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**BIKER TRIAL ENDS IN MIXED VERDICTS **

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NORFOLK - When The **Renegades** Motorcycle Club drug trial began in September, 13 defendants faced life in prison on charges of distributing methamphetamine.

By day's end Friday, only three remained in custody following one of the largest and longest trials ever held in Norfolk federal court. After deliberating less than 16 hours, the jury acquitted five men of all charges. Five others were convicted on minor charges and released on bond. Three were ordered held without bond, two convicted of conspiracy to distribute drugs, one convicted on gun charges.

FBI officials said Friday they were still pleased with the outcome of the case. Of 33 defendants originally charged, 20 pleaded guilty prior to trial, which lasted eight weeks.

When the verdicts were announced Friday, wives, mothers, lovers - and even a juror - wept, some for joy, others in sorrow.

Under extraordinary security - some two dozen U.S. Marshals were in the courtroom - there was a hush as the jury filed in. Jurors avoided eye contact with prosecutors, defense attorneys, defendants and family members trying to read their faces.

As the first verdict, for acquittal, was announced, there was a rush of subdued joy through the courtroom.

Then, when Travis "Taz" Dailey was found guilty of conspiracy, stunned family members realized jurors had considered each defendant individually; they had not thrown out the government's entire case.

When Keith "Tank" Watson was also found guilty of conspiracy, his attorney, R. Wayne Nunnally, wept openly. He later said the verdict "ripped his heart out."

Harold Ratliff, Edgar Kirby Jr. and Steven E. Locklear were each found guilty of the misdemeanor charge of conspiracy to possess methamphetamine.

Richard F. Connor and Robert J. Provo were found guilty of possession with intent to distribute drugs.

Brenda McNamara dropped to her knees, clutching her hands as if in prayer, when her husband, Clarence "Mac" McNamara, was acquitted on all charges.

"We're going home," she said, holding her husband's hand outside the federal courthouse late Friday afternoon. McNamara, represented by attorney Walter B. Dalton, is the national road captain of the Ohio-based motorcycle club.

The mother of biker Steven L. Canady - also acquitted of all charges - hugged her wavy-haired son, called him "Stevie" and wept for joy.

"The prayers of mothers were stronger than the federal government," she said. Canady, represented by attorney Kim Crump, was married by phone in August while awaiting trial and plans to join his new wife.

Also acquitted on all charges were James "Ed" Land Jr., William "Eddie" Locklear and Frank A. Sylvia Jr.

"Many of us have accepted Jesus as our savior," Sylvia said when he was released. "This is his work."

Sylvia said he had one message for the public: "Bikers are people too, with big hearts. They're also human beings who can make mistakes."

Sylvia said his "heart fluttered" before his verdict was read. "I shed tears," he said. "Yesterday I was facing life in prison. Today, I'm going home."

As the others joyfully embraced family, Candace Levenite, who testified for her husband - national enforcer Michael Levenite - sat forlornly on the front of the courthouse steps, holding her crying 5-month old son. Levenite, who has been in jail since the FBI raid in February, was one of three who was not released Friday.

Levenite - who, testimony showed, never used drugs and tried to counsel fellow bikers off methamphetamine - faces up to 10 years in prison for possessing guns and explosives.

"He has never held his baby," Candace Levenite said, her eyes red from weeping. "He heard him being born on a speaker phone at the jail."

Description of illustration(s):

Color Photo

NHAT MEYER/The Virginian-Pilot

Renegades Motorcycle Club member Frank A. Sylvia Jr., left, and his

wife, Terry, smile at his lawyer, Steve Hudgins, on the steps of the federal courthouse after Sylvia was acquitted and released Friday.

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