

# Witness recants ID of murder suspect

BY JOHN STEVENSON

jstevenson@heraldsun.com; 419-6643

A murder charge against 32-year-old Bobby Lee McCallum was dismissed this week after a witness recanted his identification of McCallum as the person who fatally shot another man during an apparent drug deal turned sour.

Prosecutor Mitchell Garrell said Thursday he dropped the homicide case after witness Rodney Coleman drastically changed his account about the December 2002 slaying of Jonathan Horton.

Coleman had pinpointed McCallum as the shooter, and he passed a lie-detector test on the subject, according to Garrell.

But when Coleman appeared in court this week for a preliminary hearing, he said he was too far from the shooting to identify the gunman, although he was sure it wasn't McCallum.

Lawyer Fred Battaglia, representing Coleman, was asked Thursday why the witness altered his story.

"That's the \$64,000 question," he said.

Asked if Coleman might have been threatened or intimidated, Battaglia answered: "Unfortunately, Durham can be an extremely tough town at times. I'll just let it go at that."

Attorney Michael Driver, who represents McCallum, said he had "contended all along that Bobby McCallum was not the person who shot Jonathan Horton. Other than Rodney Coleman, there was no evidence he was the shooter. I'm just glad Mr. McCallum's name has been cleared in this."

McCallum is not a free man, however. He is serving a seven-to-nine-year prison sentence imposed in October after he pleaded guilty to two counts of selling cocaine and admitted to being a habitual felon twice over.

Coleman reportedly is being held in Mecklenburg County on federal firearms charges.

In the just-dismissed murder case, Horton's body was found in the 300 block of Walton Street — in the Hickory Glen subdivision — after his car careened into a resident's yard and hit a bush.

A single bullet had pierced the car's window and struck Horton in the chest, killing him on the spot.

A witness told police Horton had been in the area several times to buy crack cocaine from McCallum and drove off without paying.