

No damages awarded in PCB trial

By **CHERY SABOL**
The Daily Inter Lake

After nearly three weeks of testimony, it took a jury only three hours to decide no damages are due in a case of alleged PCB contamination.

Brent and Marsha Thompson and their grown son, Ian, sued five businesses over an April 27, 1995, incident in Flathead and Lake counties.

They alleged that they were hurt and will suffer ongoing

injuries from contact with a substance leaking from electrical bushings towed on a vehicle in front of theirs.

The family was driving from Whitefish to Phoenix when they noticed fluid splashing back on their van, behind a tractor-trailer truck, southwest of Somers to Polson.

Defendants were The Ryan Co. Inc.; GMT Consultants Inc., doing business as Shannon Environmental Services and Shannon Environmental Consulting; Burlington Envi-

ronmental Inc.; Resources Recovery Corp., and Philip Services Inc.

The trial lasted for two and a half weeks in the court of District Judge Ted Lympus.

"It was just fascinating," Lympus said.

Testimony included a number of experts on neuropsychology and chemistry. They came from Huntsville, Ala., California, New Jersey and the University of Montana.

The family tried to show that PCBs — chemicals con-

tained in the fluid that hit their vehicle — caused lasting injuries, such as headaches, reduced immune systems, respiratory and pulmonary impairment, personality changes, loss of memory, inability to concentrate and loss of mental skills, and serious emotional illness.

The defendants argued that the family's symptoms are pre-existing conditions or are caused by their family environment or other stresses.

"These jurors were really

attentive," Lympus said. Some filled nearly three notebooks with notes they took during testimony.

But it took only three hours Thursday for them to decide the defendants caused no injuries, psychological or mental distress.

At least eight of the 12 jurors had to agree on the verdict.

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