

Grandmother puts Gregory at home during murders

By FRANK FERNANDEZ, Staff writer
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DAYTONA BEACH -- William Gregory's grandmother testified Wednesday that her grandson was at home in Flagler Beach around the time investigators have accused him of being five miles away, pulling the trigger on a shotgun to kill his ex-girlfriend and her boyfriend.

Gregory is charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the slayings of Skyler Meekins, 17, and her boyfriend Daniel Dyer, 22, as they slept together on Aug. 21, 2007. Gregory is accused of slipping into Meekins' grandparents' home near Flagler Beach on John Anderson Highway, taking a 12-gauge shotgun from a closet and shooting Meekins and Dyer once each in the head.

Gregory and Meekins had a daughter, Kyla, who is now 4 years old.

If convicted of the murders, the 28-year-old Gregory could face the death penalty.

The prosecution and defense finished their cases Wednesday and the jury of 10 women and two men is expected to get the case today after closing arguments beginning at 9 a.m. in Circuit Judge William A. Parsons courtroom at the S. James Foxman Justice Center.

Meekins' grandmother, Maryann Meekins, testified earlier in the trial that she got up about 1:30 a.m. to use the bathroom on the night of the murders and noticed her granddaughter's bedroom door was ajar, which was unusual but she did not enter the room. Maryann Meekins said she was hard of hearing and did not hear anything unusual that night. Skyler Meekins' grandfather, Charles A. Meekins, who has since passed away, reported hearing two loud pops just after 1 a.m. but he did not check on the noise. The bodies were not discovered until after 6 a.m.

But Gregory's grandmother Mary Lou Wilson testified Wednesday that her grandson returned home about 9:30 p.m. on Aug. 20, the night before the killings, and he was in his room playing video games just after midnight. Wilson also testified she did not see Gregory leave the house until about 2 a.m.

Prosecutor Mark Johnson questioned Wilson about why she had not given all those times to investigators when they appeared at her doorsteps on Aug. 21 looking for Gregory's clothes.

"With those two pieces of information, that Skyler's been murdered, and they are interested in Billie Gregory's clothes, you did not see fit to tell them that you saw him at 12:05 or 2:05?" Johnson asked.

"They didn't say anything about ... they just wanted all of his clothes and stuff," Wilson said.
"They didn't say anything about murder or anything."

Johnson also questioned why she took the clothes Gregory had worn that night and put them in the home's washing machine.

"After hearing the detectives show up at the house and ask for his clothes and knowing that Skyler Meekins had been murdered, you took those clothes and you put them in the washing machine," Johnson said.

"I just went around cleaning everything up. When I get nervous, I clean," Wilson said.

Investigators took the clothes out of the washing machine, but no DNA or other evidence was found on the shorts and shirt.

Under questioning by defense attorney Garry Wood, Wilson provided a timeline of Gregory's comings and goings from his house. Wilson said Gregory and his brother, Edward Kory Gregory, returned home and went into their room about 10 p.m. Aug. 20.

Wilson said she was a light sleeper and did not have her own room in the house, which sits on stilts off Ocean Palm Drive on the beachside in Flagler Beach. She said she slept on the couch near the door.

Wilson said she couldn't sleep because of the noise from Gregory's room so about 12:10 a.m. Aug. 21 she looked in the room and saw Gregory playing video games as his brother slept. She said she told Gregory to turn the sound down.

Wilson said about 1:30 a.m. she was awakened by Gregory's mother's boyfriend, Jon Schmucker, who was also living in the house.

Wilson said about 2 a.m. she heard footsteps and saw that this time it was Gregory.

"I said 'Where are you going, Bill?,' " Wilson testified. "And he said, 'Just outside, Grandma, just outside.' "

Wood has said Gregory went to the beach, fell asleep on the sand and was awakened by a wave. Then Gregory jumped into a pool at a nearby condominium.

Prosecutors have argued that Gregory jumped into the water to cleanse himself of any evidence, such as gunshot residue or DNA. Neither was found. But investigators did find his fingerprints on the shotgun lying near Meekins and Dyer.

Wilson said about 3:30 a.m. her rat terrier started barking because Gregory returned home and was knocking on the door. She said Gregory and his clothes were all wet. Gregory went into his bedroom, took off the wet clothes and then about 4 a.m. he left the house again.

Gregory called 9-1-1 from Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area near his house at 4:17 a.m. offering to turn himself in because he said he felt guilty for doing drugs. But he was not arrested because there was no warrant for his arrest. Prosecutors have maintained Gregory actually was trying to create an alibi by being under arrest. He called 9-1-1 again about two hours later and was taken into custody.