

Bao found guilty of murder in shooting death of Vu La

■ The decision was delayed because of an injured juror.

BY JOSH FUNK

Despite defense concerns about disrupted jury deliberations, Linh Bao was convicted of first-degree murder Friday for shooting another man in February.

A juror broke her arm in three places Wednesday night and had to be hospitalized with the compound fracture all day Thursday while the rest of the panel awaited her return.

Friday morning, the woman returned to court with her right arm in a sling so Lancaster County District Judge Steven Burns could determine if deliberations could continue.

After questioning the juror about how much pain she was in and the circumstances of her separation from the jury, Burns allowed the juror to rejoin the panel to finish deliberating.

Public Defender Tim Sopinski asked the judge to declare a mistrial. He argued that the juror's absence violated the sequestration, and other jurors might sympathize to her injury and not properly consider the evidence.

Burns overruled the motion, saying that he was satisfied that the woman, who was on 100 mg of Darvoset, could continue.

The jury then deliberated for three and a half hours before finding Bao guilty of first-degree murder and the use of a weapon to commit a felony.

Bao was convicted for shooting Vu Hoang La, 37, on Feb. 5. La

was found dead in the driver's seat of his car down the street from Bao's trailer in the 3700 Cornhusker Hwy. trailer park.

Bao, 30, could receive the death penalty or life in prison for murder and up to 20 years in prison on the weapons charge at his Jan. 3 sentencing.

The jury had the option of convicting Bao on the lesser charges of second-degree murder or manslaughter.

Deputy County Attorney Andy Jacobsen would not comment on the case because of the pending sentencing hearing.

Public Defender Tim Sopinski also refused comment Friday.

The jury was sequestered in two different hotels last week. On Thursday, they waited in an empty jury room until 2 p.m. for word on the injured juror.

Juror Sandra Perman said it was difficult being away from her two children. She said the hardest part of her job was going over "all the little details" of the case.

At trial, the attorneys argued whether Bao shot La in self defense or if the shooting was a deliberate killing.

On Feb. 5, Bao went to a Vietnamese New Year's party with a friend that night, but he did not know many other people there.

At the party, Bao got into a fight with La and two other men, though it is unclear what started the disagreement. The men were asked to leave the party.

Bao got a ride home to the trailer park, and near his home Bao spotted La's car following and jumped out.

Bao ran inside his house and got his .380-caliber handgun, but

it was unloaded.

Then, Bao got into another fight with La and the two men down the street from Bao's trailer, and the men struggled over the gun.

After that struggle, Bao grabbed the gun from his wife, who had come outside. He went back into his trailer to load the gun.

When Bao returned outside with the gun, La and the other men had returned to La's car, but it is unclear if they were leaving.

Witnesses described Bao walking toward the car and firing at least five times. Police found five shell casings around the car.



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