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City businessman found innocent of bank fraud charges

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A Hopkinsville businessman has been acquitted of federal bank fraud charges lodged last year in connection with an alleged illegal transaction at a local bank.

After 45 minutes of deliberation, a jury in U.S. District Court in Paducah last week concluded a two-day trial by returning a verdict of not-guilty in the case of Steven Wayne Rawlins, 44, of Huffman's Mill Road.

Rawlins — doing business as Auburn Electronic Laboratory — apparently pledged a 1971 Jet Ranger helicopter to provide consid-

eration for a \$100,000 promissory note from the former Pennyrite Citizens Bank on Fort Campbell Boulevard.

The transaction reportedly occurred in February 1997, officials said.

Hancy Jones III, an assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Kentucky, attempted to persuade the jury that Rawlins did not own the helicopter and had presented it to bank officials as though it was his own property, officials said.

However, Rawlins' attorney, Ken Haggard of Hopkinsville, successfully argued that his client did legally own the aircraft. He presented evidence

in the form of canceled checks to show Rawlins had purchased the helicopter.

Jones declined to comment on the outcome of the case, when contacted late last week.

Rawlins was indicted last August after the FBI had investigated the matter for more than two years.

Had he been convicted, Rawlins would have faced maximum penalties of 30 years in prison, a \$1 million fine and five years supervised parole following incarceration.

Pennyrite Citizens Bank later became Mercantile Bank and eventually Firststar Bank.

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