

Jury rules not guilty in man's arson trial

Not guilty verdicts were returned Monday afternoon by a 12-member jury in the arson trial of a former Weidman man in Isabella County 21st Circuit Court. The jury deliberated for less than one hour

Terry Holland, 37, of Hersey was found not guilty by the two men, 10-woman jury of two charges: arson of insured property and arson of personal property. The charges stemmed from the burning of Mr. Holland's 1978 station wagon in Sherman Township Feb. 26, 1985.

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Thomas Plachta accused the defendant of burning his car to collect the insurance money and claimed Mr. Holland had the opportunity and motive to commit the crime. Mr. Plachta did

admit at one point during the trial that the case against Mr. Holland was based on circumstantial evidence.

Daniel O'Neil, public defender for Mr. Holland, said after announcement of the verdicts he was confident his client's innocence would be borne out by the jury's decision.

"It's always refreshing to see jurors follow the law, and even though the prosecution presented an excellent case, there was just not enough evidence. The jurors returned a just verdict."

The trial took five days in Isabella County 21st Circuit Court. Arson of insured property, the more serious of the two charges, carries a penalty of any term up to 10 years in prison.