Written by Administrator Tuesday, 30 July 2013 22:00 -

RENO, Nev. – A Vagos motorcycle gang member testified Tuesday that he thought he was going to be killed by Hells Angels leaders who kicked him in the head and pointed a gun at him before one of the rivals was fatally shot in a 2011 melee at a Nevada casino.

"I was scared to death. I thought I was going to be killed. As a matter of fact, I'm lucky to be alive today," said Robert Wiggins, the vice president of the Vagos chapter in Orange County, Calif.

Wiggins told a Washoe District Court jury at the murder trial for a fellow Vagos that he didn't know until days later that Hells Angels' San Jose boss Jeffrey "Jethro" Pettigrew had been killed during the shootout on the floor of a busy Sparks casino about 11:30 p.m. Sept. 23, 2011.

Wiggins, under sometimes combative questioning from the prosecutor, said he "played possum," trying to pretend he was dead during the beating and never saw Pettigrew get shot.

Ernesto Gonzalez, then the president of the Vagos chapter in Nicaragua, is accused of killing Pettigrew.

Prosecutors say it was an organized assassination approved by the Vagos international president after Pettigrew punched another Vagos, Los Angeles chapter vice president Gary "Jabbers" Rudnick, who had been trying to pick a fight.

Gonzalez claims it was self-defense. His lawyer, David Houston, said Gonzalez will testify that he shot Pettigrew to save Wiggins' life.

Rudnick has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in a plea deal with prosecutors and also is expected to testify at the trial.

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Wiggins said he had just ordered dinner with friends in Rosie's cafe just off the casino floor at John Ascuaga's Nugget when they heard "a lot of noise, a lot of ruckus." He said they joined a crowd rushing to the door leading to the casino floor.

The scene was "chaotic — women screaming, people yelling and shouting," he said. "I could hear glass breaking everywhere. It was crazy."

Wiggins was moving with a wave of people into the casino when he said he was accidentally pushed from behind, his bad knee buckled and he fell to the ground between rows of slot machines.

Next, he saw two Hells Angels approaching with guns — Pettigrew and Caesar Villagrana, who has pleaded guilty to shooting at least one Vagos that night.

But Wiggins acknowledged during his testimony that surveillance video showed only Villagrana holding a gun at that point.

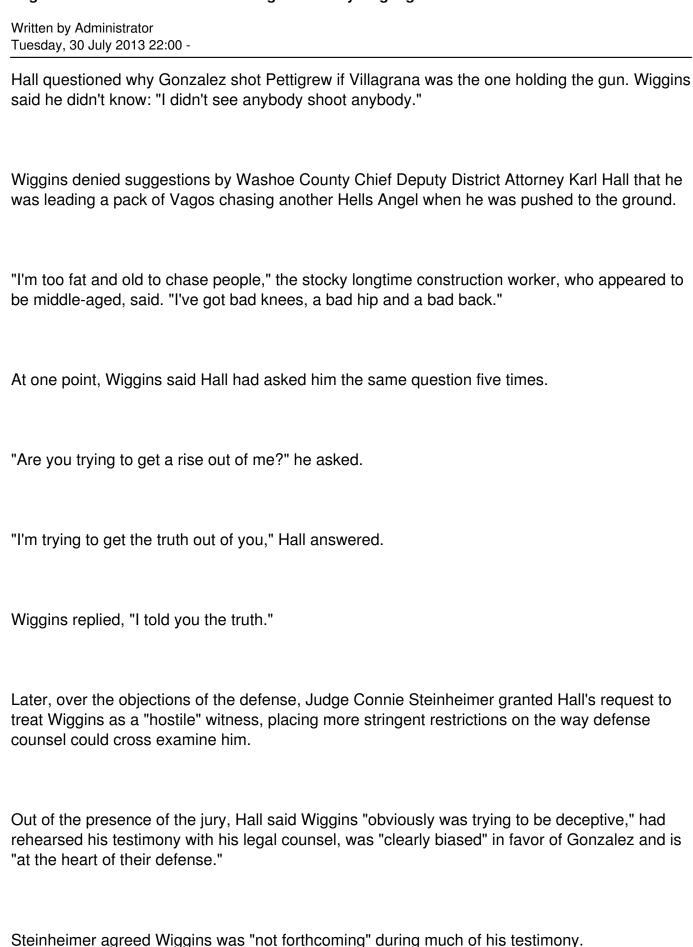
The two began "kicking the (crap) out of me," he said, including blows to his throat, chest and back of the head.

"I saw the big guy (Villagrana) was standing over the top of me unloading a gun into the crowd." Wiggins said, estimating eight or nine shots were fired.

"It seemed like it went on forever," he said. "It was an automatic gun and he emptied the magazine."

Asked if Villagrana shot him, Wiggins said, "He was going to."

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The trial is expected to continue into next week.

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