

Dale Jury Finds Woman Guilty of Manslaughter

An Ozark woman was found guilty of manslaughter by a Dale County Jury after five hours of deliberation.

Talia Johnson, 22, was charged with murder in the fatal stabbing of 47 year-old David Baker, but the jury found her guilty of the lesser-included charge of manslaughter.

District Attorney Kirke Adams was satisfied with the verdict of the jury, since it was a Class B Felony that carries a sentence of two to 20 years. However, Adams

admitted that with more witness cooperation and some evidence that was deemed inadmissible, "we could have gotten a murder conviction."

Johnson admitted to killing Baker immediately after the stabbing, but said she did it out of self-defense.

The defense argued that Johnson had been at the Ice Street residence to see an uncle who also lived there, Adams said. Johnson claimed Baker attempted to sexually assault her and that she

Continued on Page 3A

Dale Jury

Continued from Page 1A

defended herself with the knife, which has never been found.

The forensics report showed that Baker was stabbed once and that the knife hit his aorta, killing him within seconds. The toxicology report showed his blood alcohol level was .23, which is about three times the legal limit.

Those at the house had been partying all night, with the stabbing occurring around 8 a.m.

Sentencing for Johnson is scheduled for January. Adams said he will be seeking the maximum sentence of 20 years.

"She has already received a five-year sentence for a robbery that she was found guilty of during the last criminal term. In addition, she has another pending

assault charge for stabbing another man. This is the type of person that needs to remain in prison, and our office is doing everything we can to make that happen. However, the District Attorney's office is in partnership with the citizens of our county to make our communities a safer place. Although citizens who witness these crimes sometimes don't want to get involved, or may be fearful of the consequences of coming forward, it is necessary for witnesses to testify, so our office can do our job and put these criminals away. We have to have cooperation to get convictions."

During the recent criminal jury term 98 cases were disposed of through plea agreement and the three cases tried to juries were all convicted.