

# The Charlotte Observer

## Rudolf shows his talent is cut above

By TOMMY TOMLINSON

Soon, on late-night TV:

*New, from Ronco, it's David Rudolf - the Witness-O-Matic! He slices! He dices! He shreds your witnesses into tiny bits of flesh! All for only several thousand payments of \$19.95!*

If lawyers did infomercials, they'd look like Thursday in Courtroom 3301, where Rae Carruth is on trial in the murder of Cherica Adams.

Prosecutors called three witnesses. And Rudolf, Carruth's main lawyer, turned each witness into a pile of julienne fries.

That doesn't mean he proved Carruth is innocent. But it does prove that some well-paid people are worth every cent. At least on this day, Rudolf was smarter, sharper, more aggressive, more thorough and more persuasive than anybody else in the room.

It's an odd time in the trial. Each side has presented its main case. Now the prosecution can call rebuttal witnesses - people who contradict some of the defense's points.

The first two witnesses: Mecklenburg County jailers who said Sgt. Shirley Riddle was in tight with Carruth.

Riddle, remember, is the jailer who testified just before Christmas. She said Van Brett Watkins confessed from his cell that he killed Adams in a rage after she flipped him off.

Prosecutors say Carruth hired Watkins to kill Adams. And they tried to get at the idea that Riddle was a groupie of sorts who liked to hang around high-profile inmates.

On Thursday, jailer Kimberly Young said Riddle once shooed her away from guarding Carruth's cell so Riddle could have time alone with Carruth. And Maj. Felicia McAdoo said Riddle escorted Carruth around even when she wasn't assigned to his floor.

It was then that you heard the whirring sound from the defense table.

He made prosecutors spend an hour tracking down documents related to what Young testified. Then he got Young to say she wasn't sure what day it all happened, couldn't find it in the jail log books and wasn't sure which supervisor she told about it.

*Bzzzzzzz.*

McAdoo was tougher. But she admitted she told jailers who testified for the defense not to wear their uniforms on the stand. (She and Young wore theirs to testify for the prosecution.)

And Rudolf hauled out Riddle's employee evaluation, making McAdoo go over it in great detail, finally revealing that Riddle was given the highest marks in her last job review.

*Bzzzzzzz.*

Finally the prosecutors brought out Donald Kim, a former neighbor of Carruth's. Kim said Carruth grabbed him in a fury one morning after he complained about Carruth blocking in his car.

In just a few minutes, Rudolf suggested Kim was just as angry as Carruth was, and that Kim wasn't injured. And at the end, Rudolf announced that he'd be doing some further investigation on Kim.

*Bzzzzzzz.*

As Carruth was led back to his cell, he clapped Rudolf on the back for a job well done. As Rudolf came toward the cameras for his afternoon news conference, his eyes glowed like a linebacker's after he gets up off a crumpled quarterback.

But trials are not always about who has the slickest lawyers. The jurors didn't seem especially impressed by the flash of Rudolf's blades.

And when it was all done Thursday, Donald Kim stuck to his story that Rae Carruth could turn violent in a flash.

It wasn't much. But in that pile of shredded testimony, something still twitched.