

SW La. case on tonight's '48 Hours'

By Johnathan Manning

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The legal issues and the individuals involved are what drew "48 Hours" to feature a local murder trial, a show correspondent said.

Tonight's episode, "Friends for Life," which will air at 9 p.m. on CBS, will focus on Robyn Little Davis' and Carol Noland Saltzman's second-degree murder trial.

The two women were convicted in May of shooting to death Davis' husband, Brian Davis, whose bullet-riddled body was found off Wagon Wheel Lane in Big Lake in 2008.

Prosecutors built their case around circumstantial evidence, including cell phone records, which "makes the case fascinating and scary at the same time," said Erin Moriarty, "48 Hours" correspondent.

"There isn't a lot of evidence to tie them to it; on the other hand, there aren't a lot of other explanations of what could have happened to Brian," she said.

Jurors handed down an 11-1 guilty verdict, which will be discussed on the show since Louisiana is one of only two states that don't require a unanimous decision for a guilty verdict, Moriarty said.

"In most other states there would have been a mistrial; they would have gone home," she said.

Moriarty, a lawyer, said that the case is the second in Lake

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Charles that she has covered for "48 Hours" — the other involved Wilbert Rideau, convicted initially of bank robbery and murder; in a retrial, he was convicted of manslaughter.

She interviewed Davis and Saltzman, as well as friends and family members of theirs, and prosecutor Rick Bryant, Calcasieu Parish Sheriff Tony Mancuso and defense attorney Glen Vamvoras.

"It's a very interesting mix of individuals as well as issues," Moriarty said.

Moriarty said her interviews with Davis and Saltzman were particularly interesting.

"We examine the case but you can't examine it without meeting the two defendants," she said. "I've never quite met two murder defendants like Robyn and Sissy. They were very open with me and they

allowed me, before trial, to do a full interview."

She said during her interview with Bryant, she said him, "Come on, they really don't look or seem" like murderers.

"What does a murder suspect look like?" she said Bryant replied.

Moriarty said she agrees with that, but "when you spend time with them, it is very difficult to believe these two women set out to cold-heartedly kill Robyn's husband. "Motive aside, it's just hard to believe."

She said the case will also focus on the cell phone records. "Even the cell phone evidence didn't absolutely pinpoint their location, but it was enough to raise questions about their stories and that ultimately becomes very important," Moriarty said.

"We now see cell phone evidence being used in nearly every case. Even though it is not digital DNA, jurors sometimes treat it as such."