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Pathologist explains fatal wounds in 2016 stabbing death of Dusty Boots Saloon owner Joe Pendergrass

Jim Hagerty

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ROCKFORD, Ill. (WTVO) – Dusty Boots Saloon owner Joe Pendergrass was stabbed a total of four times on May 31, 2016, inside the Loves Park chiropractic clinic where his wife worked.

Two of those wounds caused his death.

“They would have been facing each other, and also, likely on the floor during the altercation,” said Dr. Larry Blum, a forensic pathologist who testified for the defense in the murder trial of 60-year-old Roland Breault.

Blum, who review the autopsy, told the jury Breault was on his back when he admittedly stabbed Pendergrass in the chest and back. The doctor said his medical opinion is in line with that of Dr. Mark Peters, the pathologist who did the post-mortem examination.

Breault claims he was being attacked by Pendergrass and was defending himself when he used a folding pocketknife to end the altercation.

Blum was not permitted to address the jury about Breault's state of mind at the time of the stabbing. But he was allowed to explain where he believes the men were positioned.

"The cause of death in this case was two stab wounds to the chest, causing the heart injury and internal bleeding," he said.

Prosecutors say Breault was the aggressor and that he committed first-degree murder when he stabbed Pendergrass. The two men fought inside Advanced Medical Rehabilitation after Pendergrass and his wife, Dr. Cathy Dzik, arrived to reset the burglar alarm and found Breault in the building.