

Jury clears Stratford man accused of wife's murder

Jim Walsh, Cherry Hill Courier-Post

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CAMDEN - When police made a well-being check at a Stratford home in February 2016, they found 35-year-old Roxanne Flores fatally shot in a bedroom.

Her husband Mario had been seen leaving the house a short time earlier. The father of three was carrying his passport, a gun and a loaded suitcase as he fled South Jersey, authorities said.

On Tuesday, a jury returned a verdict at the husband's murder trial.

Mario Flores, it said, was not guilty.

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"Thank God for the jury system," defense attorney Robin Lord said Tuesday night, after Flores was released from Camden County Jail, where he'd spent more than two years.

"Roxanne Flores committed suicide," said Lord, whose defense relied heavily on the findings of a noted forensic pathologist, Dr. Cyril Wecht.

"He testified that (Roxanne Flores) killed herself, and that the

evidence was consistent with suicide," said Lord.

She also offered an explanation for why Mario Flores, 35, had gone on the run.

"He panicked," said Lord, noting Roxanne Flores was dead before her husband left their home.

"She used his gun," the attorney said.

"He was afraid he'd get blamed," added Lord, saying the couple had been having marital problems.

"He was correct in his feelings," she observed.

Police found Roxanne Flores' body after going to the couple's home around 1:30 a.m. on Feb. 20, 2016, according to the Camden County Prosecutor's Office.

That was about 40 minutes after a Stratford police officer had seen an SUV, later found to belong to Mario Flores, leaving the property on the first block of Wright Avenue.

Detectives later learned Flores had dropped off his 3-year-old daughter at a relative's home in Lindenwold around 1 a.m. Two other children, ages 8 and 13, were left behind at the Stratford home, authorities said.

Mario Flores was arrested several hours later in Alexandria, Virginia. After extradition to New Jersey, he was ordered held on \$1 million bail.

[At a court hearing in March 2016](#), Assistant Prosecutor Christine Shah said Flores had packed a suitcase and taken his passport before leaving his Stratford home.

She said the gun that killed Roxanne Flores was found ditched at the end of a residential street in Lindenwold.

Flores' trial, held before Superior Court Judge David Ragonese,

began in the first week of September, according to Lord.

The prosecutor's office, which was represented at the trial by assistant prosecutors Mary Ellen Murphy and Ian Steenson, could not be reached for comment.

Lord said the jury met for less than an hour after closing arguments Thursday, then deliberated for about three hours before reaching its decision Tuesday.

"He couldn't stop hugging me," said the attorney, who noted about 25 members of Flores' family had waited at the courthouse for the verdict.

Lord said Flores wants to resume his drywall business and rebuild his life.

"It's unfortunate you have to spend two years in jail to get to this point," she said. "He won't be getting those years back."

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