

Bobbitt denies striking his wife



NATIONAL

On Day 2 of Bobbitt II, Bobbitt Denies Striking Wife
MANASSAS, Va. (AP) — John Bobbitt returned to the witness stand Tuesday and denied ever striking his wife before she cut off his penis, saying the worst he ever did was "push her, hold her down, restrain her from hitting me."

On the second day of his wife's malicious wounding trial, Bobbitt disputed a court record that a defense lawyer said showed Bobbitt pleaded guilty to assaulting his wife, Lorena.

"I never pleaded guilty to nothing," Bobbitt said. Lorena Bobbitt, 24, is charged with maliciously cutting off her husband's penis after he came home from a night of drinking June 23.

If convicted, the Ecuadorian-born manicurist could get up to 20 years in prison and be deported. Bobbitt, 26, was acquitted late last year of assaulting his wife.

The defense opened its case Tuesday by calling Bobbitt to the stand as an "adverse" witness. On Monday, he testified for the prosecution, which rested its case Tuesday morning.

Both times, and in his own trial in November, he denied ever forcing his wife to have sex.

Lorena Bobbitt contends that prolonged sexual, physical and verbal abuse by Bobbitt during their four-year marriage forced her to cut off his penis in an "irresistible impulse." Bobbitt is seeking a divorce.

Amalia Hoyt testified for the defense about an incident in which Bobbitt gave his wife bikini underwear for Christmas in front of several friends. Lorena Bobbitt was embarrassed and walked away, she said.

"He said 'Why are you trying to hide it?'" Hoyt said. She said Bobbitt pushed his wife against the wall several times.

"She was really scared," Hoyt said.

Terri McComber, who used to work with Lorena Bobbitt, testified that Bobbitt would criticize his wife's appearance, but could turn violent if other men paid attention to her.

On a trip with the Bobbitts to Ocean City, Md., McComber said somebody whistled and Bobbitt wife.

"He came up, grabbed her by the hair," she said. "He said the weekend was over. We're going home."

She said Bobbitt started hitting his wife in the car on the way home. "He kept accusing her of

looking at the guys in other cars," she said.

Defense attorney Blair Howard said Bobbitt records from a court case that the lawyer said showed he pleaded guilty in March 1991 to assaulting his wife.

Bobbitt disputed the records. Commonwealth's Attorney Paul B. Ebert said the court did not issue a final finding of guilt in the case.

"I could never hit my wife," Bobbitt said. "I never hit her at all — just push her, hold her down, restrain her from hitting me."

Instead, Bobbitt said, it was his wife who sometimes assaulted him.

In one instance, he said, she got upset when they weren't allowed in a restaurant because they were wearing sneakers and began hitting him as they drove home.

"My brother was sitting in the back seat, and I remember looking in the rearview mirror and he was just nodding his head," Bobbitt said.

Detective Peter J. Weintz, who testified for the prosecution, said Lorena Bobbitt told him that her husband forced himself on her early June 23 and, when she complained to him afterward, said he didn't care about her feelings.

"If he wanted to make love, he should have asked me," the detective quoted her as saying.

After severing the penis that day, Lorena Bobbitt drove off and threw it from her car window. She later directed officers to the location, where the organ was recovered by Howard Perry, a rescue squad member.

"I picked up the penis and placed it in a clear, plastic bag," Perry said.

By that time, Bobbitt had arrived at Prince William Hospital, where he was examined by Dr. James T. Sehn.

"There was nothing but a large amount of blood where the penis should have been," said Sehn, a urologist who reattached the organ in an operation that lasted about nine hours. "It appeared it had been severed right at the body wall."

Robert Johnston, a house guest of Bobbitt who drove him to the hospital, said Bobbitt was naked and had blood on his hands when Bobbitt woke him up.

Johnston quoted Bobbitt as saying, "You better get me to the hospital. I've been cut."

The jury of seven women and five men looked at photographs of Bobbitt's injury, but only for a few seconds. The only reaction was a frown by one woman juror.

Sehn said it is still uncertain how well the reattached penis will function.

Panel to probe radiation test data

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton will name a civilian panel of scientists to independently review human radiation test data uncovered by a government-wide search and determine whether ethical standards were violated, administration officials said Tuesday.

At the same time, the Energy Department said it had completed telephone interviews with some 4,000 people who have called a department hot line and that about one-fifth had complained of being victims of some radiation experiments.

In all, more than 10,000 callers have gotten through to a bank of 36 operators. About half of them were veterans and were referred to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Thousands more people have been unable to get through, with the hot line receiving as many as 700 calls an hour, department spokesmen said.

The civilian advisory panel, expected to be named later this month, will examine the hundreds of thousands of documents on reported radiation tests conducted on humans during the Cold War. It also may interview some of the victims and in some cases recommend a compensation scheme will have to be approved by Congress, said Energy Department spokesman Michael Gauldin.

"We felt it was important to

choose a non-governmental body to make these determinations," Gauldin said.

He said the civilian panel is "going to be the broad range" in analyzing the data once it is assembled. It will also be given wide latitude to judge whether the experiments were within proper ethical bounds — as they existed at the time and by today's standards.

Gauldin emphasized that it would be up to Congress to determine actual compensation.

He said it had not yet been determined who would be on the advisory panel, which will consist of health physicists, experts on radiology, and specialists in medical ethics.

Meanwhile, there are signs that the massive record search and the intense public reaction from thousands of people who claim to have been victims is threatening to overwhelm officials trying to manage the program.

Gauldin said the interagency "working group" formed a week ago to coordinate the search of records in eight agencies and departments is trying to more clearly define exactly what experiments should be included in the sweep for documents and files.

"We're looking for cases in which the government deliberately exposed people to radiation or deliberately released radiation," Gauldin told

reporters Tuesday. "We're very concerned about being able to manage this task. It's an immense job."

Gauldin said the search of documents specifically will not include cases of accidental exposure, including some involving accidental releases of radiation at government nuclear weapons plants.

The task force also has not yet clearly determined what medical experiments might be subject to the search. Officials acknowledged, for example, that some radiation experiments conducted on humans were well within medical standards with proper medical goals, and in some cases may have had therapeutic effect.

Gauldin said the records search is intended to "cast a wide net" but that researchers will "specifically look at how the experiments were conducted" and whether there was proper consent.

"We're still largely in the searching process," said Gauldin, predicting it will take "months, perhaps years" to find all the records and analyze them.

In addition to the Energy Department, record searches on human radiation tests have been directed at the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Health and Human Services, as well as at the Central Intelligence Agency and NASA.

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