

Marin Independent Journal (<http://www.marinij.com>)

## Marin jury acquits Dillon Beach shooter of manslaughter

### Defense argued he fired in self-defense

*By Gary Klien, Marin Independent Journal*

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A former Dillon Beach resident who fatally shot a 19-year-old man last year at Lawson's Landing was acquitted Tuesday by a Marin County jury.

Ken Neville, who said he killed Stachau Jackson in self-defense, was found not guilty after about a day of deliberations.

Judge Andrew Sweet ordered Neville released from the county jail, where he has been in custody since his arrest last March.

It was unclear what Neville, who lost his home and his best friend in the aftermath of the shooting, plans to do next. Before his arrest, he was living on a state disability payment of less than \$1,000 a month.

The acquittal spared Neville, 57, a potential sentence of 21 years on charges of voluntary manslaughter with a gun.

"I think it's a just result," said Deputy Public Defender Michael Coffino, who represented Neville with colleague Tamara York. "We're very happy. At the same time, it's sad someone died. You can't change that."

Jackson's distraught mother, Hattie Jackson of Milwaukee, said the verdict was "not justice at all."

"I don't understand how they got to the point of him being not guilty when my son didn't have a weapon," she said by phone. "My son was outside the trailer. (Neville) could've closed the door and waited until the police got there."

About a half dozen jurors declined to comment while leaving court after the verdict.

The shooting occurred on March 30 at Neville's trailer at the Lawson's Landing campground. Jackson was the estranged romantic partner of Neville's housemate and best friend, 51-year-old Eric Gillispie, during a volatile relationship of about 18 months.

Jackson spent part of his time at the trailer home with Gillispie and part at an apartment in Guerneville. Defense attorneys said Jackson had a history of menacing Neville and Gillispie, who had called the

sheriff's department about him on numerous occasions, including one that landed Jackson on a 72-hour involuntary mental health confinement.

On the night of the shooting, both Neville and Gillispie told investigators that Jackson broke into their trailer after they locked him out, and that he threatened them with a knife.

The shooting happened during a series of outgoing 911 calls or incoming calls from sheriff's dispatchers. Neville said he was able to force Jackson outside of the trailer at gunpoint, allowing Gillispie to run away, and fired the gun when Jackson moved as though about to lunge at him.

Sheriff's investigators booked Neville on suspicion of murder and released Gillispie after questioning.

Gillispie was found dead two days later near his car in a remote area of Tehama County, not far from a family home in Cottonwood. The sheriff-coroner's office ruled the death a suicide by an overdose of antidepressants.

A suicide note left behind indicated Gillispie was distraught in part over having brought the perilous legal situation into Neville's life.

The Marin County District Attorney's Office initially charged Neville with murder, but two judges found insufficient evidence to support the charge. The prosecution then refiled the case as manslaughter.

Neville testified in his own defense at the trial. He said he felt "overwhelmed with guilt" for Jackson's death but that he feared for his safety when he fired the gun.

"It's just a shocking feeling that I actually did it," he said. "I was afraid he was going to jump me. He probably would have killed me, or caused me great bodily harm."

Neville is a Pasadena native who has lived in the Bay Area for 45 years. He lived in Hayward before renting the trailer space at Lawson's Landing.

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