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## Jurors hear taped confession from Edmonds

By Valerie Matchette

[vmatchette@cdispatch.com](mailto:vmatchette@cdispatch.com)

Thursday, July 22, 2004 11:10 AM CDT

STARKVILLE - In a videotaped confession, jurors Wednesday heard Tyler Edmonds say in his own words that he'd helped fire the shot that ended Joseph Fulgham's life.

Prosecutors rested their case this morning, and Edmonds was expected to take the stand this afternoon to refute the tape, saying the confession was a lie and coerced, according to his attorney.

The tape was made by Oktibbeha County Deputy James Lindsey on May 12, 2003, the day after Joseph Fulgham's body was discovered in his Longview home.

On the tape, Edmonds, who was 13 at the time and is now 15, describes how his half-sister and co-defendant Kristi Fulgham "begged" him to help her shoot her husband. The couple had filed for divorce but still were legally married.

This morning, Edmonds' mother, Sharon Clay, testified she took her son to the Oktibbeha County Sheriff's Department without knowing he was a suspect in the case.

"I had no reason to believe Tyler was a suspect," Clay said, explaining she knew Kristi Fulgham had been arrested and thought investigators just wanted a statement from her son.

She testified she told authorities not to interview her son without her being present and she thought detectives were coercing him into confessing.

"My son was coerced into giving the statement," Clay said.

In his statement, Edmonds said his half-sister had talked a few times of killing her husband, but he didn't take her seriously.

"She was sick of the crap that he'd put her and her kids through," Edmonds said on the tape.

"I just wanted so bad for her to be happy," he said, adding that his half-sister had been molested as a child by her father.

In the taped confession, Edmonds said he and Kristi Fulgham both held the gun and pulled the trigger together as Joseph Fulgham slept early on Saturday morning, May 10, 2003.

The alleged murder weapon was an old .22-caliber rifle that Edmonds had brought from his West Point home. He said on the tape that he didn't think the old gun would still fire.

"I just closed my eyes. I didn't actually think it would go off because it was broke," Edmonds said. "I was just holding the gun. I wasn't really aiming at anything."

After the shot was fired, Edmonds said he realized Joseph Fulgham had been hit when he saw some blood on his pillow.

"I was crying. I couldn't believe that I did it," Edmonds said.

As Edmonds ran from the room, Kristi Fulgham began taking jewelry, Joseph Fulgham's wallet, and a computer to make the crime look like a break-in, Edmonds said. The teenager said he knew nothing about the \$1,000 in cash that was missing from Joseph Fulgham's home.

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There were some inconsistencies in Edmonds' story about whether Kristi Fulgham had helped pull the trigger. At first, Edmonds said she had stood behind him and squeezed the trigger along with him, but later he said her right hand had been on his stomach. When asked another time, he said he wasn't sure whether she'd had her hand on the gun at all.

Edmonds also said he didn't know what had happened to the gun after the shot was fired.

"I think I dropped it or set it down somewhere," Edmonds said.

The murder weapon never was found.

As Edmonds was wrapping up his statement on the 30-minute tape, his mother Sharon Clay was heard knocking on the deputy's office door and demanding to be allowed in.

"Why can't I be in here with him?" Clay said, telling Lindsey she had contacted two attorneys.

"You are sitting here doing stuff behind my back," she said. She said it was against the law for Edmonds to give a statement without her present.

"I want to be here with him. This is my child," she said.

Edmonds began to cry, and when Clay asked him what was wrong, he told his mother, "We both did it."

"Are you sure you did it?" Clay said, hugging her son and crying as well.

"She begged me to," Edmonds said.

By the end of the tape, several people in the packed courtroom were crying, and Edmonds looked down at the floor.

Lindsey testified that in an earlier statement that was not recorded, Edmonds said the last time he'd seen Joseph Fulgham was when Edmonds was leaving for Jackson early Saturday morning. Joseph Fulgham had waved good-bye as he lay in bed, Edmonds said.

"He said he did not know who might have killed him," Lindsey said.

But Lindsey told Edmonds that Kristi Fulgham had said in her statement that Edmonds was responsible for the shooting.

"He told me he did not believe Kristi told me that," Lindsey said.

Lindsey brought Kristi Fulgham, who already was being held in the shooting, to tell Edmonds herself. Dressed in orange prison clothes, Kristi Fulgham met briefly with Edmonds and told him: "I want you to tell them the truth," Lindsey testified.

Then Edmonds said, "I shot Joey and I want to tell the truth," which led to the videotaped statement. Edmonds didn't want his mother present while the statement was being made, authorities said. He was read his rights for a second time, and said he understood them.

Defense attorney Jim Waide renewed objections to the statement's admissibility, on the grounds that Clay wasn't present and that Edmonds hadn't been told there was any possible charge against him. Circuit Court Judge Jim Kitchens said his earlier ruling to allow the tape still stands.

In other testimony, Edmonds' friend and neighbor Chasady Oswald, 15, said she'd spent time with Edmonds on Monday, May 12, the day after Joseph Fulgham's body was found. Other than being "upset" about Joseph Fulgham's death, Oswald testified that Edmonds was his "normal" self.

She said he told her that he'd been crying "all weekend" about Joseph Fulgham's shooting, though his body was discovered Sunday night. Defense Attorney Robert McDuff asked Oswald if she was sure Edmonds had said "all weekend," and she said she was.

Oswald's stepfather Marcus Sullivan described a phone conversation he'd had with

Edmonds, after Edmonds had been arrested. He was trying to get in touch with his mother, but her phone wouldn't accept collect calls from the county jail, Sullivan said.

He said he asked Edmonds, "Did you do it?"

"He said, 'Yes, sir,'" Sullivan said.

Sullivan asked him why, but said he couldn't remember Edmonds' exact answer but said the youth told him he had done it to protect his sister or because she had made him, Sullivan said.

Medical examiner Steven Hayne testified that Joseph Fulgham had died from a gunshot wound to the head, and that his injury was consistent with the version of the story given in Edmonds' videotaped confession.

The prosecution didn't rest its case, but two defense witnesses had to testify out of turn because of time considerations.

Charlotte Thomas, a former teacher of Edmonds, and Valley Cantrell, 14, a friend, testified that Edmonds was non-violent and had a reputation of being non-violent.

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