

After 2 1/2 weeks of listening to witnesses, 12 people found Robert F. "Bobby" Petty guilty of voluntary manslaughter in the 2010 death of his former wife, Nina Mae Keown.

The guilty finding on the lesser included Class B felony came after the jury listened to final arguments made by Prosecutor Jason Mount and by Petty's public defender, Brian Chastain of Corydon. Jurors deliberated for about five hours, advising Special Judge Frank Newkirk Jr. some time after 8 p.m. on Wednesday, February 13, that they had reached a unanimous verdict.

Petty was originally charged with murder as well as two Class D felonies, obstruction of justice and removal of a body from the scene (of a crime). Jurors opted for the lesser included charge of voluntary manslaughter as well as finding Petty guilty of the two Class D felonies.

Voluntary manslaughter carries a sentence of from six to 20 years in prison plus a fine of up to \$10,000. The class D felonies can carry a sentence of up to three years each as well as a fine of up to \$10,000 each.

Petty's sentencing is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 17, in Scott Circuit Court. Because Prosecutor Mount also filed an Habitual Felony Offender Status in the case, Special Judge Newkirk can weigh mitigating and non-mitigating circumstances and add up to 30 years to Petty's sentence, making it possible that Petty could receive a total sentence of 56 years.

Nina Mae Keown and Petty had gone to an outdoor music festival near Petty's mobile home on the night of August 7, 2010. The couple left together on Petty's ATV, though Keown reportedly did not wish to leave the festival.

Petty's story to authorities searching for the petite blonde after her family reported her missing was that Keown and he argued on the way back to his trailer. She got off the ATV and said she was returning to the festival and walked into a cornfield, Petty said at the time.

After Petty was held in Clark County Jail on an arrest warrant for an unrelated crime, he told a different story to Clark County detectives.

They called in then-Sheriff Lizenby, the man who had led the search for Nina for over two weeks before Petty confessed that Nina had died at his mobile home.

The man said he took the body to a remote country road in Jefferson County. After disrobing the body, he dumped it down a roadside ravine. He eventually led Sheriff Lizenby and the Clark County detectives to the site, where Nina's decomposed body was recovered.

Since then, Petty has remained in custody awaiting his trial on the murder charge and two Class D felonies. He will continue to be held until his sentencing on April 17.

Asked by Louisville media about her reaction to the verdict, Nina's mother, Debbie Conover, stated that she was relieved. "I am satisfied with the verdict. He (Petty) never showed any emotion during the trial, not even when pictures of Nina's body were shown. I'm satisfied that he will serve a long term in prison."

Prosecutor Mount also related relief that the trial was finally at an end. "I am glad that this (verdict) will bring an end to this family's ordeal," he commented for the media.

"We argued for the murder conviction and believe there was evidence to support it. Certainly, there was evidence of 'sudden heat' or anger, which allowed the finding of the lesser voluntary

manslaughter charge. We believed that, although Mr. Petty was certainly angry, his rage, essentially over Ms. Keown's refusal to tell him who she was speaking to on the phone, was not rational or reasonable enough to mitigate the murder charge to one of manslaughter.

Thankfully, Mr. Petty is an Habitual Felon, so his potential sentence will be raised from the 20-year maximum on a B felony to 56 years," advised Mount.

He added that he wanted to thank former sheriff Lizenby as well as Lizenby's former chief deputy, Wayne Williams, a retired Indiana State Police officer. "John (Lizenby) and Wayne really helped us present a good case to the jury. We are grateful to all who helped and to the jurors for their service," he stated on behalf of his staff and his chief deputy prosecutor, Chris Owens. Approximately 30 witnesses were called during the trial, one of the longest in Scott County trial history.