Two jurors who acquitted former Newton driver's education teacher Norman Swerling of rape and sexual assault this week said yesterday that it took the jury just 20 minutes to rule out the rape charge, because they thought his teenage accuser was lying.

"We wanted to believe her," said one juror, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "We didn't want to believe a young girl would just lie and destroy someone's life. Boy, did we look, but we couldn't find anything."

Jurors said the accuser gave different accounts to the grand jury, to friends, and at trial of how Swerling, 57, of Wellesley, allegedly sexually assaulted her and forced her to perform oral sex while he was giving her driving lessons in 2003. She was 16 at the time.

Swerling, who taught driver's education at Newton North and Newton South high schools from 1972 until he was placed on leave in January 2004, was acquitted of eight charges Monday after the jury deliberated for 4 1/2 hours.

The jurors pointed to what they said were several inconsistencies in the girl's story. For example, they said, the accuser, now an 18-year-old college student, told jurors that Swerling rubbed her inner thigh at one point. But a witness said she saw Swerling touch the accuser matter-of-factly on the knee.

The Globe does not identify victims or alleged victims of sexual assault.

The accuser also testified, they said, that when Swerling took her to the Watertown Registry of Motor Vehicles it was empty, while witnesses maintained that it was packed.

"It was a case of 'he said, she said,' and you know she blew her own credibility about not telling the truth about a couple of things," the juror said. "There just wasn't enough information to destroy a man's life based on inconsistent stories."

A woman who answered the phone at the accuser's family's house yesterday but would not identify herself said the family is "not interested in talking to any papers or media."

Middlesex District Attorney Martha Coakley declined to comment yesterday.

The juror and a second juror, Kathy Banks, both said the jury took note that the accuser was laughing and giggling on the witness stand.

They acknowledged that it could have been a nervous reaction, but they said they were turned off when she was laughing while prosecutor Mark Walter questioned her.

Both jurors said several members were not completely convinced that Swerling had done nothing
Inappropriate, but they weren’t sure beyond a reasonable doubt that he had committed a crime.

Banks and the other juror agreed that the accuser, an attractive and self-described confident woman, probably didn’t like being told what to do by an older teacher who took a hard line with her when he discovered she wasn’t practicing her driving at home.

"I think she just wanted to get back at him," Banks said. "But it just went too far, and she started making things up."

A third juror said yesterday that he believed that the accuser deliberately set out to ruin Swerling’s life because he had publicly reprimanded her for not practicing her driving and talking to friends in class.

"This girl was out to get him, and she tried everything she could to do it," said the juror, a 69-year-old Acton man who asked not to be named.

Swerling said this week that he wanted to return to Newton to teach