

Singer James Brown Receives 6-Year Sentence in Car Chase

AIKEN, S.C., Dec. 15 (AP) — The soul singer James Brown was sentenced to six years in prison today for failing to stop for the police in a two-state automobile chase.

But he was acquitted of assault with intent to kill.

Mr. Brown's lawyer, Bill Weeks, had argued that the prospect of arresting a celebrity caused the police to overreact in their pursuit of Mr. Brown.

But the prosecutor, Robert Harte, said Mr. Brown admitted that he failed to obey a police officer's command to pull over.

An Aiken County jury deliberated more than three hours before finding Mr. Brown guilty of two counts of aggravated assault and of eluding the police.

Childhood Difficulties Recalled

Considered one of the most influential shapers of contemporary popular music, Mr. Brown is best known for such songs as "It's a Man's World" and "I Feel Good."

Mr. Brown, who lives in Beech Island, situated about five miles from Augusta, Ga., initially was charged with two counts of assault with intent to kill and one count of failure to stop. He could have faced up to 30 years in prison if convicted on all three charges.

Judge Hubert Long sentenced Mr. Brown to six years in prison for failing to stop for the police. For the two assault charges, Mr. Brown was given the option of six months in prison or a \$6,000 fine and five years probation.

Mr. Brown, who is 55 years old, did not say what his choice would be. But before he was sentenced, he told the judge about the difficulties of his early life.

"The only thing that held me together was when I looked at the flag,

and that represented a chance," said Mr. Brown, who was holding a small Bible. "I respect police. Without them we have nothing."

Mr. Brown pleaded innocent Monday. He was arrested Sept. 24 after a high-speed chase through Augusta and North Augusta, S.C.

Says He Feared for His Life

Mr. Brown testified Wednesday that he did not stop because he feared for his life.

"I was scared to death," Mr. Brown said. "I went to Vietnam and I wasn't that frightened."

Police Officer Ronnie Delaughter said the police tried to pull Mr. Brown over after they received a tip he was carrying a gun and acting dangerously. Officer Delaughter said the pursuit involved from 10 to 14 vehicles and reached speeds of 60 to 85 miles per hour.

Officer Delaughter testified that when officers appeared to have surrounded Mr. Brown in a parking lot, he put the car in reverse to evade them. He said several officers shot out the tires on Mr. Brown's pickup as it drove toward them.

Mr. Weeks said the North Augusta officers drew their weapons too soon and endangered Mr. Brown and other members of the public because of the prospect of arresting a celebrity.

"This is North Augusta's version of 'Miami Vice,' coming in with their guns drawn," Mr. Weeks said.

But Mr. Harte told the jury Mr. Brown had broken the law well before the incident in the parking lot.

"He's guilty" of not stopping, Mr. Harte said, "and he apologized. But an apology doesn't make him not guilty. Being scared isn't a defense to a crime."