

# Community news

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## Woman who lied about rape must pay man \$12,000

### First time verdict handed down in state

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**Waukesha** — In an apparent first-of-a-kind verdict in Wisconsin, a jury has instructed a woman to pay monetary damages to a man she falsely accused of sexual assault, it was learned Thursday.

Barbara Ann Trapp, 29, of Oconomowoc,

During the police investigation, Trapp further complicated matters by hiring a private detective to follow O'Malley, court records show.

After the charges were dropped, O'Malley sued Trapp in Waukesha County Circuit Court. Trapp filed a counter-suit, but the jury rejected all of her claims against O'Malley.

woc, defamed Michael S. O'Malley, of Dousman, when she told police he raped her multiple times at an Onalaska motel, the jury decided this week after a three-day trial.

The jury found that Trapp had damaged O'Malley, 25, in the amount of \$12,000.

O'Malley's attorney, James C. Wood, said Trapp is broke, and his client has little hope of receiving any of the money.

"It's like he told the jury," Wood said. "He said, 'I don't expect to realize any money on this case, but she (Trapp) had to take responsibility for her actions and for the pain and embarrassment I went through.'"

During a July 1991 visit to Onalaska with O'Malley, her boyfriend of several weeks, Trapp told police he sexually assaulted her and threatened her life.

O'Malley subsequently was charged with five counts of sexual assault and was jailed briefly.

However, La Crosse County Asst. Dist. Atty. Rhonda Martinson later had the charges dropped after a six-month investigation turned up multiple inconsistencies in Trapp's story.

Witnesses at the motel and restaurants and bars the two visited during the trip contradicted many of the statements Trapp made to police, court records show.

In addition, tests done by medical personnel and the State Crime Laboratory found no evidence of sexual assault on Trapp and her clothing.

"This is the first time in the State of Wisconsin that someone accused and vindicated of sexual assault has turned around and sued the supposed victim for defamation of character and prevailed," Wood said.

Wood said at the time Trapp made the allegations, she worked for a shelter for battered women. He said he believed Trapp was a troubled woman who fabricated the allegations to win attention from her co-workers and legitimate victims of rape and abuse.

"She worked feverishly for that cause," Wood said. "She had heard all of the war stories. She kind of put those war stories of battered women together in a collage. She made it all up. Frankly, during the trial, I felt sorry for her. I think she is one hollow shell of a woman.

"She victimized herself twice. She wanted to have the aura that she needed care from her fellow care-givers. She did a disservice to that worthy community service."

Wood said he took the case on contingency and doesn't expect to be paid for his work.

"Basically, this was a pro bono case advocating for the victims of false allegations of sexual assault," he said. "I knew going in I wasn't going to see any money."

Trapp declined to comment. Her attorney, Joseph Radtke, would not comment on the case, a spokeswoman for his office said.