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Family animosity allegedly precipitated Rumney shooting

By John Koziol Union Leader Correspondent

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Dean R. Kenneson, left, and his attorney Ted Lothstein listen on Monday at the start of his trial on charges of assault and reckless conduct in the shooting of Jacob Sanborn in March 2022 outside the Rumney Post Office.

John Koziol/Union Leader Correspondent

NORTH HAVERHILL — Long-simmering family animosity was allegedly behind the confrontation that led Dean R. Kenneson to shoot Jacob Sanborn in the parking lot at the Rumney Post Office on March 1, 2022.



Sanborn, 31, of Rumney, suffered a minor gunshot wound in the incident and returned to work the next day.

Kenneson, 73, who now lives in Campton, is on trial on one count each of first-degree assault, second-degree assault and reckless conduct related to the shooting.

In opening statements Monday in Grafton County Superior Court, Assistant Grafton County Attorney Antonia Barry and defense attorney Ted Lothstein told Judge Lawrence MacLeod that the men were connected through Sanborn's late aunt, Sandra Poitras.

Poitras was the paternal aunt of Jacob Sanborn. After she died in 2015, her obituary listed Kenneson as her "significant other of twenty years."

In court, it came out that Poitras's will was a point of conflict between Kenneson and the Sanborn family: Poitras bequeathed the house in which she and Kenneson lived to Kenneson.

Kenneson was driving Poitras's pickup truck when he went to the post office to get his mail, Barry said, but after an exchange of bitter words, Kenneson "got angry and shot" Sanborn.

Barry acknowledged that Sanborn, in response to a verbal provocation, broke the driver's side mirror on Kenneson's truck with his hand, after which Kenneson reached for a handgun and shot Sanborn "in the back as he was running away."

Sanborn, 31, knew who Kenneson was, Barry said, and neither he nor his family liked him.





Jacob Sanborn, at left, was the state's first witness in the assault and reckless conduct trial of Dean R. Kenneson, who is accused of shooting Sanborn outside the Rumney Post Office in March 2022.

John Kozioł/Union Leader Correspondent

Lothstein said the one witness who actually saw the confrontation between Sanborn and Kenneson will testify that Sanborn "got right into the old man's face, yelling, and screaming" and making "criminal threats" to beat Kenneson "to a pulp," and to put him "in the ground."

The antipathy between Kenneson and the Sanborn family goes back to the 1990s, said Lothstein, when Kenneson began dating Poitras and, he said later, that it got worse after her death when Jacob Sanborn may have seen "the land that had always been in the Sanborn family disappear."

When Sanborn broke Kenneson's side mirror, he was within "one foot from Dean Kenneson's head," said Lothstein, and as a result Kenneson reached to his right, grabbed a handgun and "turned and fired."

Lothstein noted the bullet left a wound across Sanborn's back, and that Sanborn returned to work as a carpenter the next day.

On the stand as the state's first witness, Sanborn stressed that the bullet struck close to his spine.

Lothstein said Kenneson acted in self-defense when he shot Sanborn, adding that his client had no legal obligation to retreat because he was in a place where he was legally permitted to be and because he had not been the initial aggressor.

northcountrynews@unionleader.com

John Koziol