



THE JOY OF A WOMAN FOUND INNOCENT
Louise Thoresen shows her joy on hearing verdict

—UPI Photo

Louise Freed in Slaying

*Acquitted on
All Charges*

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FRESNO — Louise Thoresen was found innocent of all charges early today in the slaying of her wealthy gun-collector husband, William E. Thoresen III.

The 34 year old defendant spent the balance of the night in jail on a federal holding charge, but was released in \$1000 bond this morning.

She told reporters her first intention is to travel to Chicago to visit her son, Michael, 8, whom she has not seen in five months and who has been in custody of his paternal grandparents.

A jury of eight men and four women, after deliberating for nearly nine hours, returned the verdict before a handful of sleepy spectators at 3:50 a.m.

"Not guilty as charged, and not guilty of lesser offenses," was the finding court clerk Stephen Poole intoned to the group in the tiny courtroom.

'Prayers'

Immediately, Mrs. Thoresen's mother, Mrs. John Bannich — who has been sitting quietly in the courtroom throughout the 14-day trial, went over to her daughter.

"Thank God," she said. "I'm so happy. I've been to mass every day since I've been out here, and John has gone with me some of the days. This answers our prayers."

Mrs. Thoresen cried.

"Oh, Mommy, Mommy," she said. "Daddy! Daddy

said. "It's been a real battle."

"Thank you," she said. "It's all over now."

Held for Night

She was held for the rest of the night because of a charge of illegal possession of unregistered and untaxed guns in New York City. She will be given a hearing on that charge on Jan. 31.

Freed when the bond was posted shortly after 9 a.m., Mrs. Thoresen said her first reaction was one of freedom in being "able to go outside without a matron following me."

She is looking forward eagerly to a "good meal," she added, calling her jail stay "an interesting experience."

"Everybody ought to serve a little time there," she said. "I think I have compassion for people . . . I do hope so."

Her visit with Michael will include taking him to the home of a sister in southern Illinois. There, with the sisters four children, they will celebrate Christmas and have a tree.

"William never cared for a Christmas tree," she explained. "Now I want Michael to have one."

Will Sell Home

She said she had received two jack o'lanterns from Michael for Halloween. A note accompanying them said, "I hope you like these jack o'lanterns; you'll soon be grinning from ear to ear," she added.

Louise said she will sell the Fresno home that was the scene of the fatal shooting, but has made no plans yet concerning her San Francisco mansion.

She was obviously still tired from the long ordeal of the trial and what must have been largely a sleepless night.

The jury had been given the case at 5 p.m., and debated steadily through the night except for a two-hour dinner break. Poole, the court clerk, had tried unsuccessfully to find hotel accommodations for the panel, but a convention had filled every available room.

Instructions

Superior Court Judge Joseph L. Joy had given the panel only three instructions — that it could reach verdicts of murder in either the first or second degree, of manslaughter, or of not guilty.

Outside the courtroom, he explained that he had purposely omitted the option of involuntary manslaughter, saying that evidence to support such a verdict had not been presented.

Such a finding would have sent Louise to prison, but would have permitted her to inherit Thoresen's remaining estate of almost \$300,000, less outstanding debts.

Shortly after the jury retired, it asked for Mrs. Thoresen's own testimony — she had taken the stand twice in her own defense — and for Judge Joy's instructions on self-defense.

Testimony

Later, it asked for the testimony of two doctors who specialized in research on LSD and Seconol, drugs which had been found in samples of Thoresen's blood after he was found shot to death in their Fresno home at 8:25 a.m. June 10.

That testimony went to the heart of the case, as stressed both by the prosecution and the defense.

The prosecution, through a neighbor of the Thoresens, Mrs. William McDermott, contended that minutes after the shooting Louise had said her husband was asleep when she shot him.

Louise herself testified twice that he was awake.

Choices

The defense, in its final argument, told the jurors that it had a choice of either of two verdicts — that if they believed Louise, they should find her not guilty, and that if they didn't believe her, they should find her guilty of murder in the first degree.

Prosecutors Frank Wells and Stephen Henry argued that if the jury believed Mrs. McDermott's story that Thoresen was asleep, it had

no problem — implying first degree murder.

Otherwise, the prosecutors said, the jury should return a verdict of second degree

murder or voluntary manslaughter.

In the final arguments, DeVaney described the slain 33 year old heir to a Chicago steel fortune as "a madman."

"He was a sick man, a depraved man. He was a deadly, murderous man," he said.

Louise had testified that Thoresen stabbed her sadistically in the buttocks with a knife, tortured her with a whip, and made her write "suicide" notes before trying to stuff a lethal dose of pills down her throat.

Paid to Murder

The night before she fired five bullets into his back as he lay nude in bed, she said, he disclosed that he had paid a man to murder his brother in 1965, and then shot the triggerman "to put him out of his misery" after beating him with a hammer.

Henry, arguing for the prosecution, insisted that "as bad as he was, as bad as you think he was, you didn't have the right to shoot him."

Among the spectators in the courtroom when the verdict was returned was Joe Hinajosa, a friend of the Thoresens. The prosecution had charged that Louise, 34, had shot her husband for "the love of Joe Hinojosa, and for the love of money."

Denied

The couple steadfastly denied any intimacies, although

they admitted that Louise had hidden for six weeks in Hinojosa's San Francisco apartment after Thoresen had beaten her.

After she heard the verdict, Louise walked over to where Hinojosa sat behind a railing in the press section and shook his hand.

"Joe," was all she said.

With that, Hinojosa turned and left.

Mrs. Thoresen said the first thing she plans to do after her release is to go to Chicago to see her son Michael, 8, who has been there in joint custody of his grandparents and a young couple.