

Fatal hit-and-run trial kicks off

By Dionne Waugh

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Renee Annette Jones, 36, was joking around, laughing, but getting a little loud, her husband, Troy, thought.

The couple and a friend were on their way to the Texas Inn just

before 1 a.m. May 13, 2004.

Troy Jones and his wife had been drinking and smoking some marijuana with friends at a cook-out, he testified Monday in Lynchburg Circuit Court.

He worried that she might get in trouble for being too loud at the restaurant, so he decided not to go, he said.

But Renee got upset with his decision and demanded to be let out of the car. Though he didn't want to, Troy Jones let her out of the car near the Grace Street exit off the Expressway.

When he returned for her 20 minutes later, it was too late.

His wife of eight months, a mother of three teenagers, was

lying dead in the southbound lanes of the Expressway.

The woman accused of hitting Renee Jones with her car and leaving the scene of an accident faced the first day of what is scheduled to be a three-day jury trial Monday.

Mary Elizabeth Miller, 22, of Hendersonville, Tenn., showed little emotion as witnesses described

seeing Jones in the road alive; finding Jones in a bloody heap later on; and how police came to suspect Miller.

"It's a classic case of whodunit," Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Chuck Felmlee said in his opening statement.



Please see **TRIAL**, Page C2

Miller

Woman found guilty in hit-and-run

Family 'pleased and relieved'; jury to recommend sentence today

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As the court clerk read the jury's verdict Tuesday evening, tears began to slide down Mary Miller's pale face.

A Lynchburg jury of eight women and four men found the 22-year-old guilty of running over Renee Annette Osborne Jones with her dark green

Honda Accord on the Expressway and leaving the scene of the fatal accident.

Police found Jones, 36, a mother of three teenagers and married for eight months, dead just after 1 a.m. May 13, 2004.

More than a dozen of Jones' family members and friends, who have attended the trial since Monday, smiled and could barely contain their joy after hearing the verdict.

"I'm pleased and relieved," Jones' mother, Laura Runkle, said outside the courthouse.

Runkle and Jones' daughter, Roxanne Osborne, 14, often cried softly during the trial and left the courtroom when the prosecution showed a photo of Jones' mangled bloodied corpse, which barely resembled a body except for the T-shirt and jean shorts, on a projection screen.

"I'm just happy it's done and over and she got what she deserved," Osborne said.

The jury deliberated for a little more than an hour before reaching its decision just before 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. They will return to court today to hear sentencing arguments and recommend a punishment for Miller. She faces one to 10 years in prison.

Roanoke defense attorney David

Damico said after the hearing that they were obviously disappointed with the jury's decision, but that, judging from the jurors' expressions, he felt

like they considered his arguments. "I hope that they'll still see some



Miller

Please see **GUILTY**, Page C2

Jury: 9 months for hit-and-run

\$1,500 fine part of recommended sentence for running over woman on Expressway

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After taking more time to determine a punishment than a verdict, a jury recommended Wednesday that a woman serve nine months in jail for

running over another woman last year on the Lynchburg Expressway.

The eight-woman, four-man jury also recommended that Mary Miller, 22, now living in Mesquite, Texas, pay a \$1,500 fine.

In Lynchburg Circuit Court, jurors convicted the woman Tuesday of leav-

ing the scene of an accident that killed Renee Annette Osborne Jones.

The bloody body of Jones, 36, a married mother of three teenagers, was found in the southbound lanes of the Expressway between the Grace and Kemper street exits just after 1 a.m. May 13, 2004.

The jury determined Miller's green Honda Accord struck Jones while she was lying on the road. Jones' husband had dropped her off near the Grace Street exit after Renee, who had been drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, got upset and demanded to be let out of the car.

Police received a tip about Miller in November and later linked her to the crime through car debris found at the scene and statements Miller made to others about a hit-and-run.

The jury's sentencing decision

Please see **MONTHS**, Page A8