

Kent Juror Says Films of Shootings Figured Heavily in Voting Acquittal

CLEVELAND, Aug. 29 (UPI)—Films of the Kent State University shootings figured heavily in the jury's decision to exonerate 29 defendants in the death of four students and wounding of nine others, according to one jury member.

Richard Williams, of Cleveland, a mechanic, also said jurors never considered Gov. James A. Rhodes, one of the defendants, liable for the shootings by Ohio National Guardsmen.

Williams, in an interview with NBC News-Cleveland, said film of the shootings convinced him the defendants were blameless.

"We had a short film and two (sound) tapes," he said. "In the tapes a few seconds before the shooting you could hear 'Charge!' and several times 'Lay down your guns. You're surrounded. Go home!'"

"On this one film, it was very hard to see, but you

could see this rush up the hill at the Guard," Williams added.

"I figured the Guard panicked," he said, "which, according to the law, if they are in fear of their lives, they can fire."

The jury of six men and six women voted 9 to 3 to exonerate Rhodes, former Kent State University President Robert White and 27 current and former members of the Guard.

Williams was asked if he believed Rhodes did what the law required him to do.

"Yes. (Kent) Mayor (Leroy) Satrom asked them (the Guard) to come in, the prosecutor asked them to come in and the chief of police asked them to come in."

According to Williams, who voted with the majority in the 9 to 3 decision, emotions were so high in the jury room during the deliberations that every juror cried at least once, knowing that a decision either

way would have a significant effect on the lives of many persons.

The seemingly endless litigation involving the shootings is now moving toward an appeal for a new trial of \$46 million in civil suits on grounds U.S. District Court Judge Don Young made errors during the 14-week trial.

"We are studying the legal aspects now and will have to make a motion within 10 days of the verdict," said David Engdahl, attorney for one of the plaintiffs.

The attorney said an appeal will be made to the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati should Young deny his motion for a new trial. The case would come up in about six months.

"We think we can get an appeal on reversal, but we are not optimistic about it at the trial court level," Engdahl said.