

Accused shooter: ‘Sorry, Jeff’

Defendant apologizes; he and uncle face trial

By Karen Blackledge, Sunbury Daily Item – July 21, 2010

- Michael Todd Kelly, 44, of Danville, is led into District Judge Marvin Shrawder's office by Rick Deiterich, an officer with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, on Tuesday morning. He waived his right to a preliminary hearing. Liz Rohde/The Daily Item

DANVILLE — A man shot while turkey hunting said Tuesday he accepted the apology of the alleged shooter.

“I have no ill feelings against either of the Kellys,” said Jeff Blue, 52, of Kaseville Road.

“I understand it was a hunting accident and a mistake,” Blue said a few minutes after Michael Todd Kelly, 44, of 102 Beaver Place, and his uncle, Samuel Edward Kelly, 75, of 52 Beaver Place, waived their rights to preliminary hearings on the charges before District Judge Marvin Shrawder. Their cases will be scheduled in Montour County Court.

A convicted felon, Michael Kelly allegedly shot Blue from a distance of 18 yards, injuring him with 27 pellets from a borrowed 12-gauge shotgun on May 31, the last day of spring gobbler season, on Montour Ridge in Mahoning Township.

As Michael Kelly, in handcuffs and leg shackles and wearing orange prison garb, was led into Shrawder’s courtroom, he said, “Sorry, Jeff,” as he passed by Blue and Blue’s family members, who were seated in the back of the room.

“I accept his apology,” said Blue, an avid outdoorsman who vowed to still hunt turkeys, after the men waived their hearing rights.

“I’m happy with the way things went. Things went well today,” Blue said. “I just want to get this over with.”

Since the shooting, he said he has been feeling good. He has returned to doing lawn work and some construction work. “Not like I was, but I’ll be back,” he said of his occupations.

During an interview June 2 while hospitalized, Blue said the pellets had struck his head, neck and shoulder.

Michael Kelly’s attorney, Michael Dennehy, requested a bail reduction, which Shrawder denied.

His bail remained at \$25,000, and he was returned to the county jail. Dennehy asked that his client be allowed to post 10 percent of the bail as cash, saying Kelly had limited means, was a lifelong resident of the area and a low flight risk.

County District Attorney Robert Buehner Jr. disagreed, saying Michael Kelly fled the scene after allegedly shooting Blue. Michael Kelly faces two felonies and numerous misdemeanors, one of which involves possessing a firearm while prohibited, Buehner said. He also has several felonies on his record and demonstrated he was a flight risk when it took hours of hard work by law enforcement officers to find him at the bicycle path, the DA said.

“He fled the scene of the crime and didn’t make himself available at his home,” Buehner said.

Shrawder asked Michael Kelly where he last worked, and he replied The Danville News. He worked there more than 1 1/2 years ago as a parttime cleaning person when the newspaper offices were on East Mahoning Street.

Shrawder said he kept bail at \$25,000 because Michael Kelly allegedly left the scene of the shooting and “I’m concerned you may leave again.”

Blue had support from family members. He was accompanied by his fiancée, Stephanie Shumaker; her daughter, Madison Baylor; Blue’s daughter, Katie Blue; and Blue’s mother, Rose Blue. Also on hand were Shumaker’s sister and her father.

Mahoning Township police charged Michael Kelly with illegally possessing a gun as a convicted felon, aggravated assault, simple assault, recklessly endangering another person, two counts of shooting at or causing injury to human beings, fleeing or failing to render immediate and full assistance to an injured person and tampering with or fabricating physical evidence.

After being apprehended several hours after the shooting, Danville police charged him with possessing a small amount of marijuana and a pipe. Police said the “pot” was found in a camouflage hunting glove and the pipe near the bike trail behind Beaver Place, a public housing project.

Samuel Kelly is free on \$5,000 unsecured bail and is charged with failure to render assistance after the shooting, tampering with or fabricating physical evidence and recklessly endangering another person. He was represented by attorney Hugh Sumner.

The Kellys will be arraigned on the charges Aug. 16 in county court.