

Acquittal attributed to boys' 'lockerroom' boasting

Teacher found not guilty of raping her students

United Press International
PITTSBURGH — Jurors discounted a sixth-grade teacher's confession and two teenagers' "locker-room" boasting and found her not guilty of raping the boys last summer.

Kathleen Harden, 31, believed to be the first woman in Pennsylvania history charged with rape, sobbed heavily after her acquittal Monday. Her husband, who testified she is a "perfect" wife, rushed to her side along with other family members.

She had been charged with four counts of statutory rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and three counts of corrupting the morals of minors. The six-man, six-woman jury returned the innocent verdict after two hours of deliberation.

Harden's arrest by Allegheny County rape squad detectives in her home last July 21 began what she described on the witness stand as a "bad dream." The night of her arrest, she gave police a written statement her attorney conceded was very damaging and which she repudiated at her trial.

In it she admitted having sex with Larry Dunlap, 13, a study hall student of hers, and Kenneth Porter, 15, in her home when they visited her to mow her lawn last June and July. That confession was the key prosecution evidence Harden had to overcome, as Assistant District Attorney Robert Vincler repeatedly brought it up in his cross-examination of her last Thursday and in closing remarks.

The jury apparently believed Harden's testimony that the two boys were lying and that she wrote her confession inaccurately under duress. "She's a believable person," Defense Attorney Peter Skeel said. "I'm of course totally elated, and so is my client. She's been vindicated."

Skeel had said in closing arguments Harden's reputation had already been dragged through the mud, and the damage done was irreparable. "The bottom line is the bragging and boasting (of the boys)," Skeel told the jury. "It's locker-room talk of telling friends that I've done something you haven't done — I've had sex with my teacher."

Vincler speculated that "even though we had a 12-page confession, maybe the jury felt going through the trial was punishment enough."

On leave of absence from her teaching job of 10 years in the Elizabeth-Forward School District since her arrest, Harden had no comment on her trial and the verdict. Whether she would return to her job was not known.

Also unknown was the status of a slander suit Harden filed against the boys last month, demanding damages for anguish caused by their charges.

A similar case is awaiting trial in Knoxville, Tenn., where a female grade-school teacher is charged with raping an eighth-grade boy.

Jan. 30: Solidarity Day in U.S.

United Press International
WASHINGTON — President Reagan will designate Jan. 30 a day of "solidarity with the Polish people," the International Communication Agency says.

Reagan will make a statement from the White House expressing support for the Polish people during a telecast by the agency, entitled "Let Poland Be Poland — A Day of Solidarity with the People of Poland," an agency spokesman said.

The program also will feature appearances by Senate Republican leader Howard Baker and House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill.

The program, the title of which comes from the Solidarity movement's anthem, will be beamed by satellite to countries outside the United States Jan. 31, and sections will be broadcast by radio on Voice of America.

Court rules maid keeps found cash

United Press International
WAUKESHA, Wis. — The Wisconsin Court of Appeals says a former maid at the Lake Geneva Playboy Resort can keep the \$107,690 she found in a room on her first day on the job, but at least two co-workers may sue to get a share.

The appeals court affirmed Monday a previous ruling in Walworth County Circuit Court that Linda Mueller, 31, of Burlington had the right to the \$107,690 she found in May 1979 in two flight bags in a resort room.

An earlier appeal rejected a claim on the money by the town of Lyons, where the club is located. The decision also rejected a claim by the maids' supervisor that she was entitled to some of the money.

However, two maids who were working with Mueller say they may sue to get part of the money.

"We had no agreement to split the money," Mueller said. No one knows where the money came from but authorities said six men registered at the club using false names, stayed one night and left after paying for their rooms in cash. The money was found in their rooms.

Burglar gets shot in the arm

United Press International
MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Lee Gilbert saw a burglar stick his arm through a window and grab a framed picture of Jesus from the top of his television set. His response was to open fire.

Gilbert heard a noise Monday, walked into his living room and saw a man's arm reaching through the window. He said he ran back to his bedroom and got a .38-caliber pistol.

"I opened the front door and fired two times at him as he took off running," said Gilbert. "He had a lot of nerve."

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\$1000	79	1:96,936	1:7,203	1:3,601
\$100	295	1:28,548	1:1,280	1:790
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