



■ Jon Stover speaks with a member of his legal team before the defense made closing arguments Wednesday. Stover was accused of child sexual abuse, but the jury found him not guilty on all three charges.

Staff photo by Evan Lewis

IN COURT

Jury finds Jon Stover not guilty of assault

By LYNN LAROWE BEST
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NEW BOSTON, Texas—Three not guilty verdicts were handed down Thursday evening in the child sexual abuse trial of Jon David Stover before a courtroom packed with supporters.

Stover, 39, was arrested in 2010 for allegedly molesting the daughter of a woman to whom he was briefly mar-

ried after a three-year, on-again-off-again relationship.

"The Stover family is grateful for the jury's verdict," said Stover defense lawyer Toby Shook of Dallas. "It has been three long years of heartache and turmoil. We had no doubt once the jury heard the evidence they would find Jon not guilty."

Stover's defense team, Shook, Texarkana lawyer Craig Henry and Michigan lawyer Demosthenes

Larandos, theorized the girl was coached by a mother who had an eye on Stover's money.

"Can you find a man guilty of sexual assault based on an incomplete investigation? Can you be comfortable with that?" Shook asked after a critical analysis of the initial investigation into the 8-year-old's allegations by Bowie County investigator Todd Aultman.

See **STOVER** on Page 2A

Stover

Continued from Page 1A

"Think about (the alleged victim's mother), the type of person she is. Can you be comfortable with that?" Shook argued.

The mother denied she ever intended to sue Stover over the allegations though the defense produced a contract the mother signed with a local attorney. The mother's love life was the subject of testimony as well.

Defense experts, including a forensic social worker who testified about the girl's behavior in an interview July 6, 2010, at the Children's Advocacy Center in Texarkana, refuted the state's case.

A microbiologist who testified for the defense offered criticism of the Department of Public Safety's Garland, Texas, crime lab.

At issue was a large square of carpet collected from the bedroom of the alleged victim. The crime lab found DNA from Stover in five separate stains on the carpet. The defense and its

DNA expert, Michael Spence, Ph.D., of New Mexico, theorized the child's DNA should have been found in great quantity if she had spit Stover's sperm on the carpet as she claimed.

Assistant Attorney General Ralph Guerrero, who led the prosecution, argued in his closing remarks that testimony from investigators concerning discolored areas of the carpet, which appeared wet and smelled of bleach when collected by investigators, should not be overlooked. Guerrero argued enough evidence to convict Stover was presented even if some of the pieces are missing.

But the jury disagreed.

During their deliberations Wednesday afternoon and evening, they asked to view portions of the child's Children's Advocacy Center video, to look at photos and to examine all reports concerning DNA testing from the Garland crime lab.

In the company of jubilant supporters, Stover left the Bowie County Courthouse a free man.

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