

Ted Oswald case evokes residents' curiosity, anger

By Kay Murphy Nolan

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WAUKESHA — Some spectators at the Ted Oswald trial have the death penalty on their minds while they watch the 19-year-old defendant.

And few citizens seem to buy the youth's story that he was forced to commit crimes by his father, James.

"They (the Oswalds) deserve capital punishment, or at least life imprisonment," said Leonard Smith of Waukesha. "From what I've seen and read in the papers, they were both robbing banks and shooting people."

Rodney Schultz, a former Waukesha resident now living in Tennessee, said he has attended the trial every day.

Schultz said he was so moved by testimony that he wrote a letter to Diane Lutz, widow of slain police Capt. James Lutz.

"I told her not to give up her quest, not to quit," Schultz said. "I'm a Christian. I'm not in favor of killing people," he said, trembling with emotion. "But law enforcement people are defending us. It (reinstating the death penalty) is the least we could do for them."

FBI agent Daniel Craft attended the trial with his son. Craft had testified earlier in the week about his encounter with

the Oswalds while they were trapped in a crashed van. But he said he was there Saturday out of personal anguish and as a father of three, including sons, ages 16 and 19.

"I'm trying to make some sense out of a senseless act," he said. "I've been in law enforcement for over 19 years, but when you come across somebody who's only 18 years old ... Standing out there that day, you just feel this is senseless."

Several people said they don't believe Ted was coerced.

"I think he has his own mind and can use his own mind," said one young woman.

"He could leave. He could say, 'I don't want to do this,'" Smith said.

"I believe him somewhat," Schultz said. "But I think he had a mind of his own and could choose."

Patty Savatski of the town of Pewaukee felt some sympathy.

"It's a shame to see a young man like that waste his life," she said. "As a mother, I couldn't handle it."

Ted's mother, Susan, watched his cross-examination on a television monitor, then hurried out of the courthouse, blinking back tears.

"Isn't it obvious how I feel?" she said softly.