

Bermuda cruise could play part in strange bribery trial

By ANDREW WOLFSON
Staff Writer

Opening the bizarre trial of a lawyer who is allegedly married to both of his co-defendants, a prosecutor said yesterday that he will prove that Greg Holmes and Dr. Diane Shafer perpetrated "one of the most blatant, deceitful examples of public corruption you will ever see."

In an opening statement in Jefferson Circuit Court, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Wes Faulkner told jurors that he will call witnesses from as far away as Bermuda to prove that Shafer, a Paintsville surgeon, favored Holmes with gifts, cash and trips to induce him to recommend the dismissal of medical-licensure charges against her.

Faulkner also said he will show that Holmes, a former assistant attorney general who served as hearing officer in Shafer's case, never disclosed his blossoming romance with Shafer, which led to their purported marriage in December 1989. On Jan. 9, 1990, Holmes recommended that the charges against Shafer be dismissed.

"He never said, 'By the way, I married her but that didn't have anything to do with my decision,'" Faulkner said.

Holmes and Shafer are charged with bribery, and Holmes with theft, for allegedly taking his state pay on 13 days when his credit card records show he was traveling with Shafer.

Holmes is also accused of bigamy for later marrying his longtime secretary, Kathryn Harmon, who herself is charged with theft for submitting many of Holmes' time sheets.

Lexington lawyer Joseph Harkins

III, who represents Holmes and Harmon, declined to offer opening remarks to the jury, as did Grover Cox, who represents Shafer.

However, in selecting jurors, Harkins indicated that he will try to prove that Shafer fraudulently charged hotel rooms, meals and phone calls to Holmes' charge cards and that Holmes did not catch the phony billings because he is blind.

Cox suggested to prospective jurors that Shafer acted foolishly, but not illegally, in falling for Holmes.

"Does anyone here not think that love and reason keep little company?" he asked. "Does anyone not think smart people can fall in love with the wrong people?"

Cox also suggested that there was nothing untoward about Holmes' advice that the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure dismiss charges against Shafer.

"Is there anyone here who believes that just because a person rules in your favor means they've been bought off?" Cox asked.

Faulkner said an immigration officer from Bermuda will testify that Holmes and Shafer disembarked there, and a clerk from a Bermuda shop will testify that she sold Holmes a bottle of perfume. Officials from Cunard and Norwegian cruise lines also will testify about Shafer and Holmes' travels.

Holmes has contended that the commonwealth is unfairly portraying him as "the Don Juan of the bar association." He claims that he was never romantically involved with Shafer and that his signature on their wedding license was forged.

The trial, before Judge Geoffrey Morris, is expected to last two to three weeks.