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Murder conspiracy trial begins in Fort Pierce

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Posted at 1:43 p.m.
June 12, 2006

FORT PIERCE — Opening statements were delivered this morning in the trial of two people accused of plotting to kill a man because he wouldn't testify in court.

David Woodard, 40, and Rudine Hill, 29, are charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the April 3, 2003 shooting death of Thomas Noble, 33. Woodard is accused of firing the fatal shots while Noble sat in a car outside a Chinese restaurant in Fort Pierce, and Hill is accused of arranging to bring him there so he could be shot.

Advertisement "Four shots execution style in the back of the head. That's what Thomas Noble got for refusing to perjure himself," said Assistant State Attorney Daryl Isenhower in his opening.

Isenhower claimed Noble was killed because he wouldn't testify on behalf of Wesley Roberts, who was found guilty of carjacking and murder only hours before Noble was shot. Roberts' mother and aunt, who also await trial on murder and conspiracy charges, are accused of orchestrating the plot.

Defense attorney Rusty Akins, who represents Woodard, said his client is innocent and told jurors they would hear from some "unbelievable" witnesses with criminal pasts. The state simply can't prove its conspiracy theory, he said.

Defense attorney Tom Burns, who represents Hill, said she had no reason to want Noble dead. She had been dating him for about nine years and he acted as a father to her children, as well as supported her, he said.

"Keep in your mind the question why," Burns said. "Why would Rudine do it?"

Testimony in the trial continues this afternoon and the case is expected to last all week. Both Woodard and Hill could get the death penalty if convicted.

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