

'GET OUT EARLY'



Barbara Sheehan outside her home yesterday, a day after jury cleared her in killing of her husband. Photo by Anthony DelMundo

Hubby killer's advice to abused wives

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THE DAY after she was acquitted of murder, admitted hubby-killer Barbara Sheehan went to her church — then offered up advice for women trapped in an abusive relationship.

"Get out early," she told reporters as she walked from Our Lady of Grace church to her Howard Beach home, where a bouquet of roses was delivered later in the day.

Smiling in the morning sun, the school secretary said she planned to spend the next few

days with her two grown children relaxing, not celebrating.

"There are really no winners," she said of Thursday's verdict.

Sheehan, 50, beat a murder rap by claiming she shot ex-cop husband Raymond Sheehan 11 times because he threatened to kill her after years of abuse.

Still, the jury convicted her of gun possession, for using her spouse's Glock to fire six of the shots.

The charge comes with mandatory jail time — between 3 1/2 and 15 years — but Sheehan's lawyer, Michael Dowd, is looking for a way around that.

Dowd spent the day researching case law to see if the judge

could toss the gun rap or give her less time.

Legal experts said the defense could argue Sheehan doesn't deserve hard time because as a victim of domestic violence, she needed a gun to protect herself.

Prosecutors are expected to seek substantial jail time.

Observers said there's little chance the judge will overturn the verdict — even though the jury found her not guilty of murder but guilty of possessing the weapon she used.

"There are thousands of verdicts where the jury renders a verdict that appears contradictory and the courts will sustain it every time," said veteran crimi-

nal defense lawyer Martin Geduldig. "They'll say the jury has rendered a verdict and we'll stand by it."

Dowd put on a classic battered-wife defense, while prosecutors painted Sheehan as a jealous liar who never reported the alleged abuse.

Trial strategist Julie Blackman said she advised Dowd to select jurors whose life experiences suggested they "would be open to the idea that a battered woman could stay with a man who abused her over a long time.

"It's pretty easy for people to think that if a battered woman stays, she doesn't mind too much," she said.

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