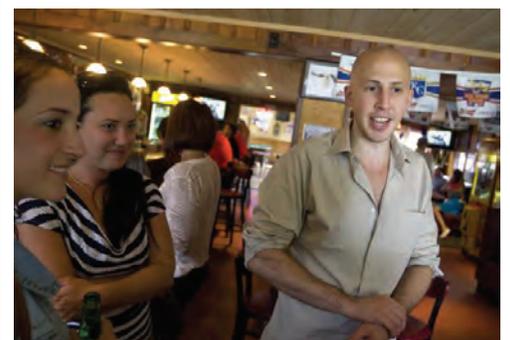
The jury deliberated for a day and a half on all the charges.

“It’s overwhelming,” Gibbs said at a celebration with his family and friends after he left court. “I’m just happy to be free.”

A large group of family and friends gathered at a local restaurant to celebrate Gibbs’ acquittal. Gibbs said the last year was “down the drain for someone (he) trusted.”

Gibbs was accused of killing Isaac Smith, 18. He was charged with murder, though the jury was

“We were both kind of numb,” Pattis said about the feeling after Gibbs was released. “He’s happy, he’s got his life back.”



Jonathan Gibbs, of Meriden, gathers with family and friends at Village Barn in South Meriden, Friday, August 1, 2014. A jury today found Gibbs not guilty in the June 2013 killing of a New Britain teen. | Dave Zajac / Record-Journal

also instructed to consider lesser charges, including first-degree manslaughter with a firearm, second-degree manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide.

The jury found Gibbs not guilty on all charges. Pattis said before the verdict was read Gibbs and he were “hopeful but apprehensive,” because he never assumes anything with juries. As the not guilty verdicts were being read aloud, starting with murder and going

Continued on next page

Record-Journal

Continued from previous page

down the list of the lesser charges, Pattis said his hand started shaking. Gibbs said he was shaking so much before the verdict was read he could barely stand up.

“They got to the bottom and I turned to Jon and said ‘You’re free,’” Pattis said.

Smith’s family was not in court to hear the jury verdict.

Pattis said Gibbs was released after a few administrative checks were done, and they walked out the front door of the courthouse together. Gibbs said his time in prison was “harsh and cruel” but that the other prisoners and correction officers gave him support, saying they hoped he would get out.

Rob and Theresa Cassin were at the celebration. Rob Cassin said he loves to see Gibbs in society again. Theresa Cassin said Gibbs’ acquittal shows “there is a God.”

“We were both kind of numb,” Pattis said about the feeling after Gibbs was released. “He’s happy, he’s got his life back.”

Gibbs was selling a pair of \$400 Nike sneakers on Facebook, according to the arrest warrant. After being contacted by a prospective buyer, he drove to 19 Kelsey St. in New Britain to sell the shoes on June 16, 2013, according to the warrant. Gibbs parked his pickup truck, got out and was approached by Smith. Gibbs told police at the time that Smith, 18, grabbed the shoes and ran off. Gibbs said he got a gun from his truck and fired a shot

“in the direction” of Gibbs, the warrant said.

During the trial, Gibbs said he was lying to police and that his uncle, Terry Gibbs Sr., was in the passenger seat and was the one who fired the gun. Pattis reminded the jury that Terry Gibbs Sr. was a felon who was not allowed to own a gun and that Jonathon Gibbs had lied to police to protect his uncle. Pattis also argued that police failed to tell Gibbs that Smith had died when he confessed.

Gibbs said his condolences go out to Smith’s family.

“No one should have died,” Gibbs said.

Gibbs said he is working to get his life back, including going out on Monday for a job he hopes is lined up. His house was sold during the past year, so he is now staying with friends.

State’s Attorney Brian Preleski prosecuted the case. He did not return a call seeking comment about the shooting and any possible future investigation.

Noted criminal defense attorneys said it’s possible, but unlikely prosecutors will seek to charge Gibbs’ uncle in the crime.

“Yes they can, but it’s a steep road because they went out on a limb to charge someone else, and that is admissible,” said attorney Hugh Keefe.

Attorney John Walkley agreed with Keefe’s assessment .

“It’s very difficult to go after the other person because you have the police saying for this long it was the other guy,” Walkley said. “It’s not impossible, but I would find it unusual. They should have done a better job with their investigation.”