

Jury booted, judge rules Roloff not guilty of drunk driving

by Cheryl McDermott & BWNS

The six-man jury deliberating the guilt or innocence of Matt Roloff, television star of TLC's "Little People, Big World", in his long-anticipated drunk driving trial was given the boot Thursday after violating court orders by researching terms on the internet, leaving the judge to ultimately make the decision: "not guilty".

Matt Roloff's mug shot - WCSO photo Jurors deliberated three hours on Wednesday before going home, and continued today for about an hour and a half before the judge was informed of the jurors' violation.

Roloff, 46, seeking to avoid a mistrial, waived his right to a jury trial and left it up to the judge to decide his fate. He was found not guilty of driving under the influence of intoxicants, failing to maintain a lane of traffic, and refusing to take a breath test.

Roloff was arrested around midnight on June 19, 2006 when Washington County Sheriff's Deputy Allen Pastori observed him driving erratically after leaving the Rock Creek Cafe & Pub, where he admitted to having a single beer.

Because Roloff had refused to take a breath test, the evidence against him was based on the deputy's observations including a "moderate odor of alcohol" on his breath, and watery and glassy eyes. Deputy Pastori testified that Roloff displayed six of six indications of impairment commonly used by law enforcement.

The reality TV star, however, maintained that he was simply tired and was unused to driving his wife, Amy's, custom van which has foot pedal extensions for her stature instead of his.

After announcing his decision, the judge called the jury into the courtroom and gave them a stern admonishment for doing a "diservice to the entire legal system".

Roloff has been charged with drunk driving before. In 2003, reports show he agreed to enter an alcohol treatment program and the charges were dropped when Roloff successfully completed the program.

The Roloff family: Matt, Amy, daughter Molly, twin sons Zach and Jeremy, and youngest child Jacob; are featured on The Learning Channel's television show that focuses on the family's life on their 33-acre farm in Oregon. Pegged by TLC as an "extraordinary family composed of both little and average-sized people", the Roloffs share how Matt, Amy, and Zach live as Little People with dwarfism in a world of normal-sized people.