

**By CHARLOTTE SANDERS**

**Senior Writer**

A jury of 11 men and one woman deliberated nearly an hour Wednesday to find a Ragland man not guilty on each of six counts of sexually-related charges.

The two-day trial featured a parade of 19 witnesses for the state and the defense with one rebuttal witness.

This marked the second trial for the accused. An earlier appearance in court ended in a mistrial.

The accused, 28-year-old Okey Runyon, took the witness stand to deny charges he committed sexual offenses against his adoptive daughter, now 13. (In a related story appearing in yesterday's Daily News she was inadvertently listed as 14). He claimed he loved her and her sister, whom he also adopted after his marriage to Melissa Ann Runyon.

He later divorced that wife and is now married to Jamie Runyon, who gave tearful testimony in his behalf. They were married in April 2001, about a month before their baby was born.

The alleged victim testified to what she claimed were instances in which her father touched her and made her perform or participate in sexual acts against her will. The offenses began when she was eight years of age, according to testimony.

The state case was presented by Assistant Prosecutor Miki Thompson. Huntington Attorneys Mark Underwood and Courtenay Craig represented the defendant.

Judge Michael Thomsbury took 20 minutes to read 14 typewritten pages of instructions to the jury before closing arguments were presented by opposing counsel.

The jury was instructed to give a verdict on each of the charges against Runyon, which included two counts each of sexual abuse by a parent, guardian or custodian; sexual assault in the second degree, and incest.

The indictment was returned by the January 2002 grand jury upon information provided by State Police Senior Trooper M.E. Muncy.

The state's final witness was Loralie Lawson, PhD, a licensed psychologist in private practice in Williamson. She was declared an expert in the field of psychology.

She testified that 25 percent of her clients are children. She first saw the 13-year-old alleged victim of sexual offenses in May 2001 and was aware the girl had made allegations against her adoptive father in 1997.

Lawson told of seeing the girl 20 times during a year and interviewing her mother 17 times. She said the girl was consistent in actions of a child showing emotion when she talked about something that made her uncomfortable. Aware that her young client had recanted her allegations, Lawson said four percent to 29 percent of children make allegations that something happened and then recant by saying it didn't happen.

The defense moved for acquittal after the state rested its case but the judge overruled the motion.

Besides the defendant, others testifying on his behalf were his brother-in-law and sister, Cletis and Violet Mounts of Ragland; his brother and sister-in-law, James and Melissa Runyon of Ragland; his mother, Imogene Runyon; Sandy and William Bush of Huntington, parents of the defendant's present wife, and Dr. Joe White, professor of psychology at Marshall University.

The defendant was pictured by defense witnesses as a loving father of his two adoptive daughters; a hard worker and religious. His mother declared "I know it is not true" about the charges against her son. She stated she got so many phone calls at her home after Okey had left his first family that she had to get the phone blocked to some of the calls.

Some of the testimony told of his divorced wife, Melissa Ann, and two children calling frequently in efforts to get him to return to their home. They even made a trip to Huntington after Runyon's natural child was born, according to testimony.