

Seeds’s Wife Talked to Witnesses



Thomas Van Valkenburgh compares the signature of Justin Jacquez on his voter registration, with the outer envelope of his absentee ballot, Jan. 25, in the First Judicial District Court in Santa Fe. Van Valkenburgh, a veteran forensic handwriting analyst who came out of retirement to testify in the case, said there is no comparison between the two signatures, and no way of knowing whether or not the signature on the absentee ballot was actually written by Jacquez.

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them.

Signatures scrutinized

Sixteen voters testified as witnesses in the case, with all of them saying it is, indeed, their signature on outer envelopes of the absentee ballots, and most saying they felt harassed or intimidated by New Mexico State Police officers, who came looking for them at their places of work, while they were investigating criminal allegations of voter fraud parallel to Lewis’ civil lawsuit. Some witnesses said they will never vote again.

Van Valkenburgh came out of retirement in order to testify in the case. He said it’s most common for a person’s signature to change over their lifetime, but a signature can stay the same over the course of 10 years.

One signature on an absentee ballot outer envelope, that of Justin Jacquez, is noticeably different from Jacquez’s signature on his voter registration application completed on Jan. 22, 2016, less than two months before the election.

Graeser said case law allows Singleton to give more weight to Van Valkenburgh’s testimony than the statements of witnesses.

However, Seeds’s attorney, Margaret Kegel, of Santa Fe, called into question the strength of the expert’s opinion. Van Valkenburgh testified that he needs 10 to 15 documents that show a person’s actual signature in order to conclude whether an unknown document shows the same person’s handwriting. Kegel argued that he did not have enough samples in order to make clear and convincing evidence of voter fraud.

“It’s a money issue,” Graeser said, referring to Lewis’s inability to pay for more legal advice and more time for Van Valkenburgh to review more signatures.

Election code allows votes to be tossed

Another issue Singleton will have to consider is whether there is good reason to throw out the votes being called into question.

Kegel said that discounting votes needs to be done only after strict scrutiny because the right to vote is protected by the U.S. Constitution. Graeser said he is


not trying to prove voter fraud as a pretext to disenfranchise anyone, but he argued that the election was not free, open or secure, and that Singleton has the ability to discount votes that have been questioned.

An analysis conducted by News21, a project organized by Arizona State University, found that between 2000 and 2012, out of 2,068 alleged voter fraud cases in the country, only 10 were instances of voter impersonation at the polls, while 491 were absentee ballot fraud.

State Elections Director Kari Fresquez, with the Office of the Secretary of State, said if Singleton finds that the election was faulty, there is no way the election could be completely redone. However, she said, if Singleton finds good cause, she would be able to disqualify all of the absentee ballots that were counted.

Throwing out the absentee ballots would only affect the race between Lewis and Seeds and not any of the other races in the election, Romero said.

Singleton is expecting the lawyers to submit closing arguments in writing by Feb. 3, then she will make a ruling.



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Woman’s Hands Bound In Handcuffs and Chains

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would drive by.

“They made a traffic stop at the San Pedro Shell, and that’s when they came into contact with Jack Morgan,” Vigil said.

Española Sgt. Danny Pacheco responded, along with Officer Albert Rael, around 11:30 p.m.

After the vehicle stopped, officers asked Morgan to step out of the vehicle, then had him get on his knees, before a State Police officer handcuffed him, Pacheco said in a Tuesday interview.

“When the officer cuffed him, all he said was, real calmly, ‘Officer, did I do something wrong?’” Pacheco said.

Pacheco had been told that Morgan was armed and dangerous and he expected the situation might quickly escalate.

“That was it,” Pacheco said. “Not panicking about nothing. He was not worried about the arrest or what we found.”

Pacheco said Brown was the passenger in the vehicle and described him as a transvestite because he was dressed as a woman.

While Morgan was being handcuffed, officers could hear Priebe in the back of the van, yelling that she needed help.

When officers opened the van, they found the woman, wearing flannel pajamas.

“She was very shaken (sic) up, very scared and very fearful for her life,” Pacheco said.

She had a chain around her neck and handcuffs on her wrists. The chain was locked to the inside of the van with three padlocks.

“I thought this only happened in the movies,” Pacheco said. “It was unbelievable.”

Pacheco said the only thing Priebe told him, after he helped free her, was that Morgan kicked down her door, stunned her with a stun gun, and choked her.

“Once she saw my uniform, she pulled me in and gave me a big hug,” Pacheco said. “She wouldn’t let go.”

Priebe had bruises on her eyes and cheeks.

After documenting her injuries and the restraints, officers and medics wrapped her in a blanket and tried to get her into the back of an ambulance, to be checked out at the Española Hospital.

“She didn’t want to go,” Pacheco said. “She was terrified.”

In the back of the van, officers found a roll of duct tape, in addition to the padlocks and chains.

Pacheco said Morgan lives in the area, but he had never called police, been arrested, mentioned in a police report or issued a traffic ticket.

“He said he was going home,” Pacheco said. “We already had prior contact by the (Las Vegas Metro Police Department) and they said he lived in Española. State Police officers had seen him and the van at a convenience store (in the past), but other than that, there was nothing.”

Pacheco said he was just glad that Priebe is safe.

“Who knows what would have happened to her,” he said. “This guy (Morgan), he was not there, trust me.”

According to news reports, the initial 911 call, Monday morning, came in around 10:30 a.m. in Las Vegas.

The approximate driving time between Las Vegas and Española is between nine-and-a-half hours and 10-and-a-half hours.

Kidnapped

According to a press release from the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, Priebe was forcibly taken from her apartment early Monday morning and placed in the minivan.

According to an article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Morgan allegedly dragged Priebe out of her apartment, while she was just wearing a bra and underwear, while bound and gagged, as seen by the neighbor who called 911.

Las Vegas Metro Police Officer Larry Hatfield, working the public information office there, said a woman had been kidnapped in Las Vegas and it was an instance of domestic violence and his department was going to be seeking extradition. He could not, however, confirm any of the details reported by the *Review-Journal*.

The Las Vegas Metro Police Department will seek to extradite Morgan to Nevada to face charges, although what exactly he will be charged with, Hatfield did not know.

He said he had not been told anything else, and could not confirm anything else, because his office had not been made aware.

“We sent out that information yesterday, in a general email,” he said. “We haven’t done anything from this office regarding that, and we haven’t put out any charges or anything.”

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