

Herrin child abuse trial begins in district court

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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HERRIN

The trial for a 28-year-old Gothenburg woman charged with felony child abuse began Monday in Dawson County District court.

Herrin's 3-year-old daughter, Misty Herrin, died in December of 2010 of what medical officials said were injuries consistent with child abuse.

KRVN radio, which is covering the trial, reported that Monday was spent impaneling a 12-member jury with two alternates.

Dawson County attorney Elizabeth Waterman, who is prosecuting the case, and defense attorney Jeff Wightman, presented opening arguments on Monday.

The radio station reported that Waterman said Misty died after suffering blunt force to her head while Wightman said Herrin's boyfriend at the time, Adam Jesseph of Gothenburg, had something to do with the injuries.

Felony child abuse charges were dropped against Jesseph in 2011 after Waterman said the case was not winnable.

During Monday's trial, according to KRVN, Waterman said Herrin and her boyfriend told investigators that they were in another room when they heard a noise in Misty's room, in a home they shared in Gothenburg, and found her unresponsive on the floor.

The story said the couple claimed Misty had tried to climb to the top of a dresser and fell.

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Wightman presented the possibility Misty had a pre-existing injury that led her to suffer another one and insisted that Herrin did not harm her daughter, KRVN reported.

Dr. Craig Bartruff of Gothenburg was in the emergency room of Gothenburg Memorial Hospital where the couple brought Misty. She was later airlifted to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney where she underwent emergency surgery for a brain injury and later died of massive hemorrhaging, according to an earlier story in The Times.

Bartruff testified at the trial, according to KRVN, that Misty was still breathing when he assessed her but was unresponsive.

On cross-examination, the radio station reported that Bartruff said he found bruising on Misty's body not unusual for a 3-year-old.

The doctor also said that Misty had been treated three times at his clinic for a respiratory infection and sore throat but abuse was not suspected during those visits, the story said.

Dawson County District Court officials said the trial is expected to last through the week.

Herrin has been in custody in the Dawson County Jail since December of 2010.