

Judge: Therapist was negligent in affair with client

By JULIE STAFFORD
Camera Staff Writer
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A former Boulder psychotherapist was professionally negligent when she had an affair, and eventually married, one of her clients, Boulder District Judge Joseph Bellipanni ruled Tuesday.

After hearing closing arguments, the jury began deliberating Tuesday afternoon. Jurors recessed at 5 p.m. and will begin deliberations again today at 9 a.m.

David Smith is suing his former therapist, Jacqueline Jaeger, for negligence, claiming she caused him to quit his job, lose his family and house, begin drinking after months of sobriety and attempt suicide several times.

Smith says Jaeger seduced him while he was her client and persuaded him to divorce his wife and marry her. They married in 1990, but the marriage was later annulled.

Before the jury started its deliberations, the judge ruled that Jaeger was professionally negligent. **Smith's** lawyer, Steven Silvern, requested that Bellipanni issue the negligence instead of leaving that to the jury.

Lawyers can ask a judge to issue a verdict during deliberating. The request can be denied or Bellipanni issued a verdict means he believed the juror could have denied that Jaeger was negligent. Jaeger has been banned from practicing orado.

The six-person jury's task now will decide if harm. If so, was it caused by Jaeger's negligence and what type of damages can he claim and how much.

Silvern asked the jury to award **Smith** \$2 million in emotional and physical damages. He also asked for full amount "for the purposes of punishment" and send a message to "other professionals that such conduct is unacceptable."

Jaeger's lawyer, Larry Stone, told the jury that any damages because he bears responsibility and monetary losses. Stone directed the jury to rule Jaeger could really have possessed **Smith**.

Therapist wielded power over him, plaintiff testifies

By SALLY McGRATH
Camera Staff Writer

The man who is suing his former therapist for negligence claimed Tuesday that she manipulated him so he would become dependent upon her, leave his wife and marry her.

"I was dependent on her and felt I needed her," said **David Smith**, who took the witness stand Tuesday in Boulder District Court. **Smith** is suing his former therapist, Jacqueline Jaeger, for unspecified damages.

"As I look back, I feel ashamed that I had let someone have that much power over me."

Smith, 38, married Jaeger in 1990 after being her client for three years. The marriage was later annulled.

Smith claims Jaeger caused him to

quit his job, lose his family, begin drinking after many months of sobriety and attempt suicide several times.

The relationship with Jaeger originated in 1986 when **Smith** sought treatment for alcoholism at the Boulder Psychiatric Institute. He later entered into family therapy with his wife, **Barbara**, and their two sons. Jaeger, 49, was the family's therapist.

Also Tuesday, Dr. Ray Leidig, who evaluated **Smith**, said he was "seriously and perhaps permanently damaged," by his experience with Jaeger. "The damage began when he was led down a path that led to seduction and sexual involvement," Leidig said. "The path has been downward, even with the help of some well-trained therapists."

1992

By JULIE STAFFORD
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Therapist's victim gets \$244,250

By JULIE STAFFORD
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David Smith of Boulder was awarded \$244,250 Wednesday in a lawsuit against his former psychotherapist with whom he had an affair and later married.

A Boulder judge had ruled Tuesday that Jacqueline Jaeger was professionally negligent in the case.

The amount wasn't as much as **Smith's** lawyer had asked the six-person jury to deliver, but **Smith** said money would never be able to reimburse what he lost.

"I feel like there's no monetary amount I could ever be awarded to re-

place what happened to my family and myself," said the 38-year-old **Smith**. "Not just my family, but my father, brother, mother and sister. It's been hard on just about all of my relatives."

Smith claimed Jaeger caused him to quit his job, divorce his wife, lose contact with his children, begin drinking after many months of sobriety and attempt to kill himself several times.

Boulder District Judge Joseph Bellipanni ruled Tuesday that Jaeger was professionally negligent. For about seven hours Tuesday and Wednesday, the jury deliberated the extent to which Jaeger was responsible for **Smith's** suf-

fering.

Reading the jury's verdict, Bellipanni said Jaeger was found to be 75 percent responsible and **Smith** 25 percent. That meant 25 percent was subtracted from the monetary amount the jury awarded **Smith**.

Bellipanni further reduced **Smith's** judgment by \$47,000 because he was awarded that amount in a previous case against the business where Jaeger worked.

Of the final amount, \$211,250 is to reimburse **Smith** for medical and therapy costs. The remaining \$33,000 was (See VICTIM, Page 3A)