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By Bill Duryea

Though the charge was common, the circumstances were strange and in the end that may have been why on Friday a jury acquitted Jeff Williams of the 1993 killing of Jason Jetton.

Williams had been charged with manslaughter even though he did not fire the shot that killed Jetton, 20 in the parking lot of a Brandon apartment complex. That shot, fired accidentally came from a gun held a gun held by Jetton's best friend, William "Bubba" Sullivan.

Prosecutors argued that Williams and Sullivan were equally negligent when they pulled rifles on each other and then fought in a crowd of rival youths. Jetton was standing to the side when the .30-30 bullet ripped through his chest.

Sullivan pleaded guilty Monday to manslaughter and was sentenced to 10 year's probation, but the jury did not think that Williams, was standing outside his apartment, was as guilty as the person who came there looking for a fight.

Williams, 19 was convicted of aggravated assault, however, for threatening Sullivan. Hillsborough Circuit Judge Diana M. Allen sentenced Williams, who has three misdemeanor convictions, to 3 year's probation and 100 hours community service.

My concern is that Mr. Williams not possess firearms she said.

Assistant Hillsborough State Attorney Leland Baldwin asked that Williams serve one year in jail, make restitution and write a letter of apology to the Jettons. Allen said she could order none of that because Williams had not been convicted of a crime in which Jetton was the victim.

Jetton's family asked Baldwin to read a statement into the record in which they mentioned a similar case that Williams was involved in three months before their son was killed. "Since this is not the first time he has been involved in a person's death, he should not be slapped on the wrist." Baldwin read from the family's statement.

On April 4, 1993, a fight broke out between a group of Williams' friends and another faction in a trailer park in Valrico. A friend of William Dennis Wesley Boone was shot by someone from the opposing group.

"He definitely present and involved in an altercation that escalated into an incident where somebody was killed." Assistant Hillsborough State Attorney Karen Cox said. Williams has not been charged in that case.

We do feel this young man will eventually be back in the court based on his past record. Dennis Jetton, Jason's father said later.