

WINKELMAN v. WINKELMAN was a 1969 Michigan Court of Appeals decision. Although this divorcing couple did not have children, the memorialization of events and attitudes found in this scenario are educational and informative for those not thoroughly familiar with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Verner Winkelman and Helen Winkelman were married in January, 1948, and separated in January 1966, when Helen Winkelman moved to Florida, to live with her mother. Parties were 58 and 59 years of age, respectively, and there were no children of this marriage. In 1968, Verner Winkelman sued Helen Winkelman for absolute divorce. Divorce was granted, but Helen Winkelman appealed.

At trial, Verner Winkelman testified that after Helen Winkelman joined the Jehovah's Witnesses, she became unbearable to live with. There was excessive criticism and accusations. Helen called Verner dumb and lazy, and she repeatedly stated that she hated him - sometimes in front of other people. In Fall 1965, Helen threw a sugar bowl at Verner. Helen Winkelman's conduct and the false accusations brought on Verner's ulcers and ill health. In January 1966, she left the marital home in Michigan to live with her mother in Florida.

Interestingly, at trial, Helen Winkelman denied all the allegations, except for one occasion when she stated she hated Verner in front of a third party, who testified to such.

In granting Verner Winkelman's petition, the trial court stated: "After sizing up the parties, the plaintiff is a rather subdued quiet type, and the defendant a forceful aggressive personality; the court is inclined to hold that the situation exceeds that of normal marital bickering, and that the plaintiff had made out a case justifying a judgment for absolute divorce.

The appellate court affirmed the trial court's decision, stating: "We find nothing in the record which would allow us to discount the plaintiff's credibility or the trial court's reliance thereon."