

Davin testifies in first day of trial for courthouse attacks



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Steven D. Kravetz, right, covers his face, as his defense attorney, David Arcuri, listens to potential jurors answer questions posed by Chief Deputy Prosecutor Gerald Fuller during jury selection at the Lewis County Law and Justice Center in Chehalis on Tuesday, March 26.



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Grays Harbor County prosecutor Chief Deputy Prosecutor Gerald Fuller works through jury selection for Steven D. Kravetz's trial at the Lewis County Law and Justice Center on Tuesday, March 26 in Chehalis.

By Brionna Friedrich

CHEHALIS — Harrowing first-person accounts of the day Steven Kravetz allegedly shot Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Deputy Polly Davin and stabbed Superior Court Judge David Edwards kicked off the first day of the trial over last year's courthouse attacks on Tuesday in Chehalis. Davin herself began to tell her story at the end of the day.

"The wonder in this case is no one died," Grays Harbor County Prosecutor Stew Menefee said in his opening argument.

When Davin was shot, the bullet missed all major blood vessels and nerves.

"Judge Edwards' puncture wound was just a fraction of an inch from the major blood vessels and nerve plexus in the back of the neck," he added.

Kravetz, 35, of McCleary, is charged with attempted second-degree murder, assault and disarming a law enforcement officer during an altercation at the Grays Harbor County Courthouse on March 9, 2012. Much of Tuesday was spent selecting a panel of Lewis County jurors at the Lewis County Law and Justice Center in Chehalis. The venue for the trial was changed largely because the case surrounds the Courthouse in Montesano.

Menefee outlined the history of the case, Kravetz's growing paranoia surrounding law enforcement and research about individuals working at the courthouse, the Sheriff's Office, his attorney and Mark Reed Hospital staff, where he was examined after a domestic disturbance in 2005.

Kravetz's attorney, David Arcuri, made a short opening statement and didn't offer any cross examination on the first day. As he explained to jurors, the burden of establishing exactly what Kravetz's intent was when he shot Davin was on Menefee. That's the difference, in a nutshell, between assault and attempted murder.

"A lot of the things you're going to hear in this trial are going to be unobjected. There's going to be a slew of testimony basically outlining the story laid out for you by Mr. Menefee. Those are the facts. But beyond the facts are the issues laid out to you," Arcuri said.

"We're going to talk more about intent, because that's what they're going to have to prove to you. That when Steven fired that gun, he intended to kill Deputy Davin ... and when he had that knife he intended to cause great bodily harm," he added.

Something odd

District Court Assistant Administrator Jackie Watkinson was the first to notice something odd about Kravetz as he loitered outside the County Clerk's office on that day.

"When I walked past him, he would turn into the wall, like he didn't want to be seen," she testified.

About 15 minutes later, as she was about to leave for lunch, he was still there.

"As I walked by him, he turned into the wall by the water fountain, like again he didn't want to be seen," Watkinson said.

She ran into Superior Court Assistant Administrator Rita Zastrow near the stairs, and asked if she recognized the man. She didn't, and Watkinson decided to notify police.

"He made me nervous. He wouldn't look at me, he was just hanging out there," she said.

As people came out of the Clerk's office, "he would duck behind the wall."

Watkinson walked over to the Sheriff's Office, near the courthouse, and Davin answered the call to the squad room.

"I called dispatch, let them know I was headed in that direction, then I responded," she said. "When I entered, I didn't see anybody on the floor at all."

Davin walked up the back staircase to the second floor, then spotted Kravetz on the first floor near the landing for the other set of stairs.

Davin testified she made contact with Kravetz, who gave the name Michael Thomas, and asked why he was lingering in the building.

"Did this person act in a threatening manner at that time?" Menefee asked.

"No," Davin said.

She came down the stairs to keep talking with Kravetz, keeping a few feet between them. He said he was there to meet his attorney, but didn't give any other details. By that time, the building was mostly empty for the lunch hour, and Davin asked Kravetz to continue talking outside. She touched his elbow to guide him to the door.

"As I started to reach for his elbow, that's when he turned and attacked me," Davin said.

'I'm really in trouble'

Davin said Kravetz grabbed her around the neck, holding rather than choking. They struggled while Davin tried to simultaneously protect her gun and reach for her radio to call for help.

"I can tell you what it seemed like, in reality it was probably 5, 10 seconds," Davin said. "(Then) I felt him get a surge of energy, is what it felt like to me, and he threw me on the ground."

Other witnesses said Kravetz struck her repeatedly as he stood over her, but Davin said she didn't remember things that clearly.

"The only thing that I remember is flailing. As far as putting together exactly what was happening, I can't tell you out of my own memory," she said. "I remember the feeling of being attacked, and thinking, 'Now I'm really in trouble.' "

Davin testified the attack was a complete surprise, "because my initial contact with him — you kind of get an impression whether people are fighters or not fighters. My impression of him was that if he had a problem with me he was going to run out the front door, not turn and attack me."

She said she didn't remember being stabbed, but she had cuts on her face and throat that required stitches. A 3-inch buck knife was later recovered by police and determined to be the weapon Kravetz used at the courthouse.

At that point, Edwards came running down the stairs and grabbed Kravetz's arm. The two began to struggle.

"I could see stabbing motions, and they were going wildly into (Edwards') back," Davin said. Still on the ground, she drew her gun.

"I pointed it in their direction, and I said 'Stop.' I did that with the hopes of distracting him from what he was doing to the judge," Davin said.

"What happened?" Menefee asked her.

"He stopped stabbing the judge. He came tightly around the judge, and he very quickly grabbed a hold of my gun," she replied.

Again, he stood over her, this time pointing her own gun at her chest.

Two shots

“He was very close. He wasn’t between my legs, but he was very close. Spatially it’s hard to say, but he was within kicking distance,” Davin said.

“Were you kicking something then?” Menefee asked.

“When he came up over me, my survival instincts — that was the only way I could think of at that time to save my life. So I was kicking him,” she recalled. “I couldn’t get a good kick to kick him in the knee in any way to disable him, but I was kicking at his legs.”

Kravetz’s aim seemed to be shifting from her chest to her face, Davin said, but “as I kicked, I could tell, getting a little more wobbly.”

Then, in quick succession, two shots came from her .45-caliber Glock.

“At the time you heard the shot, what did you think?” Menefee asked.

“I know when he was pointing the gun before he shot that I was about to die,” Davin said.

Instead, one bullet tore through the muscle in her arm, somehow missing bone, major arteries and nerves.

After the second shot, she said. “He looked around, and a few seconds later he just walked out the front door. It was kind of a hurried walk.”

When Kravetz was gone, Davin set herself up by the door with the only weapon she had left: her Taser. She still hadn’t gotten off the ground. “I wanted to protect myself and others if he came back. I laid there for a time on the floor with my Taser out, waiting for him to come back,” she said.

Zastrow called to her from the third floor, where she had set up chairs for Davin and Edwards.

‘He has my weapon’

Sheriff’s Office Support Specialist Chris Smith came running up the steps to help seconds later. She had sent Davin over to talk to the suspicious person, and came running to the courthouse as soon as someone told her there had been a shooting. That person initially thought the victim was dead, based on the range of the shot.

“Immediately when I walked in the door, the odor of gunpowder hit me, so I knew a shooting had occurred,” Smith said.

When she went to the stairs, she saw “a pool of blood, and spatter on the wall.” She followed the trail up the stairs to find Davin.

“She said, ‘If I go out, tell them the person said his name was Michael Thomas, and that he has my weapon,’ ” Smith said.

The rest of Davin’s testimony was postponed for today, and Edwards is also expected to testify. The trial will likely last at least through the end of this week.

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