

Nichols' ex-wife testifies on letter to McVeigh

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Author: Nolan Clay | Page: 1A | Section: NEWS

McALESTER — Jurors at Terry Nichols' state murder trial learned Tuesday he once wrote "Go For IT!!" in a letter meant for bomber Timothy McVeigh.

His ex-wife, Lana Padilla, wept at times Tuesday as she testified about two letters Nichols left with her on Nov. 22, 1994, before leaving on a trip to the Philippines.

Nichols took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes once as she cried.

Nichols had left the letters — one to Padilla, the other to McVeigh — in a package with instructions not to open it unless he wasn't back by Jan. 25, 1995.

Padilla, a Las Vegas real estate broker and insurance agent, said she actually opened the package a day after taking Nichols to the airport. She said she worried he was suicidal. She said she made copies of the letters.

"I was very upset for many, many, many weeks," she said. "I was trying to figure them out."

The letter to McVeigh is considered by prosecutors to be key evidence that the two were partners in the plot to blow up the Oklahoma City federal building.

In the letter, Nichols uses abbreviations to tell McVeigh to clean out two Kansas storage lockers rented in fake names.

"Your (sic) On Your Own. Go For IT!!" Nichols also wrote. "As Far As Heat — None That I Know, This Letter Would Be For The Purpose of My Death."

Padilla told jurors Tuesday she discovered from the letter to her that Nichols had hidden \$20,000 in her kitchen, behind a utensil drawer. She said she kept \$3,000 for child support for their son, Josh, despite his complaints he could make her life miserable.

She also said she went through Nichols' storage locker in Las Vegas because of the letter. Inside, she saw coins, jade, gold, silver, a wig, a ski mask, makeup and pantyhose. She said Nichols had valued the property at \$38,000.

Prosecutors contend the testimony supports their allegation Nichols robbed an Arkansas gun collector to finance the bombing. Padilla said Nichols once told her, after his arrest, that he had the wig and makeup to scare Marife Nichols, then his wife.

"He's a practical joker," Padilla said.

Padilla claimed again Tuesday to have trouble remembering events. At a preliminary hearing last year, a judge had found Padilla then was being purposely evasive.

"It's been a long time," she said.

Padilla had the hardest time Tuesday testifying about a phone conversation with Nichols on Nov. 6, 1994, after their son had talked of running away. Lead prosecutor Sandra Elliott had to remind the witness repeatedly about her previous statements.

Padilla eventually agreed that Nichols spent most of the conversation complaining about the government's conflict with the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas. Dozens in the religious group's compound died in a 1993 fire during an FBI raid.

Padilla testified Nichols said the government had been unjust and killed innocent people. She said he predicted that people would begin killing off each other.

"He was agitated," Padilla said.

Also Tuesday, an FBI specialist admitted under defense questioning that more than 1,000 fingerprints in the bombing case remain unidentified.

The expert, Louis Hupp, said the fingerprints never have been run through a crime computer, even though the computer is much faster than in 1995.

Caption:
Lana Padilla

Former wife of Oklahoma City bombing defendant Terry Nichols.