

Freeman jury verdict took 5 votes

By JOHN F. BROWN
Times Herald Reporter

A St. Clair County Circuit Court jury considered finding Frederick Thomas Freeman innocent of murdering Scott A. Macklem.

The first vote was deadlocked at 6-6. Four more votes were taken before the unanimous guilty verdict was reached.

"It's not easy, it's hard to decide someone's life like we did yesterday," one of the jurors said.

This reaction was shared by all of the 12 jurors who found Freeman, 24, of Escanaba, guilty of first-degree murder in the Nov. 5 shotgun slaying of Macklem.

But gradually jurors came to believe Freeman was guilty. The second vote it was 7-5 for finding him guilty; the third vote was 8-4, guilty; and the fourth vote was 10-2, guilty.

But at 3 p.m. Monday, the fifth vote

resulted in a unanimous 12-0 guilty verdict.

One of the jurors said: "There was a lot of emotion in that jury room. There were tears and voices were raised. But we finally all agreed. He did it.

"The thing that finally convinced me was the testimony of Rene Gobeyn and Kathleen Dyer."

Gobeyn, 20, a student at St. Clair County Community college, identified Freeman as the man he saw driving out of a college parking lot shortly after Macklem was killed.

Duyer, 34, of Gladstone, testified that she talked to Freeman at a karate school in Escanaba between 12:10 and 1 p.m. on Nov. 5, the day Macklem was killed.

The juror believed Dyer could have been mistaken about the time she saw Freeman. And there was the possibility Freeman could have flown to Escanaba anyway, the juror said.

Another juror said: "We felt Freeman was placed in the parking lot. It wasn't just Gobeyn's testimony. It was a lot of things. We felt there was time for Freeman to be here."

Another juror said it was the testimony of Phillip Joplin, 38, that convinced her of Freeman's guilt. Joplin shared a courtroom cell for two hours with Freeman and testified that Freeman told him he had shot Macklem and had an airtight alibi.

"His alibi was too perfect. He called too many people," she said. "And if he was so innocent, why didn't he testify himself and tell us he didn't do it."

Still another juror said it was Freeman's cockiness in court during the trial that seemed to sway him.

"He was terribly arrogant. It almost seemed as if the whole trial was a joke to him," he said. "But it wasn't a joke. Scott Macklem was killed."