

Tigar grins at parade of jurors

TRIAL from 16A

crew that hoisted the heavy defense table and moved it a few inches forward.

Tigar, who can display a formidable grumpiness when displeased, now sits at that defense table every day beaming relentlessly at every prospective juror who enters the courtroom.

Beside him sits Nichols, who sat through many pretrial hearings looking like a scared rabbit but who now appears poised and friendly — although never overly jolly, as McVeigh sometimes did.

After moving the furniture, Tigar put a stop to prosecutor Beth Wilkinson's habit — well-established and always good for a laugh during the McVeigh trial — of fondly teasing the judge.

Questioning a prospective juror who teaches a beginning computer course, Wilkinson glanced coyly at Matsch as she wondered aloud if there might be room in the

class for "certain persons."

It was a play on Matsch's frequent joking in the McVeigh trial about his computer ignorance.

Tigar would have none of it.

"Objection," he interrupted in a deadpan voice that squashed Wilkinson's punch line flat. "Irrelevant," Tigar said.

"Yes," Matsch replied.

"Objection sustained," Matsch said solemnly.

Tigar also politely chided the judge for raising his voice at a prospective juror — the first time Matsch's demeanor had been criticized in court during the 22 months he has presided over the bombing cases.

Tigar prompted another major procedural change by arguing that the judge and lawyers should discuss in open court whether particular jurors should be dismissed. Matsch agreed.

During the McVeigh trial, Matsch and the lawyers made such decisions in the judge's chambers, behind closed doors.

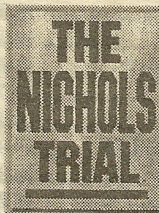
ANALYSIS

Defense engineering key changes

Courtroom procedures aren't the same as those in trial of Tim McVeigh

By Karen Abbott

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer



It took Michael Tigar just one week to engineer major changes in the courtroom procedures of the authoritative federal judge in the Oklahoma City bombing case.

Terry Nichols' chief lawyer quickly triggered modifications in a code of conduct that evolved during the trial of Timothy McVeigh.

U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch launched the Nichols trial last week with a warning that it wouldn't necessarily be run the way McVeigh's trial was.

Tigar didn't need to hear it. He already had filed two motions to change standard operating procedures.

First, Tigar wanted courtroom furniture rearranged to give jurors a better view of him and his client.

He spent the last minutes before the trial opened Monday personally checking out the new arrangement, sitting in the jury box to experience the jurors' views.

Tigar still didn't think it was quite right.

So, he organized the elegantly suited defense team into a moving

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