

Multiple witnesses testify in trial in sexual assault of flag woman

It was a week of eye witnesses and forensics in the trial of a 27-year-old man accused of sexually assaulting an on-duty flag woman in the fall of 1997.

By the time the 34-year-old woman made it back to the flagging station on Highway 97 near Bijoux Falls, it was getting on 4 a.m. on September 21, 1997.

Officers had been called to the scene earlier by concerned co-workers. Those same officers re-traced the route the woman stated she had been taken.

On a secluded spot on the old Highway 97, they found her white pickup truck. Items seized from inside and around the truck, as well as from the victim herself at hospital, were sent to a lab in Halifax.

The forensic biologist who collected the samples sent some for DNA testing and interpreted the final results took the stand on Wednesday.

Specifically, Tom Suzanski testified he sent portions of two tissues with traces of semen, a sample from a vaginal wash from the victim, her blood sample and a blood sample from the suspect at the time, Dale Roland Alexander.

He testified there was a match between the DNA from the tissues, the male profile DNA from the vaginal pool and the blood from the suspect.

Other witnesses testified for the Crown last week as well, in particular, the foreman of the construction site and the flag woman who worked the opposite end of the zone.

Larry Mabley testified he had visited with the victim at the south flagging station shortly after she came on shift at midnight, when the woman at the north end called him on the radio. He left for the north end, some seven minutes away, with a load of wood. A group of hunters stopped to tell tales, and the flag woman at the south end radioed to say two trucks were coming through. When only one passed the north station, Nina Hargreaves radioed back down to get confirmation. She got no response. She tried five times and was "getting tenser each time." Mr. Mabley headed back down, only to find the woman's hard hat and radio lying on the highway, her fire pit strewn about, with both her and her truck gone.

He radioed for help.

A short while after police arrived, the flag woman returned. She had been given a ride by some vacationers heading south from Fort St. John.

Kerwin Davies and Carmen LeFfler both testified they saw the police cruisers at the south station but kept going. Further down the highway, they happened upon a woman

standing on the highway, flagging them down. She was "excited" and "panicky" testified Mr. Davies. Ms. LeFfler told the court she was "very shaken up" and "hysterical."

She also testified the woman had said she had been raped and that the man who did it had threatened to kill her with her own axe. She testified the woman also said she had mace, but it was locked in her truck and he had the keys.

The Crown alleges Mr. Alexander is the man who approached the flag woman that night, carrying her axe.

When the struggle petered out, he allegedly forced her into her truck, drove her to the spot on the old highway and sexually assaulted her.

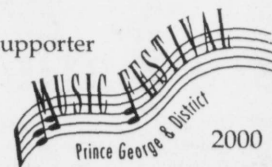
He has pleaded not guilty to five counts, including kidnapping and sex assault with a weapon.

His trial in B.C. Supreme Court is expected to run all of next week.

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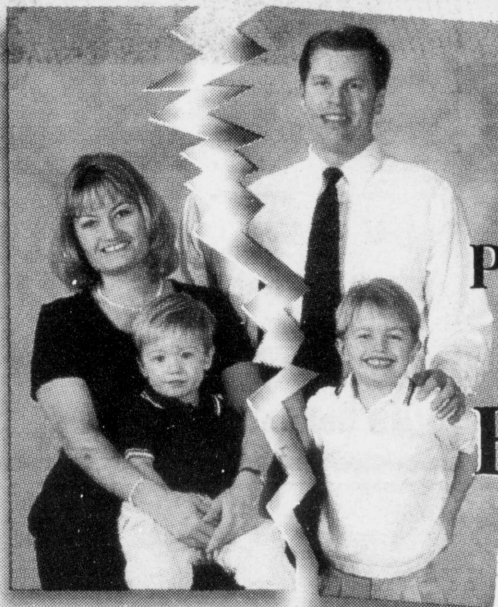


Good luck to all participants

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Cheque-cashing case still being investigated

Police say only two people have come forward in relation to an alleged bad cheque-writing spree by a 24-year-old city man, but it is expected 10 to 15 people will come forward in total.

Media Liaison officer Constable Mike Herchuk says some of the cheques in question likely haven't cleared yet.

In the meantime police say they are still looking for a man identifying himself as Robert Roger McCormack. He is a Caucasian male, 6'4" in height and weighs roughly 215 pounds. He has a shaved head, brown eyes and is clean-shaven. He has a tattoo of "Marvin the Martian" on the upper portion of his right arm. Anyone with information is asked to contact the RCMP detachment.

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