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OR SHOOT OUR WAY TO JUSTICE

news BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

Kevin Tubbs and Ginga



## Families Face Terror

Mothers give emotional testimony

**T**errorism "is what 'The Family'" is all about," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Peifer at the terrorism enhancement hearing in Judge Ann Aiken's courtroom last week. "This is a classic case of terrorism despite their claims of lofty humane goals," he said.

On the evening of May 21, almost a full week later, Aiken ruled that the 10 eco-saboteurs the government and the media have repeatedly referred to as "The Family" could be sentenced as terrorists. Her painstaking 46-page ruling was not based on the question of whether they intended to harm or kill but on their convictions as part of a conspiracy and whether the conspiracy was intended to promote a "federal crime of terrorism."

But these members of the so-called Family have families who don't see them as terrorists at all.

Stanislaus Meyerhoff's mother, France de Laage, stood before the court on Tuesday afternoon. Slender and vulnerable, she spoke quietly, haltingly and with speech accented by her native French. "When you sentence Stan, you sentence me as well," she said.

Meyerhoff is the first to be sentenced. He has been in jail since he was arrested in December 2005. Now, she will find out his fate. After listening to hours of testimony about the horrors her son may face in prison, de Laage's face was dignified but drawn and tired. "Can you imagine the horror of waking up every morning with the thought of a son who could be beaten up or raped and live with that all day?" she asked.

Tuesday after the hearing, with the sentencing carried over for another day, she spoke of her son as "gentle" and "passionate." She taught him "be of service," she said. "If there is someone in your path that needs help, help him."

When she spoke of the arsons, she said, "Stan has done terrible deeds. He has taken a big detour, a detour that's hurt many."

But at the time of his arrest, her son had already left that detour behind. He had begun to go to school and, according to his sentencing memorandum, wanted to repay his "social debt."

De Laage said at the sentencing, "He's on the path to giving and contributing."

And as she spoke of losing her only child to prison, she said, "My mind is frozen. I have been in a stupor since Stan's arrest."

Angelina Hawkins, mother of fellow de-

fendant Kevin Tubbs, knows the agony de Laage is going through. She said, "I think that a lot of me is dead. I'm like a sleepwalker."

She spoke of watching Alberto Gonzales on CNN call her son "the number one domestic terrorist threat."

"Can you believe that?" she asked, "Animal rights activists as number one?"

Her son, she said with tears in her voice, has always loved animals. "When he was little, I ran an animal rescue" she said. "Loving animals was second nature to him."

Getting a phone call saying her son had been arrested by the FBI "was a bigger shock," she said, "than when my husband died, and he died almost in my arms."

Tubbs was 20 when his father died. His parents had come to see him act in a lead role in a college performance of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Two days later his father was dead of a massive heart attack.

Hawkins herself became depressed after her husband of 30 years died, she said, and she had to be hospitalized. "When Kevin needed someone to talk to," she said, "I wasn't there for him."

Shortly after the death of his father, Tubbs found Pujo, his beloved pit-bull/beagle mix. The puppy had been left outside in the cold, and fraternity boys had cut off his tail.

When she came to visit him several years ago, Tubbs was depressed over a breakup with a girlfriend. He said to his mother about his dog, "Animals never stop loving you, like people."

Her son, she said, is "super soft-hearted."

The day he was arrested, Tubbs, worried the officers who came into his house would shoot the dog, shoved him into the bathroom without saying goodbye. That was the last time he saw his companion of 15 years. Pujo died alone at home while Tubbs' fiancée was visiting him in the prison.

He loved Pujo "like a brother," his mother said, laughing through her tears.

Tubbs will be sentenced Thursday, May 24. He faces 14 years in prison. Other sentencing dates are: Chelsea Gerlach, May 25; Darren Thurston, May 29; Suzanne Savoie and Kendall Tankersley, May 31; Nathan Block and Joyanna Zacher, June 1; Daniel McGowan, June 4; Jonathan Paul, June 5. Judge Aiken will decide the applicability of the terrorism enhancement on a case-by-case basis.

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