

BRO SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2001 The Herald 3B

Merchant wins fire lawsuit against landlord

Leon Winikor, owner of a downtown Miami shoe store ruined by fire in 1998, has won a \$1.3 million damage award in a negligence suit against his former landlord.

Winikor accused Guillermo Sostchin of failing to cover up a hole for an air-conditioning unit in a vacant storefront of his 1920s-era building in the 200 block of Northeast First Avenue.

On March 24, 1998, someone threw a Molotov-cocktail fire bomb through the hole, destroying six businesses — including Winikor's King Shoes.

After a weeklong trial, a Miami-Dade Circuit Court jury on Thursday found the landlord negligent and ordered him to pay Winikor for the loss of his inventory and profits through the end of his lease in July 2004.

Daren and Todd Stabinski, who represented Winikor, said this was the first of six lawsuits pending against the landlord. Sostchin converted the property to a parking lot.