Holmes: Mind 'Was Kind Of Falling Apart' Before Shooting

BY DAN ELLIOTT Associated Press

CENTENNIAL, Colo. — James Holmes said his "mind was kind of falling apart" and he began to have homicidal thoughts months before he killed 12 people and injured 70 others in a Colorado movie theater, according to a video excerpt presented Friday at his murder trial.

Holmes told a state-appointed psychiatrist in the videotaped interview that he had contracted mononucleosis in late 2011 and became depressed and lacked energy partly because of a breakup with a girlfriend in early 2012.

My mind was kind of falling apart," he told Dr. William Reid in the interview at a state mental hospital two years after the July 20, 2012, theater attack in Aurora. "I don't know what else to say.

Asked by Reid whether he ever thought about hurting or killing himself, Holmes replied: "No." Asked about killing other people, Holmes said: "Yes."

However, Holmes did say he associated depression with suicidal thoughts and added: "I kind of transferred my suicidal thoughts into homicidal.

District Attorney George Brauchler interspersed some five hours of the recording with questioning of Reid, helping to frame what jurors heard.

Reid told jurors he thought Holmes was struggling to protect himself from tumultuous emotions during the 22 hours of interviews that jurors are expected to see and was not trying to hide anything from prosecutors.

Again and again in the video, Reid pressed Holmes to describe his feelings, often eliciting answers of one word or succinct sentences. Reid, for example, asked him how it felt to take pictures of himself posed in body armor with weapons.

"I didn't feel anything," Holmes said. "Except that I'd be remembered by those pictures.

Holmes has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity to multiple charges of murder and attempted murder. If jurors rule in his favor, he would be committed indefinitely to the state mental hospital, and likely spend his life there.

Colorado law defines a defendant as insane if he or she was so mentally diseased or deficient at the time of committing a crime as to be incapable of telling right from wrong, or of being able to form a culpable state of mind.

Prosecutors are trying to show that Holmes knew right from wrong at the time of the attack. They are seeking the death penalty.

Řeid testified Thursday that following the exam, he determined Holmes was legally sane at the time of the shooting. Holmes told Reid that he wondered before

the attack if he was under FBI surveillance

because "I was going to commit a crime." He said he had hoped he would be "locked away before I did it.

Under questioning by Brauchler, Reid said the comments suggest "he knew that he was doing something wrong or was planning something wrong.

Holmes' attorneys have yet to question Reid.

On screen, Reid did the vast majority of talking, asking the defendant about a wide range of topics, including faith, his parents, his preference for being alone, books he liked and childhood nightmares. In court, Holmes did not glance at the camera but stared straight ahead, swiveling lightly in his chair.

Holmes said faith was important to his mother but that he was "never really a believer." Asked about his parents' relationship, he said he "could see love between them" and that he also felt loved.

Peterson

From Page 1

"The 2014 flood was more of a challenge because (the water) all came in two days," he said. "In 2011, the river rose slower and we had more time to deal with it."

On the other hand, Peterson worked with a trio of historic experiences producing a more pleasant outcome. "We worked with three new bridges on the Missouri River, which was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," he said.

The first two bridges linked Running Water with Niobrara, Nebraska, and Vermillion with Newcastle, Nebraska. The third structure, the Discovery Bridge at Yankton, replaced the 1924 Meridian Bridge.

For good measure, Peterson also worked with the conversion of the double-decker Meridian Bridge into a pedestrian bridge.

In addition, he has worked with an overlay, reconstruction and resurface of the 600 miles of highway at least once - and some areas three times. During his tenure, the DOT rebuilt I-29 from Sioux City to Beresford.

Peterson isn't the only engineer leaving the DOT ranks in the coming days.

We have 12 area engineers, so we call them the Dirty Dozen," he joked. "Three of us are leaving June 8, from Watertown, Huron and Yankton, with (a combined) 110 years of service.

RESPECT FROM THE TOP

South Dakota Transportation Secretary Darin Bergquist has worked with Peterson since first joining the SDDOT nearly 17 years

"Ron is one of those guys that you just love to work with, because no matter what was needed or needed to be done, Ron just made it happen without complaint,' Bergquist told the Press & Dakotan. "He was also the type of guy that didn't hesitate to go 'above and beyond' when needed, as evidenced by all the time and effort he and his staff put in to deal with the flooding, just as an example.'

ago, and he said the Yankton engi-

neer will definitely be missed.

In addition, Peterson's personality enabled him to excel as an area engineer, Bergquist said.

"Ron was able to effectively communicate and develop strong working relationships with all the various groups he interacted with," the secretary said.

Those groups, Bergquist said, included Peterson's engineering, maintenance and administrative staff; consultants and contractors; all those he worked with within the Department of Transportation; local government entities; and citizens and the traveling public.

"When you think about all the miles of streets, highways, interstate and interchanges Ron had a hand in building and maintaining in that part of the state, he really had a tremendous and long lasting impact on the state and its citizens!" Bergquist added.

A HOMECOMING

For Peterson, working at the Yankton DOT office represented a homecoming.

After graduating from Wakonda High School, he attended South Dakota State University in Brookings and graduated in December 1971 with a civil engineering degree. Peterson began his DOT career

in February 1972, spending 10 months in Brookings and six

months in Pierre for training programs. He returned to his southeast South Dakota roots when he joined the Yankton office in spring 1973, starting as a project engineer and moving through the ranks until becoming area engineer in 1999.

During the past 43 years, technology has provided the greatest changes, Peterson said. "When I started this job, the

four-function calculator with add, subtract, multiply and divide didn't exist," he said. "We had an employee who came in with one (calculator) that cost \$180, and that was a big deal. I did my work on a slide rule.

Now, DOT crews use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and computerized snow plows that control the chemical applications and tell if the blade is up or down.

Technology also allows greater interaction between the DOT and general public on highway conditions and road closures.

Unfortunately, technology has also increased the opportunities for distracted driving, Peterson said.

"You see a car passing, or you're passing a car, and (other drivers) have their phone in their hand. You have seen so many people text and drive," he said. "People with navigation systems are playing with their GPS. Or they may be listening to or dialing the radio.

A DOT staff member was the victim of distracted driving, Peterson said.

"We had a maintenance man who was hit, who was rear-ended on Highway 50 east of Yankton," Peterson said. "(The DOT worker) was parked on the road and patching the highway. He was stopping randomly to take care of spots when he was rear-ended.'

Another change has seen the rise of larger and better equipment leading to replacement of the former maintenance shop in every county with a more centralized system, he said.

The cost of maintaining the state transportation system has risen sharply through the years, Peterson said. In turn, the DOT tries to make the best use of its funds through its Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), he said.

Because of tight funds, South Dakota has taken a preservation mode rather than construction in recent years, Peterson said. As a result, residents seem generally happy with current road conditions, he added.

"Our roads are in decent shape, so public attendance (at STIP meetings) has dwindled a little bit," he said.

SAYING FAREWELL

Peterson said he has enjoyed working with a wide range of government officials, media, chambers of commerce and a tri-state incident management team.

"And I've been very fortunate to have great staff who supported and help me," he said. "I'll miss the people.

Rod Gall, an engineer supervisor in the Yankton office, said the feeling is mutual.

"Ron was respected for his knowledge and experience in all phases of design, construction and maintenance of our state highways," Gall told the Press & Dakotan. "People always went to Ron for his opinions because he would always listen and give them good ideas on how to solve the problem, including personnel issues.'

Peterson was willing to tackle the tough issues, Gall said.

"Ron was a great leader that was never afraid of a challenge and in almost all cases looked forward to the new challenge," Gall said. "Ron will be missed by many in the Yankton area, Mitchell region and the Pierre central office for his experience."

Gall joked that Peterson was also known for his thoroughness.

"The company who makes the red ink pens for the state will also miss him because their company will not have to make as many red ink pens," Gall said. "If you wanted Ron to check over a ... letter or document, it came back with plenty of red marks that he would like to have changed. He would have been a good English teacher."

Peterson also showed a sense of humor, Gall said.

"Ron had many sayings, but one that I liked was, if we were on a grading project and the contractor would say, 'We are running short of dirt,' (Ron) would reply, "That's impossible, the earth is full of it," Gall joked.

Peterson has plans for retirement. His wife Celia just retired as the Wakonda finance officer after 20 years, and they plan to spend more time with their family. They also intend to continue their private land survey business, making time to fish, golf, camp, tend to the garden and raise sheep.

In addition, Peterson plans to remain involved in many leadership roles. "I'm part of more boards than a lumberyard," he joked.

For now, though, he plans to enjoy his final days with the DOT in the office and on the road.

There's never a dull moment at the DOT. There's something different every day," he said. "It's been a great career. I wouldn't change a thing.

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