

**Daleville**

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## Newton man found guilty of murder

### SPECIAL TO THE SUN-COURIER

A seven-man, five-woman jury took only an hour to last Wednesday convict a 36-year-old Newton man of murder in the Aug. 19, 2003 death of Patricia Lynn Tomlin.

Christopher B. Hawthorne, also known as "Doughboy," was found guilty by the Dale County jury of killing Tomlin, also of Newton, who was shot through the head with .22-caliber long rifle in the passenger seat of her truck at the boat ramp in Newton.

Chief Assistant District Attorney Bill Filmore, who prosecuted the case, said Hawthorne claimed the shooting was an accident. But the combination of the forensic evidence and the statements Hawthorne made after shooting the victim led the jury to a different conclusion.

The State Medical Examiner, Dr. James Lauridson, testified about the autopsy of the victim and showed in a demonstration the direction of the bullet through the victim's head and the approximate position of the body determined by the pools of blood. In addition, the autopsy showed that the muzzle of the gun was against the victim's left forehead.

Filmore said Hawthorne made statements to Newton police when he was pulled over after driving through downtown Newton and past the rescue squad. With the police car lights and sirens on, the officers followed Hawthorne to his mother's house, where he told the officers that he had killed Tomlin.

Evidence presented in the trial also indicated Hawthorne stated to Chief Deputy Walter Ford at the jail after he was informed of the charges, "Ya'll don't understand;[she] wanted me to shoot her."

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## Murder \_\_\_\_\_

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Filmore said Hawthorne admitted that both he and the victim had been drinking in the truck before the shooting. Hawthorne contended that after he got into the driver's side of the truck while parked at the boat ramp, Tomlin put the gun to his head and that is when he snatched it out of her hand and flipped it around, the gun accidentally went off.

The case came down to whether the jury believed the version of the facts from the Hawthorne, said Filmore. Hawthorne testified that he could not remember any of the statements that law enforcement said he made.

Testimony and evidence at the trial also revealed that the name "CHRIS" was carved on Tomlin's upper left front leg. Hawthorne denied that he carved it onto Tomlin's leg and said she did it. However, Filmore contended that she would have had to carve his name on her upside down and backward. Hawthorne did admit that he had a Grim Reaper tattoo on his right arm.

Hawthorne, who is a carpet layer, had been out on bond but was remanded into custody after the trial concluded. He will face a sentencing hearing in another month or so. He has a prior felony for possession of marijuana, first degree, which will mean a minimum of 15-year sentence.

Filmore was serving as district judge at the time of the shooting back in 2003 and presided over Hawthorne's preliminary hearing.