

# Girl's father acquitted in rape case

## Daughter likely to live with mom

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**By Jamie C. Suchan**  
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INVERNESS — A 44-year-old man acquitted of raping his daughter Monday said he doesn't expect to repair the relationship with the 15-year-old.

The man, who had been on trial for three days, was accused of raping his daughter in the bathroom of his body shop in 1984, when the child was 9 years old.

After 1½ hours of deliberation Monday, the six-member jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

The man showed little emotion when the jury foreman read the verdict.

His elderly adoptive father began weeping and told family members, "I can go home and be happy now."

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After his acquittal, the man said he doubted he and his daughter would make up.

After Fifth Circuit Court Judge John Thurman told the man he was free to go, he told reporters he intends to get a job and put his life back together.

"I knew the truth would be known," he said. He said his daughter, who now lives with a foster family, may go to live with her mother.

The girl's mother, trial testimony revealed, left the family when the girl was 2 years old. She apparently has had little contact with the girl since then.

"Her natural mother has shown some interest and she may go to California to live her mother," he said.

He said he doubted he and his daughter would make up.

Defense attorney Jimmy Brown, during closing arguments Monday afternoon, told jurors the girl made up the story, and after she told it so many times, it became impossible for her to recant.

"She was a lonely girl and she retreated into Harlequin romance novels," Brown said.

He told jurors that details about the alleged sexual activity between she and her father were made up — because the details were not explained in the novels.

"Those Harlequin romances do not describe the sexual details and she tried to fill in the gaps," he said. "These are details that a 14-year-old virgin would not know."

"This was a tragedy and a pathetically sad story, and that is all," Brown said.

In the first day of the trial, the girl, now 15, testified that her father began to fondle her when she was 5 years old, and began raping her at the age of 9.

She said the man raped her weekly during a five year period and fondled her during the five years prior to that.

When she finally came forward in 1989, authorities removed the girl and her two brothers from their father's care. She and her 14-year-old brother are now in foster care.