



# **Madison County Assistant State's Attorney Issues Powerful Opening Statement In Witcher Case**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Murder victim Shari Yates of Bethalto was a kind person who was repaid for her kindness by being shot and killed execution-style, an assistant state's attorney claimed in her opening statement Tuesday.

Madison County Assistant State's Attorney Morgan Hudson gave her opening statement at the murder trial of Brady Witcher, 43, of Birmingham, Ala. He was indicted on multiple murder charges in the Dec. 19, 2019, deaths of Yates, Andrew J. Brooks, and John E. McMillian.



Brittany McMillian was allowed to stay with Yates in October out of the kindness of Shari Yates, according to Hudson. Yates was shot and killed by Witcher on December 19, 2019. McMillian pleaded guilty and is serving a life term.

Before the executions of three people in Bethalto, Hudson outlined a chain of brutal crimes that led Witcher and McMillian to Bethalto. They needed a car and money and they had left people alive in two previous cases of torture and mayhem, Hudson said.

“They were not going to leave anyone else alive. The shootings were methodical, quick, and cold,” Hudson told the jury.

The crime spree started in Birmingham, Ala., where Witcher, McMillian, and others were involved in a “business enterprise.”

Witcher and McMillian were both angry with Jessica Graves, one of the members of the enterprise. Previous hearings have revealed that Witcher is charged with a murder in Birmingham, but Circuit Judge Kyle Napp previously ruled that the Alabama murder could not be introduced as evidence in the Madison County trial.

However, Jessica Graves, a former associate in the enterprise, was allowed to testify Tuesday that Witcher and McMillian turned against her.

She said McMillian was her “best friend,” before Witcher “hog-tied” her with zip ties and forced her into a closet. For her part, McMillian attempted to rip Graves’ finger off with a pair of pliers. McMillian also spayed a rag in bleach, which Witcher stuffed into Graves’ mouth then covered her mouth with duct tape, Graves testified.

Graves said Witcher also pistol-whipped her, burned her with a cigarette and wrapped her in a deflated air mattress, and left her for several hours before she was able to struggle out of her restraints.

Graves said Witcher held a black and silver .45-caliber handgun, which showed up later in Clarksville, Tenn., and at a motel in St. Louis County where the two suspects were hiding after the Bethalto murders and theft of Yates’ car.

After allegedly killing one person and assaulting Graves, the couple stole a pickup truck from the Birmingham victims and fled north to Clarksville, Tenn. There they forced their way into the home of Diego and Taolima Padron.

Diego Padron, an Army soldier, said he opened the door on Dec. 19 to see Witcher and McMillian pointing guns at him. They hogtied both of the Padrons.

Witcher took him into a bathroom at the Clarksville apartment, where Padro grabbed Witcher’s wrist, causing the .45 to fire. He said Witcher stabbed him four times. He managed to get away and go to a secluded area where he stuffed mud in his wounds to keep from bleeding to death.

Two of the wounds required surgery, he said, but both Diego and Taolima Padron managed to get free and notify authorities.

The suspects then stole Padron's truck and headed north to Bethalto, where McMillian had stayed for about three weeks in October. They stole several items from the Clarksville couple, as well as the victims in Birmingham.

After killing three people in Bethalto, they stole Yates Ford Fusion. Witcher drove the car and Witcher drove Padron's truck to a motel in St. Louis County. The truck was found in the Stadium East Parking lot in St. Louis.

Meanwhile, federal authorities, the FBI, and the Drug Enforcement Agency were tracking the suspects by tracing Witcher's cell phone. Officers tracked the two to the motel, where they found Witcher and McMillian.

They also found the property of the Birmingham victims and the Clarksville victims. They also found a black and silver .45-caliber handgun, which Witcher admitted belonged to him.

After finding Yates' car, officers called Bethalto police to check on the Yates home. There, police found three bodies.

Hudson said the shell casings and other items were taken as evidence. Both suspected killers were taken into custody and held in the Madison County Jail without bail.

"Sheri Yates was a truly kind woman. The defendant quietly quickly and coldly killed them. The evidence is absolutely overwhelming," Hudson said to the jury.