



GRAHAM, NORTH CAROLINA ■ THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1999

Wal-Mart greeter found not guilty of assault

A greeter at Wal-Mart was found not guilty Friday of assaulting an elderly woman who attempted to leave the store riding one of the store's electric carts.

Thomas Epes, white male, no age on warrant, of 1949 Long Diary Road, Graham, was charged with assault on a female in a warrant brought by Hilda Gillispie.

The woman told District Court Judge Kent Washburn that she had shopped for 2-3 hours at the Wal-Mart store on June 14 and was attempting to leave the store on the electric cart when she was confronted by Epes who she said told her "you're not going anywhere" in the cart.

The woman claimed she had been using the carts to shop and take her groceries and other items to her car for two years without a problem.

She said Epes "grabbed the cart and slung it into the buggies" kept in the entranceway of the store.

She alleged he grabbed her arm in the process, causing a bruise.

Gillispie told the judge she had undergone two triple heart bypass surgeries, suffered from congestive heart failure, and had ruptured disks in her back.

She said she had gone to her doctor after the incident, but could not take any "pain pills" because of the other many medications she takes for her health problems.

She said the store manager "apologized" for Epes' behavior and that she told him "anyone who is that mean to an old person should be fired."

She said she went back to the

store a few days later and, upon seeing Epes on-the-job, "I turned around and went home."

To questions from Epes' defense attorney John Cox, Gillispie said she drove herself to the store, parking in a handicapped space, then walked under her own power into the store.

Gillispie said that she told Epes she had taken the motorized cart to her car in the past, "and he told me 'I've heard your tale before.'"

The woman admitted she "drew back a shoe" she had purchased when Epes "drew back his walkie-talkie."

She said the incident drew a crowd of 15-20 people. She alleged that one man in the crowd told Epes "you're not going to hit that old woman" and that Epes replied, "you shut up, it's none of your business."

Cox showed the woman a sign posted on the carts that delineate rules of usage. One of the rules states the carts should be operated on a level surface inside the store.

Gillispie denied "kicking" Epes or threatening to knock off his eyeglasses.

"He's dangerous to be around old people and children," she said. "Something should be done about somebody who jumps on people when he's supposed to be welcoming them."

Epes, who has been a "greeter" for almost four years, denied touching the woman.

He described the carts as having small wheels that might cause the vehicle to turn over if driven in the parking lot. He said it was also un-

safe to ride the carts outside because of traffic around the entrance.

Epes said he told Gillispie four times that the carts were not allowed outside.

"I told her 'you can't take the cart outside' and she told me, 'you just watch me,'" and continued towards the exit.

Epes said he offered to have a stock man carry her purchases to her car and push her in a wheelchair, but she refused and began "raving" when he grabbed the front basket of the cart and held it so she could not move forward.

"She called me everything but a child of God," Epes told the judge, "and threatened to knock off my glasses with a shoe." He said the woman also "spit on me."

He said the woman kicked at him and told him "she would kick me where it hurts bad."

He said the woman demanded the manager be summoned and when he pulled his walkie-talkie off his belt, "she asked me if I was going to hit her with the phone. I told her I was calling for the manager like she asked me to do."

He said Gillispie "said she was going to call her lawyer and threatened to sue the store."

To questions from prosecutor Cassandra Weatherford, Epes said the incident occurred so quickly that he did not have time to call security, saying "they [security] couldn't have gotten there in time."

He also said that he had "been taught not to put my hands on a person" in his capacity as store employee.

Walter Pride, a stock man at the store, said he went to the scene after someone told him "there was a lady kicking a door greeter."

He said when he arrived on the scene, Gillispie was seated on the cart, kicking Epes.

"She was so hysterical, I can't remember what all she said," he testified.

He said he did remember her saying, "if they didn't fire Tom right then she would sue Wal-Mart for all

they were worth."

Assistant manager Melissa Fowler said Gillispie was "highly upset" and that co-manager Scott Barnette told Gillispie he would "deal with the situation" and follow "proper procedure."

Fowler testified Gillispie wanted Epes "fired on the spot," but was told by Barnette "I can't fire him like that."

She also quoted Gillispie saying

if she told her sons about the incident, "there's no telling what they might do."

Judge Washburn said the incident was "something that obviously got out of hand," causing "unpleasantness" on both sides. He called the situation "very unfortunate," but said he had "reasonable doubt as to this rising to the level of a criminal assault" as he found Epes not guilty.

DEEDS OF TRUST

Deeds of Trust as recorded at the Alamance County Register of Deeds, worth \$125,000 or more, are listed below by the following: borrower, amount borrowed, financial institution, number of years repayable and property address or location.

Robin Pickard Miller and Christopher Paul Miller borrowed \$136,800 from State Employees' Credit Union, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 1378 Beaufort Drive, Graham.

Alfred James English and Sherrie C. English borrowed \$137,000 from Crown Bank, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 953 Greenwood Drive, Burlington.

Keith A. Griffin borrowed \$163,000 from 1st State Bank, repayable in 31 years, for property located at Lot 92, Creek Point Road, Graham.

Lois Holt Troutman borrowed \$152,900 from NationsBank, repayable in one year, for property located at 1960 Lewis Drive, Graham.

Theodore N. Bakatsias and Chrvsoula

Graham.

Jonathan D. Ames and Sabine L. Dmoch-Ames borrowed \$155,000 from Norwest Mortgage, Inc., repayable in 30 years, for property located at 5464 Three Waters Lane, Graham.

Jefferson D. Wilkins, II, Marie Wilkins, Henry Glenn Wilkins and Dorothy Wilkins borrowed \$332,000 from MidCarolina Bank, repayable in 30 years, for property located at 2100 Wilkins Road, Burlington.

Thomas C. McCall and Candace C. McCall borrowed \$203,000 from Dover Mortgage Company, repayable in seven years, for property located at 118 Coachlight Trail, Burlington.

Michael D. Knox and April G. Knox borrowed \$160,000 from North Central Farm Credit, repayable in 30 years, five months, for property located at 4724 Pennlawn Trail, Burlington.

Jerry L. Parrish and Deborah M. Parrish borrowed \$130,240 from Columbia National Incorporated, repayable in 30 years, for property located at 1621 Apple Street Extension, Burlington.

years, for property located at 2875-A Knoll Trail, Graham.

Deryl G. Smith and Deborah E. Smith borrowed \$135,000 from State Employees' Credit Union, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 3673 Mebane Rogers Road, Mebane.

Ronnie L. Jacobs and Kathy S. Jacobs borrowed \$146,000 from 1st State Bank, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 2634 Moss Creek Loop, Elon College.

David Jason Cooper and Nan Patterson Cooper borrowed \$181,000 from 1st State Bank, repayable in 30 years, for property located at 203 Trinity Drive, Elon College.

Larry Allen and Debra L. Allen borrowed \$125,600 from National Finance Corporation, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 1208 Briarcliff Road, Burlington.

Donald W. Brooks and Janice L. Brooks borrowed \$184,000 from MidCarolina Bank, repayable in 15 years, for property located at 625 McCray Road, Burlington.

William I. Barlow Jr. and Melonie