

Nichols jury told of visitor - Motel owner says man looked for McVeigh

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McALESTER - Jurors at Terry Nichols' state murder trial heard Thursday from the first defense witnesses, including a motel owner who testified for the first time about "a young man" looking for bomber Timothy McVeigh.

Testimony began after Judge Steven Taylor replaced a juror who suffered a possible heart attack. The change leaves Nichols with a jury of six men, six women and two alternates.

The ill juror, Robert Dale McCoy, was treated before dawn Thursday in the emergency room of the McAlester Regional Health Center. The judge told other jurors McCoy will need more hospital care, but has a "very good" chance of recovery.

The judge had McCoy's notes shredded and ordered news reporters not to contact him until after the trial.

The surprise testimony came from Lea McGown, owner of the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, Kan. She has spoken before - at Nichols' federal trial - about McVeigh's stay in Room 25 in the days before the April 19, 1995, attack on the Oklahoma City federal building.

Thursday, she added new details. She told jurors McVeigh asked her as he checked in April 14, 1995, to tell anyone looking for him that he had gone to get a haircut at Gracie's, a beauty shop.

She said later a young man "came by," asking either for McVeigh or the guest in Room 25. She said the man - age 25 to 30 - walked up to the motel from the interstate. She said she gave the man directions to Gracie's.

She also repeated her claims of hearing McVeigh and one or two other men talking in the room just before midnight April 15 or 16, 1995. She described one speaker as having a velvety, deep, self-assured voice.

And, she said she saw McVeigh with two Ryder trucks, one April 16, 1995, and the other April 18, 1995.

Nichols contends McVeigh had help from others, not him.

Jurors already have learned McVeigh rented the Ryder truck used in the attack from Elliott's Body Shop in Junction City on April 17, 1995. But defense attorneys contend there is evidence another Ryder truck was used in the plot.

Jurors Thursday also heard from Jeff Davis, who delivered moo goo gai pan and egg rolls to McVeigh's room April 15, 1995. He said the guest was not McVeigh.

He explained how he remembered the delivery, one of 17 that night. "It was late. I got a tip. That was highly unusual."

However, Davis admitted under prosecution questioning that he told FBI agents he had a hard time recalling faces because he made so many deliveries.

The first defense witness Thursday was FBI forensic artist Raymond Rozycki, who did the drawings of John Doe No. 1 and John Doe No. 2 from the descriptions of an auto mechanic at Elliott's Body Shop.

Rozycki told jurors how he created the sketches, released worldwide, after spending four hours with auto mechanic Tom Kessinger.

FBI agents used the first sketch, of John Doe No. 1, to identify McVeigh as the customer who had rented the bomb truck. They searched for weeks before deciding John Doe No. 2 did not exist.

Kessinger later decided he had remembered an innocent Army private when he described John Doe No. 2. The private had helped a friend rent a truck a different day.

Prosecutor Lou Keel asked the FBI sketch artist if he was aware Kessinger had changed his opinion. The judge, however, refused to let Rozycki answer, after the defense objected to the question.

Also Thursday, defense attorneys disclosed they plan to have an expert examine unidentified fingerprints from McVeigh's getaway car and his room at the Dreamland Motel. They want their expert to try to match them with fingerprints of a gang of bank robbers.

The judge barred defense attorneys from blaming the bombing on the bank robbers. Attorneys will ask him to reconsider the ruling if their expert finds a match.

McVeigh was executed in June 2001 after being convicted at a federal trial of the bombing.

Nichols, 49, was convicted at his federal trial of the bombing conspiracy and the involuntary manslaughter of eight federal agents. Nichols' state case is focusing on the 160 other fatalities plus the loss of an unborn girl.

Defense attorneys plan to put on about 200 witnesses over the next three weeks.