

VERDICT IN JARED MULLIS CASE

The date of October 31, 2016, is one that will always bring sadness for many of us at the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. On this day three years ago, we lost a friend, co-worker, mentor, father, husband, brother and son. Sergeant Rod Lucas abruptly left this life for an eternal one - an afterlife that he wholeheartedly believed in. Even though he is no longer working alongside us, his memory remains.

A picture of him hangs at the FDSA building next to the other 11 deputy sheriffs who have died in the line of duty. Rod's name is also etched in stone at the National Memorial in Washington DC. Each year, thousands who visit the nation's capital pass by this memorial to honor the lives of officer's who have died in service to their country and community. Everyday Rod is missed, we reminisce about him often and remember the shifts and assignments we shared with him during his many years of service in our agency.

The events of October 31, 2016 changed many lives. Among them, the life of Jared Mullis. There isn't a day that passes that he doesn't also remember Rod and the mentor and friend he was to him.

The Fresno County District Attorney filed one count of negligent homicide against Mullis for a gun exchange that ended in Rod's death. Despite the death being an accident, Mullis was held to answer on the charge, exposing him to a prison sentence of up to four years.

An impartial panel of 12 jurors listened to the trial that lasted more than two weeks. They heard from witnesses and experts, saw the evidence and listened to the facts.

It took the group about two hours of deliberating to unanimously find Mullis NOT GUILTY of the felony crime.

Court testimony revealed there was a gun exchange between Mullis to Lucas. The only people who actually witnessed the event were them. The exchange was intended to show Rod a way to utilize a new holster to carry a secondary handgun. The handgun is a smaller version of our duty weapon.

During this display- one shot rang out. Others working in the office were stunned by the sudden gunfire. Rod was hit – shot by Jared's gun. It was a shot that would take Rod's life.

Rod Lucas died that day at the SID Office.

Jared Mullis would never return back to work as a deputy sheriff due to the trauma suffered during this incident.

Initially, the charges against Mullis included a gun enhancement. This special circumstance allegation alone carries a mandatory 10 year prison sentence.

In November of 2017, a preliminary hearing was held at Fresno County Superior Court. The hearing included crime scene evidence, DNA evidence, shot trajectory, and witnesses who were at SID when the tragedy unfolded.

Following the preliminary hearing, Mullis was held to answer. But the judge hearing the case did not find enough evidence for the gun enhancement charge. Jared was never offered a plea deal by the District Attorney and his fate rested solely in a jury's hands.

Without question, this case evoked strong feelings and emotions from both families involved, along with co-workers, friends, etc.

The trial was highlighted by one clear fact that everyone could agree on. Rod was a mentor, warrior and leader. He excelled at his job. His infectious spirit and vast experience drew people to desire to learn from him. Among those who looked up to him with high regard and respect, was Jared Mullis.

For clarity and closure- Rod's family wanted to know why he died and how he died. They wanted answers and a criminal trial provided what they were seeking.

Moving on has not been easy. It hasn't been easy for Rod's widow and children, his parents, his friends and countless others.

It has also not been easy for Jared Mullis. He lives with the trauma and outcome each day as well.

This case put many people in this agency in difficult positions as they were called to testify during the trial. The professionalism shown during this process did not go unnoticed.

We continue to honor Rod Lucas in our memorial events, during memorial ceremonies and on the day of his death. This is yet another tragic loss for the Fresno County Sheriff's Office – and one I pray that we never have to endure again.

2019 YEAR END CLOSE

2019 was a busy year of growth and nonstop work at FDSA. One of our highlights was upgrading the website and app to enhance member communication. Since going live on November 1, 2019, we have received a lot of positive feedback to the layout and compatibility it provides for us. Again any pictures you all have of different aspects/events we participate in during our jobs are needed. Please forward them to me

and we have a file on the site where they are being placed. We want to show the work you all do. Again, continue to remind each other about signing up for the website. This is imperative for information sharing from the FDSA to its members.

We will continue bargaining with the County of Fresno for our successor MOU. As you will recall, the County extended our MOU an additional six months, while giving each member an enhancement in their health insurance benefit – offsetting any increases we felt for the 2020 plan year. I will be updating you all as we work through the details of the new contract.

A goal for 2020 is providing support to you. This will continue being a priority, as you continue the challenging work of policing Fresno County and caring for your family.

Wishing you all the best in 2020.

Truly,

Eric