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Coroner: NH woman alive for 32 machete, knife cuts

By LYNNE TUOHY
The Associated Press
Thursday, November 4, 2010; 6:13 PM

NASHUA, N.H. -- A woman hacked to death with a machete and knife in her home was alive for all 32 slash and stab wounds that split open her skull, sliced through bones and pierced organs, a medical examiner testified Thursday.

Both sides in the murder trial of 18-year-old Steven Spader have rested. The defense called no witnesses, ending speculation Spader might take the stand.

Jurors will begin deliberating Monday, after final arguments. They heard from 45 witnesses during the nine-day trial.

Spader has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder and burglary and witness tampering. He was 17 years old when prosecutors say plotted the home invasion and rounded up the three other young men who accompanied him.

During the home invasion, 42-year-old Kimberly Cates was killed, and her daughter was severely injured.

Prosecutors said Thursday that Spader's own words on paper and to witnesses are enough to convict him.

In arguing against a defense motion to acquit Spader on all charges, prosecutor Jeffery Strelzin said Spader's letters to fellow inmate Chad Landry "are sufficient to prove every charge."

In those letters, which Spader described as "bedtime stories" to Landry, he detailed the many machete wounds he inflicted on Kimberly Cates, and what her body looked like afterward. Witnesses say he brought the machete down on 11-year-old Jaimie Cates, who



Steven Spader enters court in Nashua, N.H., Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2010. Spader is facing life in prison without parole for his role in the attack of Jaimie Cates and murder of Kimberly Cates. (AP Photo/Don Himsel, Pool) (Don Himsel - AP)

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survived.

Spader's description of Kimberly Cates' body to Landry closely matched the testimony of state deputy chief medical examiner Jennie Duval. Spader wrote that he could see brain and an eye hanging out of its socket.

Duval said she counted 32 wounds on Cates that were inflicted by at least two weapons. She said a machete could have made the long and deep cuts that cleaved bone and split Cates' skull. One slash to the left side of her face broke the bone around her left eye socket, Duval said.

Advertisement Duval said Cates died from massive blood loss.

Strelzin stood over Spader and glared at him as he asked Duval if Cates was alive for every wound that was inflicted. She said she was.

Duval said one slash cut through Kimberly Cates' upper arm bone and another broke her jaw. She said Cates likely was trying to fend off the blows when her palm and forearm were slashed.

Co-defendant Christopher Gribble of Brookline, who prosecutors say used a knife to hack at the victims, is set to go on trial in February.

Now 12, Jaimie survived by pretending to be dead, then staggered, covered in blood, to a kitchen phone to call police. A doctor testified she would have died of a punctured lung if she had lost consciousness before summoning help.

She was on the state's list of witnesses but was not called to testify. She has not been seen at the courthouse throughout the trial.

Blows that cut off portions of Jaimie's left foot, split open her head and struck her face with enough force to break her jaw had to have come from a heavy and sharp weapon such as a machete, several doctors testified.

Document analyst Alan Robillard of Vineyard Haven, Mass., testified that the letters to Landry and song lyrics found in another inmate's cell were Spader's handwriting.

The song lyrics include the lines: "We went up in the room, Mommy is it you?, Mommy isn't here, I slit her throat from ear to ear."



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