Jury Declares Defendant Not Guilty In Aggravated Assault Case
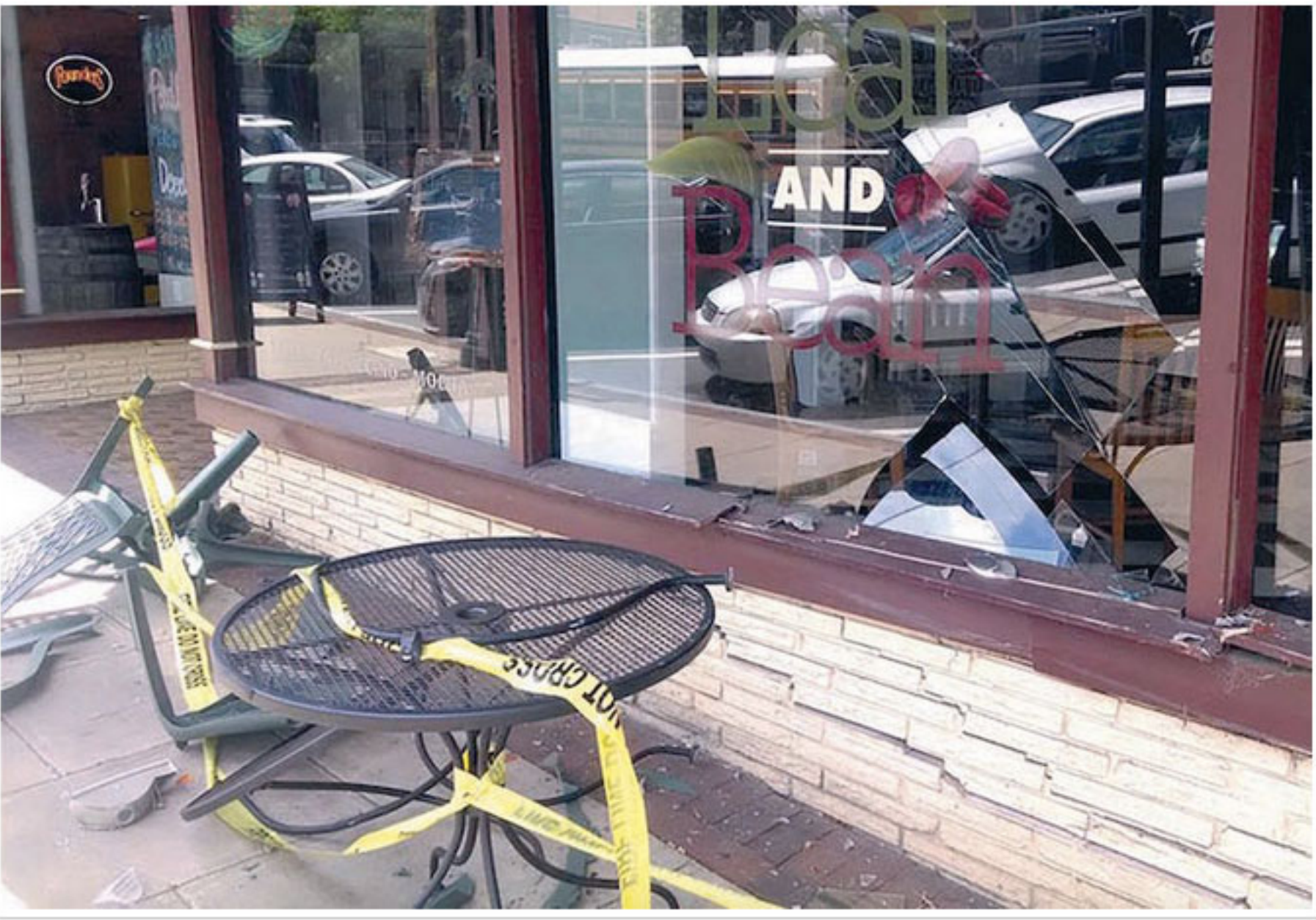
by CLAY NEELY

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Anthony James Rodriguez said he accidentally put his vehicle gear into drive, damaging two downtown Newnan businesses.

A man accused of aggravated assault after striking another man with his vehicle and driving into a storefront was found not guilty Thursday.

Anthony James Rodriguez was cleared on charges of aggravated assault and three counts of criminal damage to property after being accused of intentionally striking a man with his vehicle after an argument outside of The Alamo in May 2014.

Rodriguez's vehicle damaged the front of Ace Growlers along with the coffee shop next door, The Leaf and Bean, whose front windows and brick wall were shattered, leaving the outdoor furniture mangled.

The defense argued that the incident was an accident and testified that he did not mean to hit the victim with his vehicle, according to Coweta County Assistant District Attorney Trey Reeves. The defense also stated that Rodriguez did not have the requisite criminal intent to cause the harm, Reeves said.

Testifying on his own behalf, Rodriguez told jurors that he was in a panic after a verbal altercation with the victim, jumped in his SUV, put it in reverse, and then accidentally put the gear into drive thus causing all of the damage, Reeves stated.

It took the jury less than three hours to deliberate before clearing Rodriguez on all charges.

'I am very grateful for the verdict of not guilty in this case. Anthony has been exonerated and can now pursue his dream of serving our country in the United States Air Force,' said Jason Swindle, attorney for Rodriguez. 'I would like to thank the jury for their service to our community, their work on this case, and their decision. I would also like to thank the Coweta County District Attorney's Office for presenting a challenging case in a professional and honorable fashion.'

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