

## Ruiz's lawyers propose changes to jury questions

By Kristin M. Kraemer, Herald staff writer

PASCO -- The second suspect in the 1987 Pasco auto body shop massacre will again face a jury Monday, 19 months after a mistrial was first declared in his case.

Lawyers for Vicente Ruiz on Thursday proposed several changes to the original questionnaire that will again be given to potential jurors.

Additions to the form -- which is used by attorneys in the jury selection process -- covered everything from a jury candidate's experience with loading guns and any affiliations with pro-gun organizations to questions about security clearances and what medium they turn to for Tri-City news.

Ruiz, 44, is charged in Franklin County Superior Court with five counts of aggravated first-degree murder and one count of attempted first-degree murder.

Kevin Holt, one of Ruiz's three lawyers, wanted to ask if jurors "personally feel" they or someone they're close to may be the victim of a violent crime in the future.

Deputy Prosecutor Frank Jenny argued that it would be playing into most people's fears. "How can anyone possibly answer, 'No,' to that?" he said.

Judge Cameron Mitchell ruled that it's likely everyone responds, "Yes," and said no matter the response, it wouldn't be really constructive.

Jenny added that prosecutors "want to keep the questionnaire as simple as possible."

Jury summonses were sent out to 1,000 people for the trial, which is expected to last at least four to six weeks. Just over 200 people on that list reportedly are qualified and are scheduled to be in court Monday morning.

The court hopes to start taking witness testimony the week of April 26.

On Thursday, when talking about a statement that will be read to potential jurors to sum up the case, Mitchell said that it does not need to be referred to as "the auto body shop murders." Holt had raised the issue.

Mitchell said they can tell jurors it relates to a shooting, but added that he doesn't want to sensationalize it.

Five young men were sanding a car inside Medina's Body Shop when they were fatally shot in October 1987.

The lone survivor, who was hit by a bullet in the stomach, identified Ruiz as one of the shooters. He gave police one of Ruiz's aliases, Vicente Mendez.

Ruiz's attorneys have claimed it was a case of mistaken identity and have suggested that his brother was so similar in appearance that the two could have been twins.

Ruiz's cousin, Pedro Mendez-Reyna, is serving a life sentence without parole for his role as a shooter in the slayings.

He will be called by prosecutors, though he already has told the court through his lawyer that he will not testify.

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