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EXONERATION

Man finally free after 12 years behind bars



John Michael Harvey speaks to his attorney on a borrowed cellphone after being released from the Tarrant County Jail. STAR-TELEGRAM/NOEL ENNIS

Release closes case that began in 1989

■ A Bedford man walks free after a rare court ruling of "actual innocence."

By **MAX B. BAKER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — John Michael Harvey stepped from the Tarrant County Jail a free man Friday after professing his innocence for 12 years from behind bars.

The Bedford man — convicted in

1992 of molesting a young girl — was released with all of his worldly possessions stuffed into two sacks.

He didn't have any money. Because his mother and father died while he was in prison and with his fiancée long gone, no one was there to pick him up.

But Harvey, 40, said he knew his long nightmare was finally over.

"It is frightening that you can be falsely accused and just get out by the skin of your teeth," he said while walk-

ing down the street.

Harvey's release came two days after the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that he had been wrongfully convicted. The court's rare finding of "actual innocence" came after his accuser recanted her testimony.

State District Judge Sharen Wilson expedited Harvey's transfer by asking the sheriff's department to pick him up

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