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Suspect in courthouse attacks sketched floorplan, noted routines



Steven Kravetz, right, confers with his attorney, David Arcuri, during the first day of his trial in Chehalis

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The Daily World

CHEHALIS — Before the courthouse attacks in Montesano on March 9, 2012, the man accused of shooting a deputy and stabbing a judge made at least one prior visit to the building, apparently noting the comings and goings of employees and sketching a crude map of the facility.

On the second day of the trial of Steven D. Kravetz, more details emerged on the attack itself from three people who jumped into action to help Grays Harbor Sheriff's Deputy Polly Davin, as well as research Kravetz appeared to have done on another deputy and Mark Reed Hospital staff.

Kravetz, 35, is now standing trial on charges of attempted second-degree murder, assault and disarming a law enforcement officer, but he apparently began research long before that on the building and various county employees.

Scouting and research

After his arrest following the attacks, a folder labeled "Master plan" was found in his home, containing photos of another deputy who had arrested him in a separate case, along with the deputy's home address.

Although Chief Deputy Prosecutor Gerald Fuller agreed not to submit the list itself into evidence in response to an objection from Kravetz's attorney, David Arcuri, the folder apparently also contained a list of names of staff at Mark Reed Hospital in McCleary, where he was taken after a domestic disturbance in 2005.

Clothing matching what witnesses said he had worn to the courthouse that day were recovered as well, along with Davin's service weapon and the knife Kravetz is accused of using to attack Davin and Superior Court Judge David Edwards.

Police also found a crumpled paper, a self-guided tour of the historic courthouse available to visitors, with a pencil sketch of the floor plan visible on the back.

On Feb. 3, Corrections Officer Steve Youmans was called to the courthouse in response to a call that a man was acting suspiciously. He testified he saw Kravetz standing near the main entrance to the building, looking up at people on the second floor, glancing at his watch and writing notes.

On this occasion, however, there was no altercation.

"He made eye contact with me, obviously wanted nothing to do with me, went right out the main door, down the walkway and onto the sidewalk," Youmans said.

He said he watched Kravetz on the sidewalk for several more minutes, looking up at the second floor through the windows and continuing to look at his watch and make notes. When Youmans walked outside to try to talk with him again, Kravetz again walked away.

Youmans waited a few minutes in front of the County Administration building, in a spot not easily spotted from where Kravetz had stood before, and a few minutes later, Kravetz returned. Again, he watched the second floor and made notes.

When Youmans tried to circle around and get close enough to contact him, he testified Kravetz spotted him and left, this time for good.

March 9

When Kravetz returned to the courthouse, taking a bus from Olympia near the home he shares with his mother, he again drew attention.

"He was standing close to the wall with his head down, with his head at an angle, and he was scanning," said Superior Court Assistant Administrator Rita Zastrow, demonstrating a slightly bird-like look out of the corner of her eye.

She asked Judge Edwards to walk by the man and take a look, but when they neared the stairs, they heard sounds of a struggle. They saw what they would later identify as Kravetz repeatedly hitting Davin with overhand strikes.

Zastrow recalled screaming at the man to stop, and Edwards running down the stairs. By that time, they could see Kravetz had a knife.

"I heard (Edwards) make a noise, and I thought that was peculiar, but I realized it was a noise that he had decided what he was going to do. And he charged the assailant and he hit him, a body hit on him," Zastrow said.

She said Kravetz was knocked toward the door.

"The assailant was extremely angry when he did that," she said.

"How could you tell?" Prosecutor Stew Menefee asked.

"His face. He was very mad. Very mad," Zastrow said.

"The first couple times he tried to stab me, I blocked the blow and kept trying to knock him backward," Edwards testified. "At some point he grabbed my shirt and restrained me, and he stabbed me in the back of the neck."

When Davin aimed her gun and told Kravetz to stop, Edwards said Kravetz darted around him and grabbed Davin's pistol.

"In an instant he had the gun and in a single motion of pulling the gun away from her, he turned it on her," Edwards said.

"I didn't do anything, because Linda jumped right in there and started wrestling with the assailant," Zastrow said. "I sat down, because I knew that the deputy was dying. I sat down with her, because there wasn't anything I could do."

District Court Clerk Linda Foster had seen the judge knocked away and the deputy in trouble, and ran down the stairs to help, staying on her cell phone with emergency dispatchers.

It was only when she grabbed Kravetz's arm she saw the gun.

"I realized he was way too strong for me to help, and all I could think was I needed to get out to get more help to help the officer," she said.

As the shots rang out, Foster ran for the back door toward the Sheriff's Office.

"I was frozen," Zastrow said. "I saw the bullet hit (Davin), I saw smoke on her jacket. I saw the fibers and the matter go up into the air. Judge Edwards yelled, 'Get out of here' after the second shot. We turned around and just started crawling for our lives."

"What could you see at the bottom of the stairs?" Menefee asked.

"Polly was dead," she said.

"Could you see anyone down there?"

"Yes, the assailant was walking out the doors. Calmly."

Edwards also thought Davin had been killed.

"It went from an attack with a knife to what appeared to me to be an execution," he said.

When they saw Davin start to move, Zastrow started back down the stairs. Neither she nor Edwards was seriously hurt.

Olympia arrest

Before his mother, Roberta Dougherty, took the stand, Kravetz asked to be removed from the courtroom, despite advice from the judge and his attorney.

"He just tells me it would be uncomfortable for him," Arcuri said. "He is adamant he does not want to be present."

Dougherty testified for the state in response to a subpoena.

"I'm just really, really, really afraid of letting him walk out of this courtroom right now and later finding out we shouldn't have done that," Fuller said, citing possible complaints about Kravetz's due process rights and issues that could be raised on appeal should Kravetz be convicted.

"He's not going to suffer any prejudice by being allowed, or being told he needs to remain in the courtroom," Fuller added.

Lewis County Superior Court Judge Richard Brosey said he understood Kravetz's feelings, but said he didn't want to open a door to an argument of issues with the trial later on.

"I think the easiest solution is to deny the request from Mr. Kravetz not to be present, and if he doesn't want to listen to his mother, he doesn't have to listen to his mother," Brosey said.

Dougherty testified she picked her son up from Montesano at the office of Robert Earhart, his former attorney, at about 3 p.m. March 9. She said they didn't talk much, but she thought he may have been looking into hiring an attorney to deal with an outstanding warrant. When they got home, she went to bed, feeling ill.

On her way to the store the next morning, Dougherty said she heard on the radio that police were looking for her and her son.

"I immediately became a little bit upset and shocked and pulled over" to call 911 she said.

Dougherty told police where to find her son and gave permission to search the home.

She said Kravetz had lived with her most of his life, and on Arcuri's cross examination, acknowledged some of her son's social difficulties.

"He's not had a regular job, he's just had a few jobs where he's worked for friends of mine, given him a few jobs through the church," Dougherty said.

"Who's his best friend," Arcuri asked.

"I would say it's me," she said.

"Other than you?"

"There are a couple people at the church that might be friends, but he doesn't have a lot of friends."

"When's the last time to your knowledge he's socialized with somebody — he's 35 — he associated with somebody his age."

"I can't say that it's ever happened."

Menefee objected when the questions turned to issues of germaphobia and high school problems. Brosey agreed, and Arcuri may call Dougherty as a defense witness later in the trial