



1731-CR01053 ST V DERIK C OSBORN [SO]



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BUS-160-W01

Mrs. Poe

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Courtroom Observation Report

To gain my experience in a courtroom environment, I decided to go to the Green County Courthouse on Monday, July 12th. On Monday morning I arrived at the Courthouse with enthusiasm and an excitement for this was my first time to witness a real-life courtroom hearing. After informing a court bailiff of my courtroom observation assignment she was quick to point me in the direction of a double-murder trial that was taking place. Little did I know I was entering a highly publicized, and uniquely rare trial for this jurisdiction. At the same time also anticipating that I would encounter plenty of information to write about for this report. The bailiffs first conversed upon me entering the courtroom, and shortly thereafter I was provided the space I needed to quietly sit down with the other spectators.

The Case I'm referring to is about Derik Osborn who is facing charges of second-degree murder in the deaths of both his girlfriend, Ms. Williams "Valerie" and her unborn child which is also referred to as case number [1731-CR01053]. An important detail about this case is that it's a bench trial meaning there is no jury and Judge Calvin Holden will deliver the final verdict. If convicted guilty by Judge Holden, Mr. Osborn will face charges for both the death of his girlfriend and his unborn baby which will result in a life sentence. The Prosecuting attorneys for this trial consisted of Phillip Fuhrman and Amanda Johnson. The defense consisted of Mr. Osborn and his attorney Stuart Huffman. To present this information in a point of view format let me first start by

describing and going through what I personally saw, heard, and thought starting at the time I entered the courtroom around 10:30AM on Monday morning.

When I first entered the courtroom, the prosecuting attorneys were in the middle of going through some of the injuries that were sustained during the initial argument via a projector and slide show presentation. One of the images upon my arrival was a picture of Ms. Williams neck and leg that had recent injuries. As they went through these pictures, I found it interesting that the sometimes-obvious answers were repeated and verified. Such as the time the picture was taken, by whom the picture was taken, and if any other officers took similar photos that same horrific morning. I could only assume this type of questioning is for court records and to bring back up and verify earlier evidence collected.

Next to take the stand was officer Cantrell of the Springfield Police Department who is a detective in the Violent Crimes Unit. From how I interpreted the trial officer Cantrell was one of the first officers on the scene. He stated he was called in just before 5:00 AM on Monday morning, where he drove to work, entered a briefing with other officers, and was then given the lead over the investigation. Officer Cantrell also stated he collected evidence and was there documenting the crime scene that morning. This was the first-time in the trial where they began to describe the location and setting of the crime scene. He began by mentioning that this took place in a unit on ground level and that it was located on 4345 S. National which is the location of the Kelly-Green Apartments here in Springfield Missouri. Later in the questioning another officer proceeded to answer questions regarding Ms. Williams condition upon arrival. The prosecuting Attorneys re-stated that she was found unconscious on the bed with Mr. Osborn giving her CPR, the officer agreed and confirmed that was how he found her.

Following officer Cantrell to the stand was a Neurosurgeon, who had tried to help Ms. Williams that morning. This surgeon has been practicing for over 22 years and has numerous

degrees, awards, and certifications in the field of neurosurgery. After examining Ms. Williams, he initially noted “significant head injuries”, later mentioning that she had “fixed, dilated pupils”. Another thing he noted during the trial was that her “cranial nerves were not working” going on to describe that she had no reaction to any kind of stimulation. After he performed imaging studies on her brain, he noted a large fracture and an enlarged brain from some kind of traumatic impact. He also describes that her brain death was the result of a major force and that it is similar to what he sees in auto injuries and “not consistent with falling from a standing position” (Keegan, 2018). These injuries are what lead to Ms. Williams death and a few hours later were also the cause for the unborn baby’s death. Finally, he mentions in his testimony that her toxicity report came back positive for Methamphetamines and Methadone, but he does not believe these were the cause of her death or played a factor in her death.

Following the Neurosurgeon to the stand was another member of the local Springfield Police Department, with over 20 years of experience. This officer was the first that visited Ms. Williams in the hospital and was the first to recognize the injuries as something that took place during a struggle. He was also questioned about the orange staining on Ms. Williams neck area, where he pointed out that this was similar to the color and consistency of sprayed mace or pepper spray. This was about the time in the hearing where they utilized the projector to display Ms. Williams Body while in the hospital, and all of the injuries she sustained. They were clear to point out in every one of the pictures that the marks or injuries were “fresh” meaning that they had just recently occurred. They also point out bruising on her arm and scrape marks on both of her kneecaps, but at this point it wasn’t clear as to if these were from the struggle or from something leading up to the struggle. This was something that I had to assume during the trial, not knowing for sure how they happened, but having a good feeling they were the result of some kind of altercation that was the result of her death.

Next, they bring back up the orange substance they found in the bathroom at the apartment. Where the officer on stand told the court, this was in fact pepper spray and that it had been sampled and tested at a lab. So, when recognizing the same “orange substance” on Ms. Williams neck they could know almost without a doubt that it was from the same pepper spray they found in the bathtub. At this point I had to ask myself, was the bathroom where the altercation took place, and how did the pepper spray get on Ms. Williams neck area? Later in the trial they brought in evidence collected from the cell phones, that proved both Mr. Osborn and Ms. Williams were having some kind of an argument the night of the incident. This apparently was about Mr. Osborn going to a local bar “Big Whiskeys”, where he was seen on surveillance video drinking for about 2-3 hours.

As a side note to the trial and what I’m getting to see first-hand take place, let me add in some information that was published in 2018 to help this part of the story make more sense. According to a Springfield News leader article “Osborn told police Williams Came to pick him up from a bar earlier that night because he was too drunk to drive and they got into an argument in the parking lot” (Rehwald, 2018). Osborn even mentioned at this time that he “pushed her out of his car and drove back to the apartment alone and went to bed” (Rehwald, 2018). After initially reading this statement, I had to come to the conclusion that her injuries were most likely the result of being pushed from the car. We still do not know if the vehicle was moving, or if this was the cause of the “traumatic brain injury” the neurosurgeon was talking about earlier, but I could only assume. Around this time, I also had to ask myself, if he drove home alone after pushing Ms. Williams out of the car, how did Ms. Williams make it back to the apartment in a matter of 15 minutes? Considering the distance from the apartment to Big Whiskeys bar is around 6.1 miles, this would make for roughly a 2 hour walk in the middle of the night.

Going back to my perspective from inside the courtroom they next called one of the neighbors to the stand to give a testimony to the court. This was an older gentleman that claimed to

have been up at the time because there was a storm, and he was deciding whether to go out and move his car. This was around 1:00 AM in the morning on Monday, he claimed that he and his wife heard “something that struck the wall” together they concluded that he “slammed her against the wall”. He also mentioned later in the interview that the “table moved” and the “pictures on his wall moved” from the altercation.

To conclude the first day of trial, evidence was brought in showing body camera footage from a previous dispute 3-Months prior to prove a history of past violence between Ms. Williams and Derik Osborn. This is an extremely graphic video and without going into too much detail it showed Ms. Williams in a very vulnerable state of emotion. She was crying, on the ground, and had blood running down her face while Mr. Osborn was in the background claiming to police officers that she had fell when he tried to grab a knife from her. The only response from Valery in the footage showed tears, hysteria, and fear. A female officer was later called to the stand and mentioned that Ms. Williams told her “He had to go to jail, or he was going to kill me”. This testimony proved to the court that Osborn has a history of violence, and that Ms. Williams was truthfully scared for her life. My instincts beg the question why would after suffering previous violence and trauma would Ms. Williams still be attracted to this man? Or better yet why would she still see the need to be around someone who she thought “was trying to kill her”?

During the second day of trial, questioning continued by a diverse group of individuals that had contact with Ms. Williams all offering additional facts and information to the court. Including Dr. Simpson who is a Trauma Surgeon that made comments regarding the marks she had on her liver, which he suggested could be “possible from incorrect use of CPR” but “not likely”. The defense also brought up that there are studies involving falls that lead to death that are from under 6ft. Dr. Simpson was quick to declare, “there generally not in -younger people” and that “we see those falls in elderly patients where they fall from a standing position, on a blood thinner, they’ll get

a localized subdural hematoma or something like that” (Watson, 2021). This surgeon also mentioned and agreed that this type of head injury was common in auto injury accidents. Finally, there was also a testimony from the father of Ms. Williams first born, who explained to the court that Ms. Williams mentioned to him that she “thought she was going to be killed” by the man.

The trial, prosecution, and defense came to an end early on Wednesday. Where Judge Calvin Holden stated he will release his final verdict at 11:15 AM on July 27th. To wrap up my experience observing this trial I would say at the very least it was intriguing. I would consider it similar to a real-life Law and Order episode or something along those lines. It was also nerve racking at the same time being in the same room as someone who is being charged with two counts of murder. You could almost feel the tension in the air and from time to time there were periodic sighs and gasp from the audience. Which I could only imagine were Ms. Williams family members and friends wanting to see Osborn serve for the crimes he had committed back in March of 2017. Since the verdict will be announced after this assignment is due, I will continue to follow this case. I feel in a case like this that the evidence speaks for itself, it is vast, incriminating, and hard for the defense to argue against or refute.

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