

Witnesses talk about pot, guns

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Boudreau double-murder trial hears about relationship between victim and accused

By Peg McCarthy
pmccarthy@northumberlandnews.com

COBOURG - A story of armed 'pot pirates,' jealousy and a large marijuana business is being played out in the double-murder trial of James Earle Boudreau.

The accused is charged with the murders of James Edward Pearce, who went missing in October 1999, and Gordon (Goober) Carl Smith, whose body was discovered in a wooded area near Castleton, in September 2000. Mr. Boudreau was arrested in September 2006 for Mr. Pearce's murder and charged with Mr. Smith's murder in January 2007.

First witness John Dudley, 31, took the stand in Cobourg's Superior Court on Wednesday, April 30, to explain his role as a 'clipper,' a job cleaning stolen marijuana plants in a locked room at a safe house along Telephone Road, in Cramahe Township. He said he was paid one ounce of marijuana bud for every pound of the plant he cleaned. He worked three or four days for Mr. Pearce, Mr. Boudreau and Mr. Smith, the days before the disappearance of Mr. Pearce on Oct. 5, 1999. Mr. Smith's body was found north of Castleton in October 2000.

Mr. Dudley explained while he was working for the three men, a large quantity of marijuana — described as

"the motherload" — was stolen from the residence. He said the accused was very irate about the theft, and that the three or four clippers who worked at the safe house were brought there and questioned, but all had alibis.

"We were all dumbfounded," Mr. Dudley said.

The mood in the house was frantic and angry, he added, and that included the accused. A double-barreled shotgun, handguns and an Uzi were stolen along with the marijuana. Mr. Pearce was not in the safe house at the time, said Mr. Dudley.

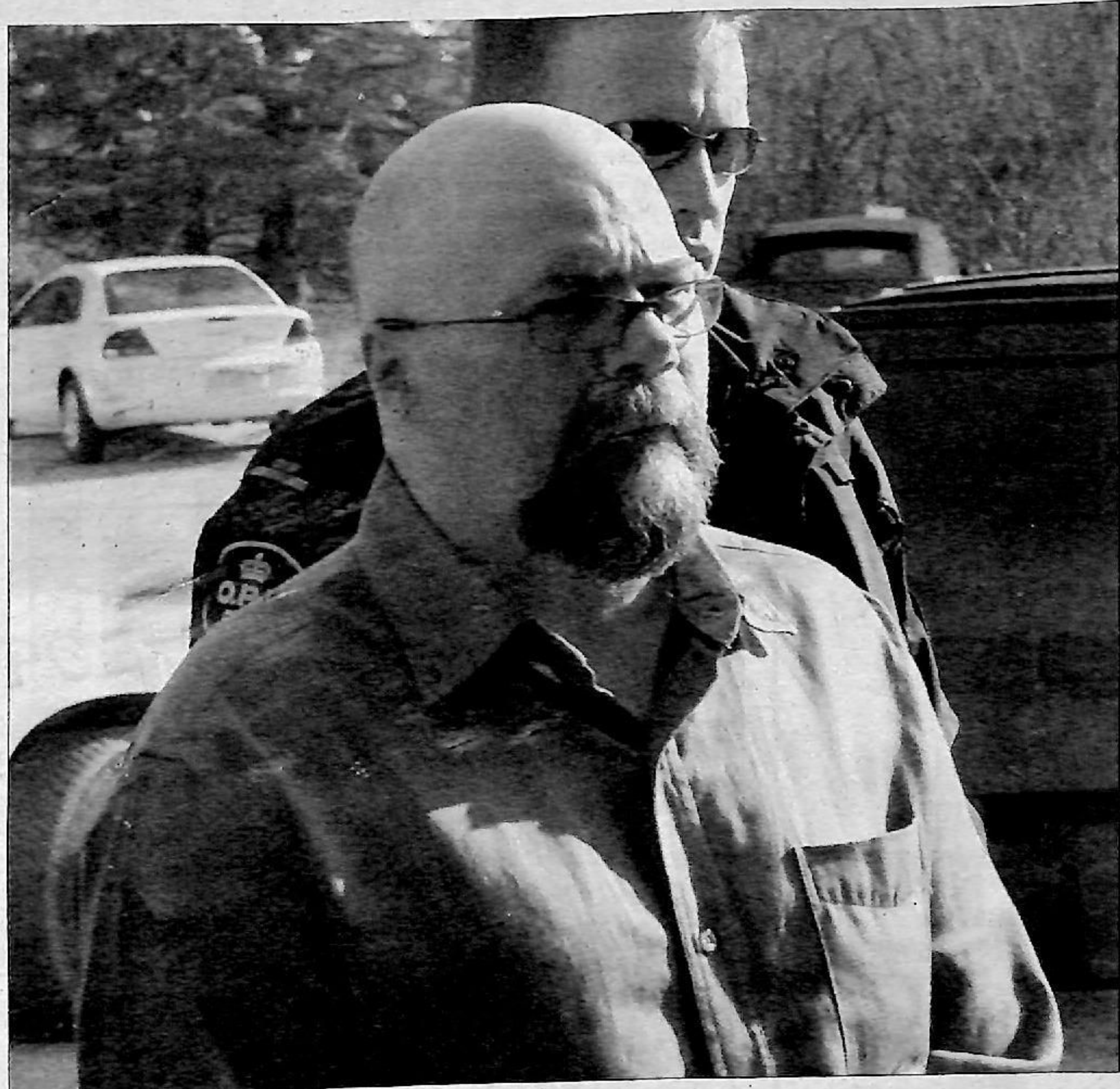
The witness said there was a conclusion made that because Mr. Pearce was not there, he was responsible for the theft. He also told Crown

Attorney Brad Kelneck that he once took a marijuana bud home and was found out. As Mr. Boudreau drove him home that night, he tapped on a gun on the seat between them and told him "not to f--k around."

Defense Counsel Gary McNeely asked Mr. Dudley if the guns could have belonged to anyone in the house. He said yes. Mr. Dudley told the defense he knew the drugs were stolen using violence and said he was just there to make some easy money, along with other people. The witness crossed his fingers and said Boudreau and Pearce "were like this."

Mr. Dudley said Mr. Pearce was the leader until he disappeared, and then Mr. Boudreau took his place. "Like an alpha male in a group of friggin' wolves."

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Peg McCarthy/Northumberland News
James Earle Boudreau, 44, is facing two first degree murder charges in a Cobourg Superior Court, in connection with the deaths of James Edward Pearce and Gordon Carl Smith.

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Victim's actions unknown after Oct. 5, 1999

The owner of the safe house, Steven Bolduc, 41, the second witness in the case, testified he rented a room for \$500/month to Mr. Smith in the summer of 1999, so that he could store some things. The room was one of the few in the house that was away most of the time, and did not know what was stored in the room until he searched it one day, looking for some medication, and discovered the marijuana.

Mr. Bolduc told Mr. McNeely he did not know there were guns in the house.

Legal secretary Heather Bonsell said she spoke to Mr. Pearce on Oct. 5, 1999, regarding the sale of a property. She said he seemed a little upset about some issues with the sale, but gave no indication he would not be available at a later time.

Former exotic dancer Amanda

Settee, 32, was the final witness on the stand on Wednesday. The woman met Mr. Pearce while he was working in Thunder Bay in September 1999, when they began a relationship. Maintaining contact, Mr. Pearce, accompanied by Mr. Boudreau, visited Ms. Settee in Fort Erie and offered her a job as a clipper for \$20/hour. She agreed and the three arrived back in Cobourg on Oct. 4, 1999.

Ms. Settee said when she saw the guns, army fatigues and balaclavas, she became scared and decided to leave. She testified there was some discussion about drugs being stolen. The morning of Oct. 5, Mr. Pearce called her and told her he had purchased a train ticket for her. Another man gave her a ride to the Cobourg Via Station, and she eventually boarded the train with-out seeing Mr. Pearce or his familiar pink truck.

Mr. McNeely grilled Ms. Settee on her relationship with Mr. Pearce

and her knowledge of the stolen drugs, the violence and the fact that bikers were involved in the operation.

Thursday, during the second day of witness testimony, Laurie Pearce, wife of Mr. Pearce, took the stand. Quietly tearful, she told Mr. Kelneck she was unhappily aware of her husband's activities in stealing pot with Mr. Boudreau. She said the two men had been good friends for 10 years.

On Oct. 5, 1999, Mr. Pearce drove her to work, as her car was being repaired, then drove their 11-year-old son Phillip to school. It was the last time either of them saw Mr. Pearce.

Later that day, and on subsequent days, Ms. Pearce said she unsuccessfully tried to contact her husband on his cell phone. On Oct. 7, 1999, she got a bank statement to see if there had been any transactions. The last entry was for a train ticket purchased for Oct. 5.

At the Cobourg Via Rail station, she learned no one by the name of Pearce had boarded the train, but did locate her husband's signature pink truck, parked at the west end of the parking lot.

She called Mr. Boudreau, who took the truck to his house, telling her Mr. Pearce had recently sold the truck to him in exchange for 10 pounds of pot. Within days, she said Mr. Boudreau told her that Mr. Pearce had run off with a strip-per. Ms. Pearce said her husband had left behind his upper dentures, which he needed for eating, clothes, bank cards, his driver's license, and other items.

During cross examination, Ms. Pearce told defense counsel her husband and Mr. Boudreau often exchanged vehicles and money, and she said while she knew they stole pot from dangerous people, she did not know they carried guns. She said she knew Mr. Pearce had affairs, and admitted that Mr.

Pearce sometimes said things that were untrue.

Mr. Pearce's mother, Lynne, told the court her son had suffered a serious head injury at age 13, and that she saw big changes in him from age 16, when he began to have trouble with the authorities.

When Lynne was with Laurie Pearce on Oct. 9, 1999, she met Mr. Boudreau for the first time and asked him what he thought of her son's disappearance. Lynne said he replied, "It doesn't look good."

Thursday's testimony concluded with OPP Detective Constable Lisa McInnis, who spent the afternoon detailing all the agencies the police contacted across Canada to secure information about Mr. Pearce, including police data banks, financial institutions, Interpol, the MTO, the RCMP, the Canadian Border Agency, Revenue Canada, and phone companies. The day ended with details of cell phone records for Mr. Boudreau and Laurie Pearce.