

Witness describes McVeigh request - Testimony in Nichols' defense focuses on events in Arizona

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McALESTER - A defense witness testified Tuesday that bomber Timothy McVeigh "asked if I'd be willing to drive him somewhere" for \$300 or \$400.

"He never said exactly how long or where we were going to go," James Rosencrans told jurors at Terry Nichols' state murder trial.

Rosencrans, of Kingman, Ariz., was among the most colorful of the 82 defense witnesses called so far.

He said he was being forced to testify, couldn't remember half of what happened and had used methamphetamine and marijuana a lot in 1995. He wore to court a black T-shirt and blue jeans with holes.

He testified he said "put up or shut up" when McVeigh complained something should be done about the government. "I told him it would take a lot more than just him."

He was called as part of a defense effort to show McVeigh recruited others to join in the Oklahoma City bomb plot. Nichols, 49, contends McVeigh had help from others, not him.

Rosencrans testified McVeigh talked of a drive of up to 15 hours. He said McVeigh wanted to sleep, be dropped off and have the car left at an airport or bus station. Rosencrans refused.

Rosencrans is the former neighbor of Michael Fortier, the star prosecution witness. Defense attorneys implied Fortier may have been more involved.

Fortier testified in April that he knew of McVeigh's plans but refused to help and didn't think his friend would go through with the attack. Fortier was home in Kingman, Ariz., when the fertilizer bomb exploded April 19, 1995.

Rosencrans said McVeigh and Fortier went into the desert with guns and backpacks for days. He said he hid a bag of pipe bombs before the attack at Fortier's request. He said he got rid of two bags of ammonium nitrate fertilizer as a favor for Fortier after the bombing.

He also described a paranoid darker-skinned man who showed up at Fortier's trailer home after the bombing. He said he told the visitor Fortier was not there.

"He was scared, whoever he was," Rosencrans said.

The defense implied the visitor could have been suspect John Doe No. 2. Prosecutors suggested the man was a news reporter.

Most of Tuesday's defense testimony focused on the supposed robbery of gun collector Roger Moore.

Prosecutors allege Nichols robbed Moore at his rural home near Royal, Ark., on Nov. 5, 1994, to pay for the bombing. FBI agents later found some of Moore's guns in Nichols' Kansas home.

Moore's neighbors thought he was faking. Moore walked to his neighbors to use their phone.

"He didn't act like it was a real thing," Walt Powell said.

Moore's insurance agents testified he blamed federal agents for the robbery.

"He repeatedly said it was a professional hit and that the feds did it," insurance agent Dana Priddy said.

Jurors Tuesday also heard more about McVeigh's telephone call on April 5, 1995, to Elohim City, a religious community in southeastern Oklahoma.

Joan Millar, daughter-in-law of Elohim City's founder, said McVeigh asked to visit. She said he explained he once met an Elohim City resident with a broad foreign accent at a gun show.

Jurors were told McVeigh apparently had met Andreas Strassmeir of Germany. He was then an Elohim City security guard.