

Riverview man sentenced for threats against RCMP

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TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

David Earl Crawford was troubled the evening of June 9.

The 19-year-old Riverview man was off his bipolar medication and highly agitated. His friend had just been arrested in the days following the June 4 shootings for comments he made about police. He also hadn't seen his son in several weeks.

New Brunswick RCMP Assistant Commissioner Roger Brown was also dealing with a lot that evening. It was only five days after five of his officers were shot by Justin Bourque, three fatally. The entire force was in mourning and the community was in shock.

Crawford was riding a Codiak Transpo bus to Dieppe around 7 p.m. that day, on his way to visit with his son. When he saw something on the wall of the bus

honouring the fallen Mounties, he lost his cool and scrawled "Pigs" across it.

His actions angered other passengers and he was kicked off the bus. Crawford — at the time a regular drug user — believed undercover officers had him thrown off, which amplified his anger at the RCMP. He began to walk up Main Street to head home to Riverview.

Brown was also heading home, at least to his temporary home at the

Mariott, where he planned to write some speaking notes for the next day's funeral for Constables Dave Ross, Doug Larche and Fabrice Gevaudan. He walked out of the Codiak RCMP detachment on Main Street and stopped to talk to some of the dozens of people gathered at the flower memorial outside the station.

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Brown was in uniform but unarmed and he was the only Mountie at the scene.

At that point Crawford was passing by the police station on the other side of the street, long hair flowing, dressed in camouflage and carrying a guitar case on his back. He looked at the people gathered at the flower memorial and yelled at them in anger.

With no other Mountie around, New Brunswick's top cop dealt with the matter himself.

Crown prosecutor Maurice Blanchard related the facts of the case in Moncton provincial court on Friday. Crawford, who was represented by defence lawyer Sylvain Pelletier, was supposed to stand trial on a charge of uttering death threats to police officers and breaching an undertaking to report to police. Instead he pleaded guilty to the threats charge and Blanchard withdrew the other charge.

Crawford had earlier pleaded guilty to causing a disturbance on June 9, breaching his undertaking on July 6 by violating his curfew, and being in possession of a small amount of marijuana on July 6. At the request of both lawyers, Judge Irwin Lampert stayed the disturbance charge on Friday, given that the elements of that crime were covered by the threats charge.

At the start of court, the judge was told the trial was ready to proceed. Brown was among the Crown witnesses sitting in the public gallery ready to testify.

But Pelletier asked for a short break and when the judge returned, Crawford changed his plea. On a joint recommendation from both sides, Lampert sentenced him to 60 days in jail, allowing him to serve the time on

weekends. That will be followed by 12 months probation during which time he must seek assessments for mental health issues and addiction and must abstain from drugs and alcohol. He was also fined \$300.

Blanchard told the court there were many people at the flower memorial on Main Street, paying their respects to the dead officers. When Crawford walked by on the other side of the street, witnesses heard him yell, "(Expletive) the police! Kill them all!"

One witness later told investigators she heard him say, "Kill the cops, kill them all! Line them up like dominoes!"

Blanchard said the threats took those in attendance by surprise.

"All the people at the memorial stopped talking and everyone seemed to be in shock," he said. "They couldn't believe what was happening."

Brown heard the threats. As Crawford continued west on Main Street, he walked after him.

The prosecutor said the offender turned at one point and asked if Brown was following him, and the assistant commissioner assured him he was.

"He approached Mr. Crawford, grabbed his right arm and put him against a wall and told him he was being arrested for causing a disturbance," said Blanchard.

Crawford was "verbally aggressive," but Brown held him until other officers arrived and took over.

Blanchard said the context of the situation made this very serious. Not only did the crime occur at the police station just days after the murders, but Crawford fit the same profile as Bourque. He had unkempt hair, was wearing camouflage, had a guitar case on his back and was raging at police.

"We regard this incident as extremely

serious and feel it will require some general and specific deterrence," said Blanchard.

Brown gave an oral victim impact statement so sentencing could proceed immediately. He said the worst part of Crawford's threats was seeing the reaction of the people who were paying their respects, including children and seniors.

"The most troubling thing was the absolute horror on their faces," he told the court. "It was a very quiet evening and the weather was nice and there was almost a sense of reverence as everyone tried to make sense of what happened (on June 4)."

He said the ugly remarks from an angry young man in camouflage sent everyone back into the fear they felt five days earlier.

"As a police officer, it put me in a place where I had to act myself," he said, adding no other officer was at the scene. "It doesn't matter what rank you have in an organization, you still have a duty to act."

He added that the situation could have turned volatile and someone could have gotten hurt.

Pelletier said his client, who has no criminal record, had a difficult childhood and was not taking his medication for bipolar disorder on that day. Pelletier explained to the court about the arrest of Crawford's friend and the situation with the offender's frustration at not being able to see his son once he was kicked off the bus.

The lawyer said Crawford lost his temper and acted out of character.

"He screamed stupid things that he regrets today," said Pelletier. "He probably put some fear in people and he apologizes for that."

Crawford is now working on his GED and plans to go to college to study

computers. He's trying to find work but the publicity surrounding this case has made that difficult.

Crawford addressed the court briefly prior to sentencing.

"I shook Mr. Brown's hand and I apologized to him," he said, referring to an exchange that occurred just before court started.

He said he just learned days before the incident that his mother was dying of cancer. He said he just wants to forget about the incident and move on with his life.

The judge referred to the pre-sentence report prior to imposing sentence. He said Crawford was a user of cocaine, speed, marijuana and occasionally LSD, but he says he hasn't used drugs or alcohol since his arrest.

Lampert described his actions as "terribly insensitive, terribly stupid and terribly dangerous."

The judge said he's lucky Brown handled the situation like he did.

"You're fortunate Assistant Commissioner Brown exercised control and good judgement while handling you," he said. "It must have been difficult under the circumstances."

Outside court, Brown said he's glad the matter was resolved. He also said the fact Crawford had a guitar case on his back when he uttered the threats raised tensions.

"It looked like a guitar case, but you really don't know until you check," he said. "I'm thankful it did not go further and nothing else happened that night."

Brown said Crawford is the one who approached him before court started, when it became obvious the trial was no longer necessary.

"He apologized, which spoke for itself," said Brown. "I told him I accept your apology, we all need to move forward and I wished him well."