

Full Release from the Greene County Prosecutor's Office

Law enforcement officers from the Greene County Sheriff's Department and Indiana State Police responded to the Julia Sowders/Alfred Jacob residence near Owensburg, Indiana on the morning of April 30, 2019 in response to a 911 call placed by Stanley Jacob at approximately 10:37 a.m. Mr. Jacob reported to dispatch that his niece, Julia Sowders, had just shot Dustin Abel.

Investigators at the scene verified the identity of the man who had been shot as Dustin Fredrick Abel, age 31. Ms. Sowders and Mr. Jacobs had remained at the scene and cooperated with the investigators. Abel was pronounced dead at the scene and an autopsy conducted by Dr. Roland Kohr determined that the cause of death was from a single shotgun wound to the head.

As a part of the investigation, detectives from the Greene County Sheriff's Department interviewed Ms. Sowders, her uncles with whom she was living (Stanley and Alfred Jacob), Mike Fields who was inside the home during the shooting, neighbors who lived close-by and Devin Bays who dropped Dustin Abel off at the Sowders/Jacob residence earlier that morning. Crime Scene Technicians from the Indiana State Police processed the scene of the shooting at the front entrance of the residence as well as inside the residence and seized evidence related to the shooting. The Greene County Sheriff's Department also released a copy of the 911 call made by Stanley Jacob to this office for review. The Sheriff's Department also released previous recordings of Ms. Sowders making complaints against Dustin Abel's behavior toward her and of her reporting that Dustin Abel had shown up at her residence uninvited on the morning of April 30, 2019.

Based upon the investigation conducted by the Greene County Sheriff's Department, no criminal charges will be filed against Julia Sowders. The investigation revealed that Ms. Sowders was acting in self-defense when she shot Dustin Abel one time with a shotgun as he attempted to enter her home without permission.

The evidence showed that Ms. Sowders had recently ended a relationship with Dustin Abel. Abel was reported to have become physically violent with Ms. Sowders prior to their break-up. Abel was also under criminal investigation for a number of offenses at the time of the shooting. On the morning of April 30th, Abel was dropped off at the Sowders/Jacob residence by Devin Bays, who then left the area.

Abel brought two loaded shotguns to the residence with him. Abel had been told that he was not allowed back on the property after his break-up with Ms. Sowders, so his arrival was a surprise to Ms. Sowders and the Jacobs. Ms. Sowders contacted her mother and the police to alert them to Abel's presence outside her home.

Abel initially began working on a broken-down vehicle located in the driveway next to the home's entrance. Shortly thereafter, Abel attempted to enter the residence.

Ms. Sowders and Stanley Jacob both met Abel at the front door of the residence and told Abel he could not come in. Abel forced his way past Jacob and tried to enter the home, where Ms. Sowders then pointed a loaded 12 gauge shotgun at Abel and told him repeatedly that he was not coming inside the home. According to Stanley Jacob and Mike Fields, who was inside the residence, Abel responded to being told that he wasn't allowed in the residence by calling Sowders a liar and telling her to "go ahead and shoot me." Stanley Jacob stated that he had also told Abel that he wasn't supposed to be there and that he didn't want Abel inside the home. He also witnessed Abel "acting like a monkey" by waving his arms around and yelling as he tried to enter the home. Ms. Sowders then fired one round from the shotgun which struck Abel in the face and knocked him back down the front steps of the home, where he was found deceased by law enforcement.

The toxicology report taken as part of the autopsy revealed that Dustin Abel had been using marijuana and methamphetamine prior to his death. Law enforcement officers from the Indiana State Police and Lawrence County were in the process of obtaining an arrest warrant for Dustin Abel on the morning of April 30, 2019 on an unrelated investigation, but were unable to secure and then serve the warrant before the shooting took place.

Under Indiana Code 35-41-3-2, a person is justified in using deadly force and does not have a duty to retreat if the person reasonably believes that the force is necessary to prevent serious bodily injury or death, the commission of a forcible felony or to prevent or terminate another person's unlawful entry of or attack on the person's dwelling or curtilage.

Therefore, based upon the facts of this particular incident, Julia Sowders was justified under Indiana Law in shooting Dustin Abel in order to protect herself from serious bodily injury and to prevent his unlawful entry into her own home.