



AP photo / JIM COLE

ON THE STAND — Amanda Bortner reacts in court Wednesday after seeing photos of her dead daughter during her boyfriend Chad Evans' second-degree murder trial.

Dead baby's mom: Evans didn't treat girl too badly

By J.M. HIRSCH
Associated Press

DOVER — Prosecutors began trying to poke holes today in the testimony of a woman who says she still loves the man accused of killing her daughter.

Chad Evans, 30, a former member of the Keene Board of Education, is charged with second-degree murder and assault in the death of 21-month-old Cassidy Bortner. He was living with the girl's mother in Rochester when the girl died Nov. 9, 2000, and the couple lived together for about nine months after the death, part of that time in Keene.

Asked how she feels about Evans now, Amanda Bortner said this morning: "I love him. I miss him."

In the days after the toddler's death, Bortner told police Evans had been abusing her daughter for more than a month — grabbing Cassidy's face and throwing her against walls, choking her until she gagged to get her to stop crying, picking her up by the head when he was angry.

But at Evans' trial Wednesday, Bortner, 19, backed off her earlier claims that Evans frequently abused the girl and began implicating another man: the toddler's babysitter, Jeffrey Marshall.

Bortner returned to the stand today, with prosecutors pointing out contradictions between her testimony and what she told police and others after the baby's death.

Bortner testified Wednesday that Cassidy came back from Marshall's home one day with makeup covering a bruise. But she never told police that, not Assistant Attorney General Simon Brown.

"I don't think I remembered until I got my thoughts together until afterward," Bortner said. "It's hard to tell something when they think the other person did it."

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Bortner backs off earlier statement

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it, and they don't want to hear about anyone else."

Brown asked, "Things became more clear in your nine months with Chad?"

"Things became more clear when I started going to church and became a Christian," Bortner said. "God helped me."

According to Brown, Bortner also told a friend that she didn't think Marshall or his girlfriend harmed her child. Marshall's girlfriend, Bortner's sister, also babysat for Kassidy.

"They're both so good with Kassidy. I know my sister would never do this to me. I know Jeffrey would never do this to me," Brown quoted her as saying.

But Bortner said today she didn't remember ever saying that.

On Wednesday, Bortner would say only that Evans "might have" grabbed Kassidy by the neck and thrown her against a wall.

Reminded of her statements to police, Bortner said, "I know I said that, but at the time, I was overwhelmed."

Her testimony ended abruptly Wednesday afternoon when she broke down after being shown photos of her battered, dead daughter.

"Oh my God!" she said, pushing the photos away from her.

Bortner was shown similar photos the day after the toddler died. Under questioning by Evans' lawyers, she said she told police Kassidy did not look like that when she was left with her baby sitter, Marshall, the day the girl died.

As Evans appeared to wipe away tears, Bortner told the judge she couldn't concentrate

and asked to take a break. The trial was suspended and resumed today.

"She didn't look like that! She didn't look like that!" Bortner yelled as she left the courtroom Wednesday.

Earlier, Bortner said Evans did sometimes pick up Kassidy under her arms and roughly place her in the corner when she misbehaved.

"One time I saw him roughly put her there, and when he did, she hit her head," Bortner said. "I didn't think it hurt her."

Bortner said Kassidy threw temper tantrums when she saw Evans being affectionate with her mother. To punish her, he would squeeze her face.

"He would get frustrated. He would grab her face. Obviously, hard enough to leave bruises," she said. "After he had her attention, he would let go. She would scream and cry. I never thought it hurt her until I saw bruises."

An emergency room doctor testified that Kassidy's body was covered in bruises. But Bortner said that other than some on the child's face, she never saw any others.

Under questioning by defense lawyers, however, Bortner later said she recalled seeing bruises on the girl's bottom after she returned from Marshall's home.

Bortner said she noticed a bruise on Kassidy's face the night before she died, and that Evans told her Kassidy had gotten hit in the face with a whiffle ball while he was playing with his son.

"I saw the little red mark around her left eye from the ball," she said. "I saw a little bit of fading from Chad grabbing, or it might have been Jeff."