

Teen guilty

Jeanette Browning
Assistant Editor

“Anyone with a fascination about the Columbine attack knows enough about that event to know you just don’t talk about ‘pulling a Columbine,’” said Platte County Assistant Prosecutor Mark Gibson during his closing arguments in the trial of Sean Amos, held Tuesday in Platte County Division II Circuit Court. Judge Lee Hull agreed, and found Amos, 18, a Platte City resident, who was charged last year along with Trevor Fattig of threatening a Columbine-style attack on Platte County R-3 High School in Platte City, guilty on two charges. Hull found Amos guilty of a misdemeanor charge of negligently making a terrorist threat, and misdemeanor possession of marijuana. He will be sentenced at 10:30 a.m. March 15 and faces up to a year in jail or up to a \$1,000 fine for each count against him.

Amos and Fattig faced felony charges of making a terrorist threat after they allegedly told classmates they planned to use guns and explosives in an April 20, 2006 assault on the seven-year anniversary of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colo. A student informed high school principal Craig Robinson, who in turn alerted the Platte City Police Department. Amos was also later charged with misdemeanor possession of marijuana.

Fattig’s case is set for trial April 2.

Platte County Prosecutor Eric Zahnd was pleased with the guilty verdict and commended the school district and city police for their response to the threat.

“In today’s world, we cannot sit idly by when threats of school violence are made,” Zahnd said. “These threats must be taken seriously.”

During the nearly six-hour trial, the prosecution team, made up of Gibson and Assistant Prosecutor Eric Poggemiller, called a dozen witnesses to the stand, including three of Amos’ classmates – Curtiss “Buddy” Carr, Zakk Rowan and Patrick Regan.

Carr, a junior at Platte County R-3 High School, was the first called to the stand, and was the student who notified Robinson of the threatened attack by relating the events of an afternoon in late March 2006. He said he and his friend, Regan, had gone to Rowan’s home after school. Several young men congregated there, and one of them contacted Fattig and Amos to purchase marijuana. After the pair arrived, the group moved from a bedroom to the garage to smoke pot and play hacky sack, a game played with a small ball. At some point during the gathering, the conversation turned to the date April 20, which is informally known as a day to smoke marijuana. Carr said Amos and Fattig began to relate to the group that on April 20 they had planned an attack on their high school.

Carr said the two went back and forth explaining they would hold a gun to the head of assistant principal Michael Becker, force him to call an assembly to the North gym, then shoot Becker and blow up the gym as students entered. He said they’d specified they would let attendance secretary Suzanne Frame live. Carr said he was unable to tell if their plan was real or not.

“If they hadn’t gone on for 10 minutes about it I wouldn’t have thought they’d do it,” Carr said. He said he was “freaking out” by the end of their plan details, but didn’t say anything about it and left himself shortly after Amos and Fattig left.

He stated he spoke to Regan about the conversation, and later that night told his father, but did not bring it up to Robinson until a few days later on March 31.

Amos’ attorney, Jeffrey Eastman, who called no witnesses for the defense, questioned if Carr was under the influence of marijuana at the time of the conversation. Carr said he was not. Eastman also said Carr had confessed he was going through a hard time in his life that spring and was involved in drugs and other various vandalism offenses.

“You characterized yourself as a ‘bad little kid’ at that time,” Eastman said, reading from Carr’s deposition, and suggested he had perhaps lied about the events of that day as he had admitted he was confused and upset when he had spoken to Robinson.

Carr denied he was lying and said he had not immediately reported the conversation because he didn’t know Amos and Fattig well enough to judge the seriousness of their statements.

Rowan, 17, and Regan, 16, gave similar testimony regarding Amos and Fattig’s plan to shoot Becker and blow up the gym, though the details varied as to whether the conversation took place in a bedroom or the garage, or who exactly was smoking marijuana and at what time. The two witnesses agreed that both Amos

and Fattig talked about the plan equally, though Regan said he recalled Amos speaking more about guns and Fattig more about explosives.

“Sean said 4/20 was the anniversary of Columbine and that that hadn’t happened for a while and it was about time it happened,” Rowan said.

Eastman’s cross-examinations pointed out the discrepancies between the young men’s stories, and suggested they were too high to remember exactly what had happened that day.

Robinson and Platte County Superintendent Dr. Mark Harpst also testified, regarding the school’s response after Carr came to Robinson on March 31. Robinson said Carr was “visibly upset and bewildered” when he came to tell him of the conversation.

“He had overheard this conversation and he didn’t know how he should feel about it,” Robinson said.

He immediately contacted Harpst and the Platte City Police Department, and the following week a school district letter was sent home to parents, notifying them of the threatened attack. Dogs from the Kansas City Police Department were also brought in to sweep the school several times. By April 20, the suspects were in custody, but attendance was low.

According to Robinson, this was due in part to the threat, which had resulted in calls from concerned parents ever since the information became public, and due to the funeral that day of a student who had died in a car accident. He said Platte County High School averages 95 percent attendance daily, but that day attendance was at 55 percent and the district was forced to reschedule a planned MAP test.

When asked about his familiarity with Amos, Robinson said the young man had had problems with other students in the past, and was often tardy.

Platte City Police Sergeant Beth Willoughby was one of the officers to initially interview Amos, and during her testimony stated while Amos denied the allegations against him, he admitted he had a fascination with the Columbine attack.

“He said he frequently had violent thoughts,” Willoughby said. “He was more interested in knowing who had told – he didn’t deny being at Zakk Rowan’s, but he denied he’d made those statements.”

Eastman questioned why police had taken four days to respond to the school and interview witnesses, and seven days to take written statements from Carr, Rowan and Regan. Willoughby said she was following the direction of Chief of Police Richard Sayles.

Chris Stackhouse, another sergeant with the Platte City Police, searched Amos’ bedroom at his grandmother’s residence. He said he had found no weapons, maps of the school or city or plans of mayhem, but he did find drug paraphernalia. He called in the Platte County Sheriff’s Department Drug Task Force to process a wooden box containing a brown, rock-like substance, scales, baggies, two glass pipes and the butts of marijuana cigarettes.

Dale Scott Lawrence, a drug lab technician with the Missouri Highway Patrol Troop H headquarters in St. Joseph, later testified the drugs found were 1.22 grams of hashish and .94 grams of marijuana.

Stackhouse also confiscated two copies of a short story by Amos entitled “To Wage a War,” drawings, poems and a black binder. Under cross-examination, Stackhouse said that while the papers, poems and drawings were violent in nature, they were not specifically threatening to the school.

In his closing statement, Eastman claimed the prosecution had failed to prove that Amos specifically made the threats attributed to him, the school had not reacted immediately to the threat and there was no evidence the drug items found belonged to Amos.

“What we had was a conversation among friends smoking dope in a garage,” Eastman said. “The witnesses cannot tell us when the conversation occurred, if they went to school that day or not or where the conversation occurred. They can’t relate specific statements to either Sean or Trevor Fattig. Carr overheard this conversation as an eavesdropper.”

During its closing statements, the prosecution took a different view.

“It’s said that ‘it’s common that a conspiracy born in hell doesn’t have angels as witnesses,’” Gibson said of the activities the teens were engaged in when they heard the attack plan.

“High school kids like this are the first line of defense,” Poggemiller said. “They’re the first ones to hear about threats - not principals and police.”

The prosecutors said the specificity of the plan was the key — Amos and Fattig had thought about it enough to say they would not kill Frame because she was “cool,” but had plotted to shoot administrators and blow up students. They said all three witnesses, though the specifics varied, knew enough to know this was not a joking matter.

“Maybe nothing would have happened if this hadn’t been reported, but maybe it would have,” Poggemiller said.

Weston looking at river access project

Jerry Keuhn

Reporter

According to Webster’s, mitigation means “to cause to become less harsh or hostile.”

That’s what Weston alderman Greg Hoffman hopes to achieve in river bottom lands between the railroad tracks at the end of Main Street and the Missouri River.

Hoffman advised the City’s aldermen during a meeting Monday of preliminary discussions he had with Bob Dimmitt, a project manager with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, about the area just west of downtown Weston being used as a part of the Missouri River Mitigation Project.

Hoffman said that since information had recently been presented by a newspaper article in The Kansas City Star, there had been a lot of questions directed towards him about the project and its possible ramifications on Weston. He said he wanted to make sure a few things were understood about the possible project.

“This project only buys land from willing landowners and it has a lot of possible benefits for this area,”

Hoffman said. “The City would get river access again and more visitors, it would help beef up the (Weston Bend) state park and it would be beneficial to the wildlife and conservation in the area.”

Hoffman said he is planning on setting a public meeting in Weston to discuss the possible project with anyone concerned, and suggested that until then anyone with questions could contact him or refer to the Web site for the Missouri River Mitigation Project, which is:

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/projects/mitigation.

According to information from the Web site, the project is “designed to mitigate, or compensate, for fish and wildlife habitat losses that resulted from past channelization efforts on the Missouri River...New wildlife areas will be created. Existing areas will be improved. And historic river features may be returned to historic conditions.

“Preservation or restoration will be accomplished by means of land acquisition from willing sellers, dredging filled-in areas, reopening historic chutes, bank stabilization, dike notching, pumping, dike/levee construction, vegetative plantings, and vegetation and land management.”

What Hoffman said was being considered is the construction of a chute that could be opened from the Missouri River that would return river access to Weston, which was located directly on the river until the river shifted course in the 1800s.

“As someone who grew up here, I think it would be cool to be able to see the river again when I’m driving down Main Street,” Hoffman said. “I’ll clean up some of the questions everyone has at the public meeting.”

Hoffman also said that he had talked with officials with the Missouri Department of Conservation and they had offered their support of the project as they had designated the Weston/Iatan area as a longtime goal for wetland restoration, and that Weston Bend State Park, which adjoins the proposed area, could be involved with maintenance.

In other business, the board:

- Heard from business owner Mel Beverlin, who owns Beverlin’s Statuary at the west end of town and said he was chairman of a Weston Chamber of Commerce committee to establish a farmers market in Weston. He said the farmers market would begin the last week of April and run through the Oktoberfest celebration in the fall, and that the proposed site of the market is in the old city park area. He advised the board that the market plans had already been discussed by the parks board and planning and zoning board and they were okay with it, and he had verified that insurance for the market could be obtained. After a short discussion, the board approved the Chamber’s request provided the market meets the requirements of the City’s special use permits.

Beverlin also asked the board for permission to add some landscaping, including a fountain the statuary would provide, for an area nearby his business. He said his goal was to encourage traffic to continue down Main Street past Market Street and he would be responsible for maintaining the site. The board determined to have city attorney Quint Shafer prepare the necessary license and that the matter would be further discussed at future board meetings.

- Heard from Weston Chamber of Commerce president Paul Norman, who reported that the farmers market was one of the top five ideas to come out of recent marketing ideas meetings held by the Chamber, along with ideas to update the Chamber's Web site, increased signage, the possible hiring of a part-time person and direct mail efforts. Norman also said that due to the success of last year's Applefest, the Chamber had been looking for something to do to give back to the people of Weston and that the determination had been made to provide to the City an automated external defibrillator (AED), a portable automatic device used to restore normal heart rhythm to patients in cardiac arrest. He said the device will cost approximately \$1,200, will be installed in a police car and will be presented to the City in the near future.
- Scheduled a public hearing for the Weston Estate replat of the preliminary plat for 6:30 p.m. March 12.
- Approved a motion to increase water rates for the City of Weston by three percent to help pay for recent improvements being made to the water distribution system.
- Approved a motion to accept a bid of \$21,838 and to proceed with a rehab project at Well No. 4. The original project had been budgeted at a cost of \$28,000.
- Approved an application for the Weston Chamber of Commerce to be designated as a destination marketing organization (DMO), so the Chamber could apply for grants from the Missouri Department of Tourism.

Glick family sells Leo's Country Mart

Lee Stubbs
Editor

One of Platte City's most recognizable businesses will change hands in April.

The Glick family — including siblings Jim, John, Paul and Virginia — announced this week that Leo's Country Mart has been sold to a southern Platte County grocer.

Beginning April 10, the business — which has served the area's grocery needs for more than 30 years at its Highway 92 and Bello Mondo Drive location — will be owned and managed by Paul Bressette, who also operates Bressette's Shur Fresh, located at Prairie View Road and 9 Highway in Platte Woods.

"It's kind of bittersweet for us, but we felt it's time," Virginia Glick said. "

Bressette, 42, said he is excited about the opportunity.

"We know it will take everyone a little time to get used to us, but we are very excited to be coming to the Platte City area," he said. "We can't wait to get in there and meet everyone."

The Glicks had talked about selling their business for the past few years and had held talks with Bressette from time to time. The process was hurried along by speculation that Associated Wholesale Grocers — of which Country Mart is a member — was planning to construct a new super store in the Platte Valley Plaza area. Platte Valley Plaza developer Bill Mann said in a report published late last year in *The Citizen* that he hoped to close on a property sale with AWG in late April or early May.

Virginia Glick said when those talks first began years ago, her family was interested in being a part of it.

But, she said further family discussions led to the eventual sale of the business.

"We had heard about the new store and, eventually, we decided we didn't want to do it," she said. "After 30 years, we realized we probably didn't have the enthusiasm to commit to a project like that."

Bressette said he and the Glicks first began talking about a possible deal a few years ago and finally hammered out all the details. He also said that at this point he was not planning to get on board the new super store project, as had been rumored.

"I would love to have the opportunity to expand the business, but right now I am totally concentrated on making Country Mart the best store it can be," he said.

The last day of store operation under the Glicks will come April 7. The store will be closed on Easter Sunday and will also be closed on Monday, April 9 for an inventory before the new owners assume control. Bressette said the store will be open for business on April 10 under his management. He added that the store will operate under the name of Country Mart — without the Leo's.

Bressette has operated his store in Platte Woods since 1994. In 2005, he was honored by AWG as an outstanding independent retailer in the Kansas City region. He said that he planned no initial major changes in the store's operation or personnel.

"We are ready to get in there and analyze the business and try to learn from what the Glicks have done — they've been awful successful over the years," he said.

Virginia Glick said that much of that success has come from the store's employees.

"We've got so many good people working here," she said. "We want everything to work out good for them as well and this is the best chance for that to happen."

A few of those employees have worked at the store ever since Leo Glick — the Glick siblings' father — first bought the business in November of 1976. The store has undergone a few renovations and additions since then, and made numerous changes in keeping up with technological advances, but has always prided itself on its customer service.

Paul Glick said that he and his family have always appreciated the store's loyal customers.

"It's always been the customers' store," he said. "They let us hold the keys for 30 years."