

Ring Shafer says she got for Holmes fits him

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In a dramatic courtroom scene worthy of Perry Mason — or Cinderella — Dr. Diane Shafer yesterday unveiled the wedding ring she said she bought for Greg Holmes to seal their marriage vows.

On the witness stand, Holmes was forced to try on the ring.

First the former assistant attorney general claimed it was too tight. Then he said it was too loose. Finally he slipped it on his finger. And, like Cinderella's slipper, it fit.

That sensational evidence and other testimony yesterday in Jefferson Circuit Court seemed to test severely Holmes' contention that he was not Shafer's lover, spouse or traveling companion.

Holmes is charged with bribery — accused of taking money and trips from Shafer, a southeastern Kentucky surgeon he supposedly secretly married in December 1989, shortly before recommending the dismissal of disciplinary charges against her.

Shafer also is charged with bribery — accused of trying to induce Holmes to urge the dismissal of the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure action, in which she was accused of overprescribing narcotics and other violations.

Holmes also is charged with theft, for taking his state pay on 13 occasions when he allegedly was traveling with Shafer, and with bigamy, for later marrying his longtime assistant, Kathryn Harmon, who herself is charged with theft — accused of turning in many of Holmes' allegedly false time sheets.

Cross-examined for 2½ hours, Holmes insisted that a Bermuda perfume saleswoman; a French Lick, Ind., hotel desk clerk; a Louisville Chevrolet salesman; two Louisville cabdrivers; and a host of other witnesses were all "lying or mistaken" when they swore they saw Holmes and Shafer together.

Although Holmes has contended that Shafer purloined his credit

cards, and fraudulently charged meals, room and phone calls that the commonwealth claims show the couple traveled together on 10 trips, Holmes admitted he has no explanation for how she stole them.

He also conceded he couldn't explain his claim that Shafer procured his Discover Card without his knowledge, since he later lent the same card to another woman.

Holmes, who on Wednesday told jurors that the woman — Judy Bratcher — borrowed the card with his permission, yesterday acknowledged that he reported last year to the card company that whoever used it had used it fraudulently.

Persisting in his claim that he and Shafer were not romantically linked, he also testified that he was merely a stand-in when he and Shafer were fitted at a Lexington shop for a bicycle made for two.

Jurors openly laughed at some of Holmes' testimony. And the 38-year-old attorney appeared to grow increasingly testy at each point scored by prosecutor Wes Faulkner, whom Holmes accused of conducting a "National Enquirer prosecution."

Holmes found himself under attack from both the commonwealth and Grover Cox, counsel for Shafer, who insists that she and Holmes did marry and travel together.

Although they are co-defendants, the only thing Holmes and Shafer have agreed on is that she didn't need to bribe him to get him to drop that medical-licensure action because the evidence was weak.

Holmes testified that while witnesses described Shafer as "abrasive" during three days of testimony in that case, being rude is not a crime under the law that regulates Kentucky doctors.

Holmes noted that from the very first day he served as her hearing officer — when he had just met her — he advised lawyers on both sides that they didn't have a case.

He also pointed out that the medical-licensure board reviewed the evidence against Shafer and made the ultimate decision to dismiss it.

Holmes also tried to make short work of the claims of Dr. Magdi Fahmy that he was disciplined on Holmes' recommendation after Fahmy refused Shafer's alleged suggestion to kick in \$10,000 to bribe Holmes. Holmes said Fahmy had clearly violated the law by billing an insurance company for eight hours of work for a one-hour procedure.

Corrections & clarifications

The date of the Western Kentucky University men's basketball banquet was incorrect in a story Wednesday. The banquet will be April 16 at 7:30 p.m. EDT.