

Area

Trial begins for suspect accused of shooting his wife

By GREG STOVER

The Goodland Star-News
GOODLAND — Lani Bevington told a KBI agent who questioned him the day of his arrest that he pointed a 12-gauge shotgun at his wife, Carrie Bevington, early in the morning of Dec. 28 and fired.

The agent, Kelly Robbins, was the last of five witnesses called by the prosecution at Bevington's preliminary hearing Wednesday on a charge of first-degree murder.

In the end, after about three hours of testimony, District Magistrate Judge Tom Carroll ruled there was probable cause and set a trial for July 19.

Bevington, who kept his head down and was quiet throughout the hearing, remained silent when the judge asked for his plea. Calvin Williams of Colby, Bevington's court-appointed attorney, said his client was standing mute which, by law, requires that a not-guilty plea be entered on his behalf.

About 40 people attended the hearing, many in the audience were wearing buttons and ribbons identifying them with a group called Voices Against Violence.

Carroll asked both attorneys to file pre-trial motions by July 12. Scott Showalter, a Goodland lawyer who is assisting County Attorney Bonnie Selby with the prosecution, noted that the date was beyond the 90 days allowed by law. Williams said his client would waive his right to a speedy trial.

The first witness called was Thomas J. "T.J." Ashenbrenner, Carrie's younger brother, who testified about events of the night before the shooting. Ashenbrenner said he, his girlfriend Christi Sommers and the Bevingtons went



Lani Bevington of Brewster walked with his head down during a preliminary appearance.

together to a wedding dance and reception in Colby in Bevington's pickup.

He said Bevington, who drove to Colby, stopped on the way and unloaded a 12-gauge shotgun that was in the vehicle. He said he saw two shells ejected which were place in the console between the front seats. Bevington ratcheted the pump-action weapon six or seven times to ensure that it was unloaded.

The next witness was Thomas G. Ashenbrenner, Carrie's father and the Brewster fire chief. He testified that Bevington called him around 7 a.m. (Central Time) on Sunday, Dec. 28, telling him that something bad happened, that he had to come right away, and to come alone.

Ashenbrenner said when he arrived at the Bevington home, three miles southwest of Brewster along the county line, 10-15 minutes later, he found Bevington in the house and asked him where Carrie was. Bevington said she was outside in the pickup. Ashenbrenner said he

found his daughter Carrie slumped over in the driver's seat. When he opened the door, he touched her shoulder and it was cold. He said he saw "gray matter" on the door handle.

Ashenbrenner said he then shut the door and called 911, and Deputy Burton Pianalto arrived about 30 minutes later.

Pianalto, the third witness called by the state, said when he got to the house, Ashenbrenner told him "he shot her" and "Lani shot Carrie." Pianalto said he asked Ashenbrenner where Bevington and the weapon were, and was told they were in the house.

Pianalto said he found both in the kitchen. He said he moved the shotgun to the living room, then took Bevington into protective custody and placed him in the the sheriff's car.

Pianalto said Deputy Roger Studer arrived to help secure the scene and take statements. Pianalto later took Bevington to the Sherman County Bastille.

Next, Paul Gleason, director of Sherman County's emergency medical service, testified, saying he and another medical technician examined Carrie Bevington and found no signs of life. He said they left the body and the pickup alone. On cross-examination, Gleason said he was not a medical doctor or a corner and could not declare someone dead.

After a short recess, Agent Robbins was called in to testify. She said Bevington originally told officers that he might not have fully unloaded the gun earlier and that when he was removing it from the pickup, the wind closed the truck's door knocking the gun from his hand.

When he reached to grab it, he said, his finger hit the trigger.

The agent said Bevington changed his statement after she pointed out inconsistencies in his original story to deputies. It was then he told her he pointed the shotgun at his wife and fired.

Closing for the prosecution, Showalter said three of the consid-

erations for a charge of first degree murder were the type of weapon used, the lack of provocation and the defendant's action before and after the act. He said the evidence presented against Bevington meets the criteria of all three.

In his closing statement Williams, acknowledging it was a technicality, said the cause of death had

not been legally determined and the statements presented can not fill in for the testimony of a medical doctor or examiner.

After closing statements by both sides, Judge Carroll ruled that based on the evidence presented, probable cause existed to bind Bevington over on the charge of first-degree murder.

Self-inflicted wound reported

ST. FRANCIS — A St. Francis man apparently killed himself Wednesday night with a .22 caliber rifle after an argument with his former girlfriend at her home about six miles southeast of Goodland.

Sherman County Sheriff Doug Whitson said Roger Curry, 42, shot himself in the head sometime around 8 p.m. at 2560 Road 62, where Curry and Tamara Espinoza, 45, lived together until they split up about two weeks ago.

Whitson said it appeared the two were arguing and Espinoza wit-

nessed the shooting.

The sheriff said the report from Undersheriff Kevin Butts, the first law enforcement officer on the scene, said that Espinoza told him Curry had pointed the gun at her before shooting himself.

Butts reported that he found the man with a single gunshot wound to the head bleeding from the mouth, nose and ears, and had no pulse. Deputy Roger Studer arrived a short time later and the two conducted an initial investigation.

Sherman County emergency

medical service was dispatched and emergency medical technicians started cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Curry was taken to the emergency room at Goodland Regional Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead by Deputy Coroner Travis Daise. Dr. Daise ruled the death a suicide. Curry's body has been taken to St. Francis for funeral services.



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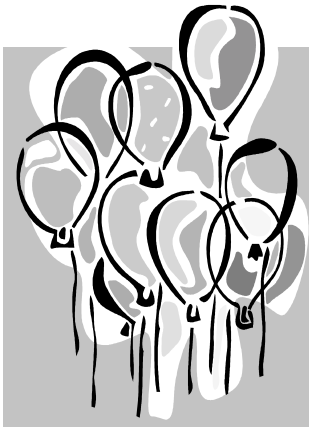
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