

# EXPLOSION /

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great majority of the verdict went for Andrew."

The jury assigned 23 percent of fault to Ruth Aretz, the owner of the house that blew up, and 19 percent of fault to H.H. Gregg Appliances and Electronics Inc.

Indiana Gas had blamed Aretz for allowing a gas line to be installed in the house that did not meet building codes and for failing to point out the existence of the hidden, uncapped gas line to the Brogans before they started moving in.

According to testimony, four months before the explosion, an H.H. Gregg delivery man installing an electric washer and dryer for a previous tenant pushed the uncapped gas line through a hole in the wall, hiding it from view.

Aretz settled out of court for \$325,000 before the trial started. H.H. Gregg reached a confidential out-of-court settlement two days into the trial.

Jury foreman Stephen Cirelli said it was difficult for jurors to determine both the share of fault of the negligent parties and the amount of damages.

"On all parties, I think there were some gaps in what happened, where it could have been done better," Cirelli said.

As for damages, he said, "We based that on potential future earning power" of Stephanie Ramirez Brogan, who was in the final stages of being hired by the U.S. Postal Service at the time of her death.

Jurors decided on \$1.75 million as the value of Andrew's loss of love and affection from his mother.

"How can you put a price on love?" juror Bonnie Wilkerson said.

The jury assigned only \$50,000 in damages to Scott Brogan, based on testimony that he and Stephanie had a dysfunctional and sometimes violent relationship.

"I think it was based on the testimony of the witnesses," Cirelli said.

## 2001-08-01 Millions for explosion -Part 2



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