

# Cabdriver acquitted



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— Russell Dossie



LEW STAMP/Akron Beacon Journal photo

Russell Dossie (upper left) listens as Judge John R. Adams reads the verdict in the July 4 shooting death of Mark Russell. Above, friend Malik Ali (left) hugs Dossie after the cabdriver was found innocent of murder and assault, but guilty of possession of a weapon as a felon and tampering with evidence.

## Jury convicts Dossie on lesser charges

BY DENNIS MCEANENEY  
*Beacon Journal staff writer*

Russell Dossie cried tears of joy yesterday after being acquitted of murder in a July 4 shooting that Akron police called the city's first homicide attributable to "road rage."

Dossie's first words after the jury announced its verdict went out to relatives of the victim, Mark Russell, 35.

"I feel bad for the Russell fam-

ily, especially the kids and his wife," Dossie said. July 4 "is a night I'll never be able to get out of my mind."

"I know his family loved him very much," Dossie said. "I just hope they can understand the position I was in and realize what was happening at the time."

Russell became enraged after Dossie's taxi cut off the van Russell's wife was driving in heavy traffic after Akron's downtown

fireworks show.

As both vehicles were stopped for a red light on the Tallmadge Avenue bridge over state Route 8, Russell got out of the van, went to Dossie's taxi and smashed his fist through the driver's side window of Dossie's cab.

Dossie reached for a handgun lying on the passenger's seat of the taxi and fired one shot. The bullet penetrated both of Russell's lungs and his aorta. He died

moments later.

Dossie hugged friends and relatives and his attorney, Kirk Mihal, after the jury found him innocent of murder, voluntary manslaughter, felonious assault and carrying a concealed weapon.

The jury, however, found Dossie guilty of being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm and tampering with evidence (for hiding the gun in a trash bin), felon

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# ACQUIT

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nies that carry a maximum combined sentence of six years in prison.

Summit County Common Pleas Judge John R. Adams set Dec. 17 for sentencing on those convictions. Adams allowed Dossie to remain free on bond pending the sentencing.

Had he been found guilty of the more serious charges, Dossie could have been sentenced to life in prison.

"These are truly sad cases," Summit County Prosecutor Michael Callahan said after the verdicts. "No one ever wins in cases like these."

"If for no other reason than the sake of Russell's family, the story needed to be told to a jury," Callahan said. "I have no quarrel with what they decided."

Dossie was initially charged with voluntary manslaughter, tampering with evidence and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

On Oct. 21, supplemental indictments were issued by the county grand jury charging Dossie with murder, felonious assault and carrying a concealed weapon - all of which were rejected by the trial jury.

At the time of the supplemental indictments, Callahan called them "more of a technical correction than anything else."

The supplemental charges stemmed from a June 1998 change in Ohio law allowing murder charges to be filed when a death results from a first- or second-degree felony act of violence.

In Dossie's case, under the new law a conviction for voluntary manslaughter or felonious assault would have allowed his jury to add a conviction for murder.

Dossie said of the supplemental indictments, "I was a little upset with the charges and the way they put them on, but I guess the sys-

tem has to do what the system has to do."

But, he said, "I feel good about the verdicts. I think that's how it should have been. I have no control over that, but thank God, things came out the way they did here."

Asked what he planned to do in the future, Dossie said, "Just continue to pray for their family and for me. I just hope I can have a decent life from here on out."

Dossie said he doubted that he would resume driving a cab. "Too many bad memories," he said.

He said he has been receiving threatening phone calls "and I hope that with this verdict, they'll stop. I think I've been through enough. It wasn't my fault."

After the verdicts, Judge Adams read a statement by jurors saying they did not wish to be interviewed on their decision.

"Both families have suffered a

great deal in this tragedy. We feel we weighed the evidence carefully and thoughtfully. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Russells and the Dossies at this time," the statement said.

Members of Russell's family did not want to be interviewed, a spokeswoman with Victim Assistance said.

Attorney Migdal said of the jury verdict, "This was a very unusual case. It was a horrible thing and a tragic thing for both families involved."

"I think they (jurors) understood that, but I think they understood what Mr. Dossie had to deal with at that time on that bridge.

"From day one, the public has been 100 percent on Mr. Dossie's side. I think they put themselves where he was and said, 'What would I do in the same situation?'"