

Reprinted from the Associated Press and The Miami Herald

Former Miami Beach lawyer acquitted of grand theft

Published December 16, 2011

Jurors this week acquitted a former Miami Beach lawyer accused of pilfering more than \$2 million from a French businessman.

Sally Sawh, a disbarred attorney, had been accused in December 2008 of stealing the money of Jean Dahan and investing it into a high-end kitchen building company owned by her husband.

Jurors on Monday night found her not guilty of first-degree grand theft.

"We believe we had a strong case and moved forward with the prosecution," said State Attorney's Office spokeswoman Terry Gonzalez-Chavez. "This was a very difficult case and we respect the jury's verdict. That is why we have courts and why we have juries."

Dahan in 2008 had transferred nearly \$4 million from a Swiss bank account into a trust account controlled by Sawh.

At the tail of end of the economic boom, the money was supposed to be used for real estate investment, according to prosecutors. Sawh bought five properties and sold two others.

But according to an arrest warrant, \$1,879,000 in the trust account — which was co-mingled with money from other clients — was transferred to her husband's company to pay his bills.

During the six-day trial, Miami-Dade prosecutors Sofiea Bailey and Fred Kerstein presented thousands of documents. They also flew in Dahan, his relatives and advisors from France to testify.

Defense attorney Brian Bieber said he attacked Dahan's credibility and insisted that Sawh did indeed have the authority to invest the money into her husband's company.

"There was no theft," Bieber said. "The bottom line is, there was no theft, even though the money is gone."

Sawh, however, won't return to lawyering. She voluntarily left the profession because of discrepancies with her trust accounts, Bieber said.

Dahan earlier sued Sawh, who settled with the businessman but still owes him just under \$2 million.