

Slaying suspects appear in court

Keagan C. Tennant of Pullman and Matthew McKetta of Moscow face multiple charges in death of teen

Josh Babcock/Lewiston Tribune



Keagan C. Tennant, 17, of Pullman, is escorted back to his cell after his arraignment in Latah County 2nd District Court on Wednesday. Tribune/Steve Hanks

MOSCOW - Witnesses say a game of Russian roulette led to the death of 18-year-old Pullman High School senior Tim J. Reeves, whose body was found last week in a wooded area east of Troy.

According to court documents released Wednesday, witnesses said Keagan C. Tennant, 17, of Pullman, was holding a .30-06 rifle and pointing it at Reeves, who in turn was holding a silver Smith and Wesson .38-caliber revolver and aiming it at Tennant, when Tennant allegedly fired and killed Reeves the morning of July 17.

Tennant and Matthew McKetta, 18, of Moscow, made their initial appearance in Latah County 2nd District Court on Wednesday following their extradition from Ferry County in Washington, where they were captured Friday.

The fatal shot and the game of Russian roulette allegedly followed a night of alcohol and marijuana consumption off State Highway 8 east of Troy. The shot went through Reeves' skull and killed him instantly.

"(Tennant) and Tim were playing around with the guns, like Russian roulette," an unnamed juvenile witness reportedly told detectives.

The witness told police the two were pointing the guns at each other when Reeves used racial slurs and told Tennant several times to jump. That's when the rifle went off, according to court documents.

Witnesses said Tennant may have loaded three or four rounds in the rifle, while there was believed to be just one round in the revolver.

The guns were stolen from McKetta's adoptive father, Charlie McKetta, Latah County Prosecutor Bill Thompson said in open court.

In court documents, the witness described watching the bullet exit through Reeves' cheek. The witness recounted walking away from the scene of the shooting toward a fire pit when Tennant allegedly fired a shot that hit a nearby stump.

The witness, who reportedly was unarmed at the time, told Tennant to stop, according to court documents. That's when Tennant allegedly fired another shot near the head of the witness, but missed.

The witness said Tennant then allegedly yelled out, "Everyone needs to die; no witnesses."

Another juvenile who was along on the camping trip reportedly was asleep during the shooting but awoke upon hearing the gunfire.

After the witness pleaded with Tennant, "(Tennant) stopped and put the rifle down next to him and started wailing around on the ground and rocking back and forth," the witness told police.

Witnesses made it clear during interviews with police they were scared of Tennant and what he might do. At one point, one of the juvenile witnesses reportedly grabbed the revolver off of Reeves' chest and stashed it in his backpack for safety.

Witnesses said Matthew McKetta was not at the campsite at the time of Reeves' death. He was getting his father's UTV so the group could go porcupine hunting.

According to court documents, when McKetta returned, he and Tennant allegedly wrapped Reeves' body in a tarp and loaded the body into the UTV. Tennant and McKetta allegedly dumped Reeves' body in the woods near Nora Creek Road.

The two witnesses said when the group returned to the campsite, McKetta and Tennant stashed Reeves' belongings in an abandoned house, and said they wanted to burn any evidence with Reeves' blood on it.

The two unnamed witnesses eventually were brought back to Pullman. The next day they allegedly contacted Tennant and McKetta and told them to meet them at Rosauers in Moscow because they needed to talk and they were "going to go to the cops to report what happened."

Tennant and McKetta never showed up and did not answer their phones, according to court documents.

The next morning, the witnesses went to police. McKetta and Tennant were taken into custody two days later about 10 miles south of the Canadian border in Curlew, Wash., where Tennant previously participated in a Job Corps program. Their capture followed a manhunt that lasted nearly 30 hours.

During interviews with police, Tennant allegedly confessed to stealing a white Pontiac Grand Prix at gunpoint from a Pizza Hut delivery driver in downtown Moscow, and to stealing money from the driver's wallet. The Pontiac was found within miles of the Curlew Job Corps building.

Tennant also allegedly admitted to breaking the revolver into pieces and ditching it in the woods near where the two were caught by law enforcement in Ferry County.

Reeves' father, Keith Reeves, looked on in disbelief Wednesday as the man charged with killing his son was read his charges by Magistrate Judge John C. Judge. Keith Reeves and members of his family cried and hugged as they looked on at the two young men dressed in orange.

Thompson requested raising bail for both of the accused from \$500,000 to \$1 million, arguing the two are a flight risk.

"Whether they were going to make it to Canada, we don't know because they didn't make it that far," Thompson told the court, noting the stolen car ran out of gas.

McKetta's appointed public defender, Ray Barker, told the court his client didn't even have money for an attorney and said \$500,000 bail was reasonable. Judge left bail at \$500,000 for both. Tennant was appointed public defender Deborah McCormick. The two are being housed in the Latah County Jail. Their preliminary hearing is tentatively set for 1 p.m. Aug. 1.

Tennant faces seven felony charges, including involuntary manslaughter; attempted murder; principal to robbery; principal failure to notify coroner or law enforcement of death; conspiracy to commit failure to notify coroner or law enforcement of death; principal to destruction, alteration or concealment of evidence; and conspiracy to commit destruction, alteration or concealment of evidence.

The maximum penalty on Tennant's charges is 60 years to life in prison and as much as \$230,000 in fines.

McKetta faces five felony charges, including principal to robbery; principal failure to notify coroner or law enforcement of death; conspiracy to commit failure to notify coroner or law enforcement of death; principal to destruction, alteration or concealment of evidence; and conspiracy to commit destruction, alteration or concealment of evidence.

The maximum penalty on McKetta's charges is 25 years to life in prison and as much as \$130,000 in fines.

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