

'Wrong man' court case finally resolved

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Court proceedings against a man accused of biting off the tip of his wife's ring finger, slitting her ear, and felony assault were stalled recently because court officials collared the wrong man — twice.

The "right" man, Fermin Sanchez Santos, 27, of 58 Union St., eventually pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of battery causing serious injury. He was given credit for time served and was sentenced to two years' probation Oct. 17.

Another man, who was also named Fermin Sanchez, was arrested for petty theft while there was a warrant out for Fermin Sanchez Santos earlier in the year. Officers apparently confused the two, and assumed they had the man who was named in the warrant.

Assistant District Attorney Paul Marigonda, who was working at Watsonville Municipal Court until Nov. 15 when he was transferred to the Santa Cruz office, said that the victim, Belin Martha Olvera, showed up for the preliminary hearing and said that the man in the courtroom was not her husband.

At this point, the wrong Fermin

Sanchez had already spent about two weeks in jail, Marigonda said.

Another warrant was issued for the arrest of Olvera's husband, and the same wrong man was picked up again.

It seems that the man tried to tell people he wasn't who they were looking for, but nobody believed him, Marigonda said.

Meanwhile, Marigonda said, Olvera's finger had healed, and it was apparent that her finger had not been "bitten off," and the original felony charges were not appropriate.

In other recent Watsonville Municipal Court cases:

- A felony burglary charge was dismissed against Edward Lee Ackerman, 28, of 8 Rogers Ave. Ackerman was an employee of Coast Produce on Lee Road when, on Nov. 5, 1989 — soon after the Oct. 17 earthquake — someone stole several crates of avocados.

Two juveniles, who were brothers, and Ackerman were implicated in the case, and Ackerman reportedly lost his job, Marigonda said.

The juveniles eventually "pleaded out" in a Monterey court, Marigonda said. Another brother of the juveniles, viewed as a crucial witness to Ackerman's involvement, could not be found.

Even if he were, Marigonda said, there was the possibility he could be viewed as a co-conspirator, so that his testimony wouldn't be enough to convict Ackerman.

- Felony grand theft and battery charges were dismissed against David Diaz Angulo, 39, of 124 San Juan Road, Watsonville, and Jose Luis Sanchez, 22, of 103 Rodriguez St., Watsonville.

The two had been accused of taking the wallet of a man Thanksgiving Day as he walked through a parking lot on Union Street. However, the victim couldn't remember anything that was in the police report, so the case was dropped due to insufficient evidence.

- Felix Vasquez Morales, 32, of 124-B Ford St., Watsonville, was given credit for time served in jail, placed on two years' probation and ordered to undergo family counseling for misdemeanor battery.

On Sept. 16, Morales was arrested and accused of felony assault and child endangerment after his ex-girlfriend told police he knocked her to the ground with a punch to the face and took her baby from her arms as she was leaving Tropicana Foods just after midnight.

- Felony assault charges were dismissed against Margarito Ruiz Corona, 37, of 128 Grove St., Wat-

sonville. The charges stemmed from a July 21 incident.

- Charges of robbery and battery were dismissed against Richard James Martinez, 32, of 117 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville. The victim in the case could not be located.