

Law and Disorder

Stateside



Kathleen Robertson of Austin, Texas was awarded \$80,000 by a jury after breaking her ankle when she tripped over a toddler who was running inside a furniture store. The store owners were understandably surprised by the verdict, considering that the running toddler was her own son.



Carl Truman of Los Angeles, California won \$74,000 plus medical expenses when his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Truman apparently didn't notice there was someone at the wheel of the car when he was trying to steal his neighbour's hubcaps.



Terrence Dickson, of Bristol, Pennsylvania, who was leaving a house he had just burgled by way of the garage. Unfortunately for Dickson, the automatic garage door opener malfunctioned and he could not get the garage door to open. Worse, he couldn't re-enter the house because the door connecting the garage to the house locked when Dickson pulled it shut. Forced to sit for eight days and survive on a case of Pepsi and a large bag of dry dog food, he sued the home-owner's insurance company claiming undue mental anguish. Amazingly, the jury said the insurance company must pay Dickson \$500,000 for his anguish.



Jerry Williams, of Little Rock, Arkansas, was awarded \$14,500

plus medical expenses after being bitten on the bottom by his next door neighbour's beagle - even though the beagle was on a chain in its owner's fenced yard. Williams did not get as much as he asked for because the jury believed the beagle might have been provoked at the time of the bite because Williams had climbed over the fence into the yard and repeatedly shot the dog with a pellet gun.



A jury ordered a restaurant to pay Amber Carson of Lancaster, Pennsylvania \$113,500 after she slipped on a spilled soft drink and broke her tailbone. The reason the soft drink was on the floor: Ms. Carson had thrown it at her boyfriend 30 seconds earlier during an argument. Whatever happened to people being responsible for their own actions?



Kara Walton, of Claymont, Delaware sued the owner of a night club in a nearby city because she fell from the bathroom window to the floor, knocking out her two front teeth. Even though Ms. Walton was trying to sneak through the ladies room window to avoid paying the \$3.50 cover charge, the jury said the night club had to pay her \$12,000 plus dental expenses.



Mrs. Merv Grazinski, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, purchased a new 32-foot Winnebago motor home. On her first trip home, from an OU

football game, having driven onto the freeway, she set the cruise control at 70 mph and calmly left the driver's seat to go to the back of the Winnebago to make herself a sandwich. Not surprisingly, the motor home left the freeway, crashed and overturned. Mrs. Grazinski sued Winnebago for not putting in the owner's manual that she couldn't actually leave the driver's seat while the cruise control was set. The Oklahoma jury awarded her ... \$1,750,000... plus a new motor home.

Winnebago actually changed their manuals as a result of this suit, just in case Mrs. Grazinski has any relatives who might also buy a motor home.



Sentry Insurance Company provided worker's compensation insurance for a Wisconsin "Meals on Wheels" program. Delivering a meal, a MoW volunteer (who was allegedly not even wearing boots) slipped and fell on a participant's driveway that had been cleared of snow, and Sentry had to pay to care for her resulting injuries. Sentry wanted its money back, so it sued the 81-year-old homeowner getting the Meals on Wheels service.

It could have simply filed for "subrogation" from her homeowner's insurance company, but by naming her in the action; it dragged an old lady into court, reinforcing the image of insurance companies as concerned only about the bottom line, not "protecting" policyholders from loss. ●