

Juvenile Acquitted Of Rape, Sex Offense Charges

By Guy Leonard
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After spending six months in the county jail on charges that he raped a 12-year-old girl back in July, John K. Edison, 16, was found not guilty of that charge and three others by a St. Mary's County Circuit Court

jury.

The jury deliberated less than half-an-hour, according to one of its members.

The trial lasted four days with both prosecutors and Edison's defense attorney, Kevin McDevitt, arguing over not only physical evidence but also the cred-

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ibility of the alleged victim in the case.

In the end, one juror said, the story of the 12-year-old and her cousin, who had also alleged that she was raped by a friend of Edison's during the same incident during the Independence Day holiday, was not believable.

The 12-year-old's cousin had alleged she was raped during the alleged incident, but later recanted her story only to make the allegation again on the witness stand in court.

"We felt neither girl was telling the truth," one juror said, asking their name not be used. "We believed that sex happened but it wasn't rape."

The alleged victim, now 13, testified at the beginning of the trial that she and her cousin left their adult relative's house the night of July 4 with two young males, one of them the accused, to Edison's house in Great Mills.

The alleged victim testified that Edison forced her from the couch she was sitting on down the hallway of his home and forcibly raped her as well as hit her with a belt.

Edison had also been charged with second-degree assault for the alleged belt beating as well as with both second-degree and fourth-degree sex offenses for the sexual contact with the 12-year-old girl.

McDevitt said of his client that he admitted to a sexual act but that it was not violent.

DNA from his client was found on the 12-year-old girl, that indicated they had had some kind of sexual contact, the evidence in the case bore out. Also, Edison's DNA was found under the alleged victim's finger nails; prosecutors

argued that was consistent with the girl's story of trying to push Edison away from her during the act.

Despite contending that she was raped, the 12-year-old testified that she had stayed at Edison's house with her cousin and the other male in the case from 4:30 a.m. July 5 until about 7 a.m. that same morning after the alleged rape had occurred.

But prosecutors Julie White and Daniel J. White argued that the 12-year-old was credible and the DNA evidence implicated Edison.

"She's telling you exactly the truth," said Assistant State's Attorney Daniel White during the state's closing argument. "She never deviates from her story."

McDevitt argued that the behavior of the two girls and the two boys in the alleged incident did not follow what would have happened after a violent rape.

Both boys were seen walking the two girls home that morning.

"Then you'd have to believe these 'psycopaths' walked these girls home," McDevitt argued. "Those girls lied about everything they said."

It was the stories of the two girls, the juror said, that led to Edison's acquittal.

"We didn't believe that their stories were believable," the juror said. "The whole story just didn't sound right."