

Man acquitted of robbery charges

by JAMES GEMMELL
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After spending six months and nine days in Isabella County Jail, Thomas Arnold Boynton, Jr., was acquitted Friday in Isabella County Circuit Court of three charges stemming from the Dec. 26 robbery of Pixie North.

A jury of 12 decided at about 5 p.m. that Boynton, of Midland, was not guilty of the two counts of armed robbery and the single count of possession of a firearm that he was charged with in connection to the felony, at the 302 N. Mission restaurant.

"I'm just glad to be out of that hell hole (jail)," Boynton said, who had been held there since March 5. "The food is garbage and the treatment is garbage there.

"And I'd like to thank from the bottom of my heart my attorney, Dan O'Neil, and everyone on the jury," Boynton said after the verdict was announced.

Similar sentiments were expressed by public defender O'Neil, who was charged with summary criminal contempt of court Tuesday by Judge Paul O'Connell. He reportedly became the first attorney in Isabella County to spend a night in jail for

such a charge in 10 years.

"I'm very pleased. The prosecution put up a very persistent case. The jury had a difficult decision, but they were courageous and followed their oath by returning a just verdict," O'Neil said. "The case was wrought with doubt."

The decision of "not guilty" was a "great relief because I spent a night in jail.

"Sometimes in trials, things get heated, but I never meant any disrespect to the court," O'Neil said.

Meanwhile, Thomas Plachta, Isabella County assistant prosecuting attorney, said he had "no comment" on the trial's outcome.

Boynton, however, had words of praise for his attorney, O'Neil.

"Tell me what kind of man would go to jail for his client the way Mr. O'Neil did for

me. You couldn't get a better attorney for a million dollars," Boynton said.

O'Neil spent Tuesday night in Isabella County Jail without bond for contempt of court. He was released the next morning and continued to represent Boynton in the trial.