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JURY SAYS MAN ISN'T GUILTY OF RAPING TEENAGE ACCUSER

Merced Sun Star

MERCED - A 32-year-old man accused of raping a 13-year-old girl was set free Monday evening, after a Merced County jury acquitted him of rape charges.

Raymond Dean Thompson was accused of committing a Nov. 1 rape in the bedroom of the teenager's Merced apartment and was charged with seven felony counts. After deliberating for 13 hours, a jury of seven women and five men found Thompson not guilty on all counts.

[Jeffrey Tenenbaum](#), Thompson's attorney, said the fact there was no DNA or physical evidence linking his client to the alleged assault probably resonated with jurors. Before the accusations, Tenenbaum said his client had been friends with the girl's family. "He's been saying since Day One that he had nothing to do with raping this young girl," Tenenbaum said. "In my mind, the jury got it right, because there was reasonable doubt as to what the girl was saying."

Deputy District Attorney Rob Carroll, prosecutor in the case, also said the lack of physical evidence in the case probably affected the jury's decision. Carroll acknowledged there was no DNA evidence in the case.

He said the jury may have also been swayed because the girl claimed she'd bit Thompson during the attack, but there was no bite mark on his body. "I know it was a tough decision, and I appreciate all the hard work the jury put into it," Carroll said.

The girl claimed she'd been sleeping in her bed when Thompson allegedly entered her bedroom sometime after 3 a.m. Nov. 1 and assaulted her for about 30 minutes. Her father was outside the apartment attending a neighborhood gathering at the time.

The girl told an apartment manager immediately after the alleged assault and police were notified. Not long after the alleged assault, the victim's father met Thompson and a confrontation between the two men erupted around 4 a.m. in the 1800 block of Merced Avenue.

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also claimed she recognized the defendant's phone ringtone.

On the other hand, the defense claimed although samples from medical cotton swabs, clothes and the bed's mattress were submitted by Merced police to a Department of Justice lab for testing, no DNA or semen evidence connecting Thompson to the scene was ever found.

After the not guilty verdict was announced, the father of the girl was arrested by Merced police officers on suspicion of stalking around 5 a.m. Tuesday. Police declined to elaborate on the circumstances of the arrest or whether it was tied to Thompson's case.

Members of the girl's family said they were disappointed in the jury's verdict — and some accused Merced Police Department detectives of botching the rape investigation. The girl's grandfather told the Sun-Star police committed several blunders during their investigation, such as allowing Thompson's wife to pick up her husband's clothes after he was booked into jail, rather than keeping the clothes as evidence.

The grandfather also said an exam wasn't done on Thompson's body to check for the girl's DNA or other possible evidence. The grandfather said he feels the result of the trial might have been different if police had done a more thorough investigation. "I feel very bad about it, because I feel this guy is going to go out and do it again," he said.

The Sun-Star's policy prohibits identifying anyone who is the alleged victim of sexual assault. As a result, the victim's father and grandfather weren't named in this story.

Lt. Andre Matthews, spokesman for the Merced Police Department, was asked Tuesday about the claims of the victim's family. "We gathered the facts in this case, we presented them to the District Attorney's Office and they made a decision to prosecute," Matthews said. "A jury looked at those facts and made a decision. Not everybody is going to agree with that decision."

Carroll disagreed with the grandfather's claims that Merced police botched the investigation. "I think the police did a good job," Carroll said. "But no investigation is ever perfect. As long as I've been doing this, I've never seen a perfect investigation. We're always striving to do things better in the future."

Thompson had previously served time in prison for assault with a deadly weapon.