

# Norwalk man acquitted of 2007 rape

By John Nickerson  
STAFF WRITER

STAMFORD — It took jurors only 20 minutes to acquit Norwalk resident Carlos Gomez of rape charges that have been hanging over his head for 18 months.

After the jury of three men and three women found Gomez, 37, not guilty of first degree and second-degree sexual assault, tears welled up in his eyes.

"I'm very happy," Gomez said after Judge Martin Nigro adjourned court.

Through bloodshot eyes, Gomez, who said he nearly lost his tree-trimming business after he was arrested for rape in October 2007, said he only wants his good name back.

Gomez was charged with

the Aug. 6, 2007, rape of a 32-year-old Fairfield woman, who testified this week she called police while the rape was occurring. Police investigated the claim for two months before his arrest.

"I think the jury got it right, and I'm very happy for Carlos," defense attorney, Lindy Urso said. I don't think there are any winners in this case, but this is a nice consolation prize for Carlos."

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Richard Colangelo, who prosecuted the case, did not return a call for comment.

The woman, who also testified that she was a recovering alcoholic, met Gomez at the El Charro Mexicano bar on North Main Street on Aug. 6, when she drank six double shots of vodka.

But before she sat at the bar and asked Gomez if she was pretty, the woman changed into a skirt with a low cut top, she told a rape nurse when she was taken to Norwalk Hospital.

She said that Gomez offered her a ride to another bar, which was two buildings away. When she got into Gomez' car, she said, he told her he had to go to his apartment. They went to the apartment and had sex.

During his closing arguments, Urso charged that the woman did call police until after the two had sex and she realized she was too drunk to drive home to Fairfield, where her boyfriend and four children were waiting.

"She realized she was in trouble and needed an out and

alleged the rape," Urso said.

He said that there was no reason why she should have accepted a ride to a bar two doors away and no reason for her to accompany Gomez to his apartment a mile away if she did not want to go.

Colangelo argued that the woman was so drunk that she didn't know what she was doing.

Before jurors began deliberating, Urso told them there was a "ton" of reasonable doubt in the state's case.

"I ask that you acquit, to return Carlos to his life, return Carlos to his dignity and not wrongly brand Carlos a rapist," he said.

*John Nickerson can be reached at 964-2320 or john.nickerson@scni.com.*