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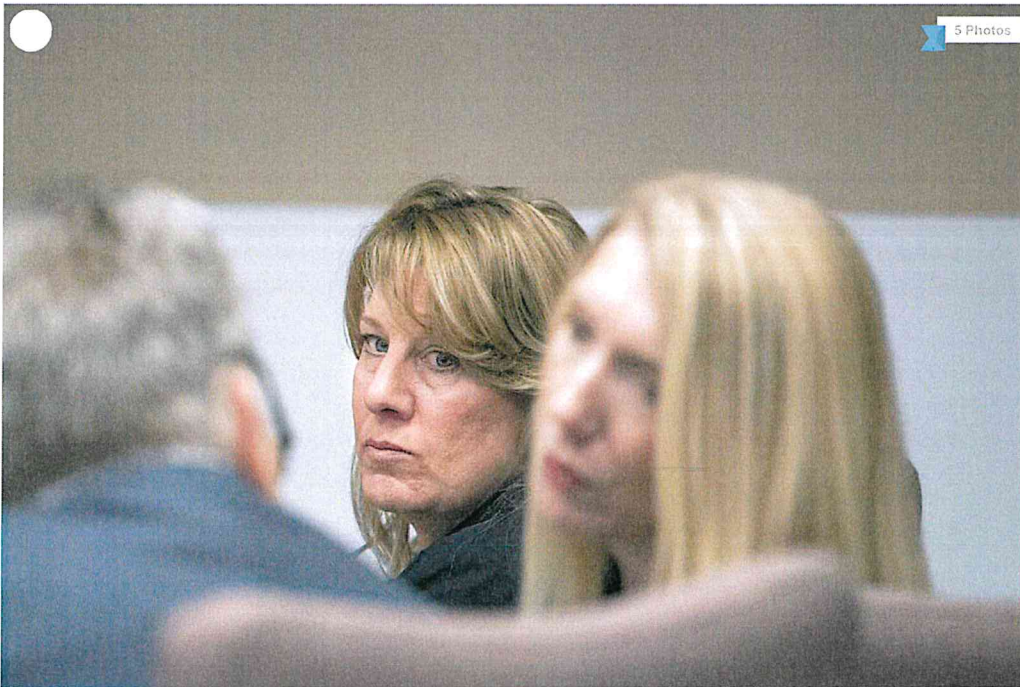
Camas woman acquitted in fatal shooting of husband

Judge rules Stephanie 'Sam' Westby acted in self-defense

By [Becca Robbins](#), Columbian staff reporter

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Stephanie "Sam" Westby, left facing, sits with defense attorney Jacy Thayer during closing arguments in Westby's murder trial Thursday morning in Clark County Superior Court. Westby was accused of killing her husband during a confrontation over him having an affair. She was acquitted of all charges Thursday afternoon. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian) [Photo Gallery](#)



Camas woman acquitted in fatal shooting of husband



Stephanie "Sam" Westby, left facing, sits with defense attorney Jacy Thayer during closing arguments in Westby's murder trial Thursday morning in Clark County Superior Court. Westby was accused of killing her husband during a confrontation over him having an affair. She was acquitted of all charges Thursday afternoon. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)



Displaying 1 of 5





Camas woman acquitted in fatal shooting of husband



Stephanie "Sam" Westby, center, hugs her attorney Steve Thayer while her other attorney, Jacy Thayer, right, looks on Thursday afternoon in Clark County Superior Court. A judge acquitted her of second-degree murder and first-degree assault charges in the September 2019 fatal shooting of her husband. (Becca Robbins/The Columbian)



Displaying 2 of 5





Camas woman acquitted in fatal shooting of husband



Stephanie "Sam" Westby, right, reacts Thursday to a judge announcing her acquittal of murder and assault charges in Clark County Superior Court. The judge agreed that Westby's fatal shooting of her husband in September 2019 at their Camas home was an act of self-defense. (Becca Robbins/The Columbian)



Displaying 3 of 5





Camas woman acquitted in fatal shooting of husband



From left to right: Jacy Thayer, Steve Thayer, Stephanie "Sam" Westby and Amber Burns pose for a portrait at the Clark County Courthouse. Westby was acquitted of second-degree murder and first-degree assault in the September 2019 fatal shooting of her husband. (Becca Robbins/The Columbian)



Displaying 5 of 5



Stephanie “Sam” Westby sobbed as she embraced friends and family Thursday after a judge acquitted her of murder and assault charges in the September 2019 fatal shooting of her husband at their Camas home.

Clark County Superior Court Judge Nancy Retsinas heard from more than 30 witnesses and considered more than 130 pieces of evidence before ruling Westby acted in self-defense.

The judge said the evidence showed there was an “intense struggle” between the couple in their bedroom, where Sam Westby shot her husband, Joe Westby, twice. Retsinas said the evidence also showed Joe Westby threatened Sam Westby and that she feared for her safety.

When Sam Westby, 51, embraced her attorney, Steve Thayer, he told her, “I’m so happy for you.”

Sam Westby replied, “I am, too, and for my kids.”

After the verdict, Thayer said he believes the judge made the right decision and saw that Sam Westby was innocent.

“It’s gratifying to see our due process system works,” Thayer said.

In addition to her attorneys, Sam Westby thanked her supporters who filled the gallery pews behind her for eight days of trial.

Senior Deputy Prosecutor Toby Krauel said he accepts the judge’s ruling and that she fairly considered the evidence. The prosecutor’s office felt this was an important case to take to trial, he said, and the charges were supported by the evidence. Still, he said self-defense cases are tough because of the prosecution’s high burden to disprove the defense.

During closing arguments, Thayer said the state’s theory that Sam Westby concocted false circumstances for a self-defense claim was fantasy. He said the evidence showed Sam Westby wanted a divorce from her husband upon discovering he was having an affair, not to kill him.

But he said when Joe Westby attacked her during a confrontation over his affair, Sam Westby was too weak to defend herself by any means other than shooting him.

Krael argued Sam Westby had only minor injuries after the shooting, and there was no history of domestic violence between the couple; he said that means Sam Westby would have no reason to believe her husband was going to harm her.

Thayer noted the law doesn't require someone to have been previously assaulted by a spouse in order to claim self-defense. He said it also doesn't require someone to be badly injured before the use of deadly force is justified.

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