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Paper: News Herald, The (Port Clinton, OH)
Title: Neighbors not guilty in snow shovel assault
Date: May 11, 2006

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PORT CLINTON - A jury acquitted a Lacarne couple Wednesday of beating their neighbor in January with a snow shovel and table leg in a dispute about a dog.

After an hour and a half of deliberating, the jury found Molly Petersen, 35, and live-in boyfriend Gilberto Maren Jr., 32, innocent of two counts of felonious assault and one felony count of breaking and entering in Ottawa County Common Pleas Court.

"I can't tell you how happy I am," said Petersen's attorney, Thomas DeBacco of Port Clinton. "She put her trust in these 12 people's hands. They were a wise jury."

At least eight of Marez's family members gasped and clapped when the foreman read the verdicts. One woman began to cry and hugged the woman sitting next to her.

Marez, who looked stricken before the jury returned with the verdicts, hugged his attorney as tears streamed down his face. He then hugged one of the women in the gallery, who sobbed on his shoulder.

Petersen also shed tears. She, Marez and their families declined to comment.

The couple was charged with attacking David Owen, 30, at their trailer park on South Meachem Road after Owen and Marez argued about Marez's dog coming into Owen's yard, according to an Ottawa County Sheriff's Office report.

Marez, however, told sheriff's deputies Owen swung at him. He said he defended himself but did not specify how, the report shows.

His attorney, Jack Bradley of Lorain, said he and DeBacco were not allowed use a self-defense argument at trial. Instead, they poked holes in Owen's credibility, Bradley said.

"The witness misunderstood some questions, so he answered them the best he could," Ottawa County Assistant Prosecutor Lorrain Croy said. "So that was misconstrued as inconsistencies."

Owen, who was not in the courtroom Tuesday, was taken to St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo, where he received seven staples to his head and suffered bleeding on his brain, Croy said.

"These were very violent acts that resulted in serious physical harm," Croy said. "For one reason or another, the jury found there was not enough evidence. We accept the verdict, but we're not happy about it."

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