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\$2 Million Award for Scuffle at Club

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A San Francisco jury has awarded more than \$2 million to a couple attending a New Year's bash at Harry Denton's Bar & Grill after the wife was doused with a glass of water by Denton and her husband was jumped on when he tried to come to her rescue.

Grace and Peter Leeson of San Luis Obispo had sued Denton and the partnership that owned the nightspot, claiming that a drunken Denton had thrown a glass of cold water on her sequined black gown on New Year's Eve in 1993 -- for no reason.

When Denton refused to apologize, Peter Leeson became upset and threw a chair. He was immediately wrestled to the ground and piled on by at least six security people. His lawyers say he suffered back and shoulder injuries from the scuffle.

After a two-week trial, the jury last Monday awarded Peter Leeson \$1.9 million for the assault. Grace Leeson was awarded \$6,500 for getting water thrown on her strapless gown as well as \$30,000 for the emotional trauma of seeing her husband attacked. On Friday the jury awarded Grace Leeson another \$141,000 in punitive damages.

The Leesons' attorney, R. Scott Erlewine, said it was a fair verdict given what the couple went through. He said the jury seemed concerned that the employees who piled on Leeson had been drinking that night.

The lawyer said the owners of the establishment, a limited partnership known as Stuart Street Venture, were negligent in running the establishment. ``Harry Denton had a drinking problem, and the establishment knew about it," Erlewine said.

Harry Denton and the lawyer for the owners did not return phone calls.

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