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Witnesses Impugned in PumpkinGate Trial

DAWSONVILLE GA – When #PumpkinGate jurors begin deliberating Monday they must weigh mounds of conflicting testimony to determine if videographer Nydia Tisdale was properly arrested for criminal trespassing at Burt's Pumpkin Farm. Once the prosecution concluded Thursday, witnesses involved in her arrest painted a clear picture that she was informed by rally organizer Clint Bearden to stop recording and when she refused, Deputy Tony Wooten identified himself, forcibly removed her upon instructions from property owner Johnny Burt and then arrested her after she tried to resist him. But key parts of their testimony were impugned by defense witnesses on Thursday and cross examination on Friday.

Bearden claimed that candidates objected to the recording. But all five candidates who testified swore that they had no objections and District Attorney Conley Greer could not produce a single candidate who did object. Bearden claimed he was unaware the event was publicly advertised but could not explain his Emails with Dawson County Republican Chair, Linda Clary Umberger who testified that she coordinated with him for public event ads that showed him as the contact.

Wooten testified that he identified himself to Mrs. Tisdale and she aggressively resisted him when he forcibly removed her for recording the public event. Mrs. Tisdale testified that those approaching her did not identify themselves or their authority, she did not aggressively resist and that co-owner Kathy Burt was aware she was recording. Her testimony was backed by 30 year Dawson County law enforcement supervisor Frank Sosebee who was at the event but not involved in the arrest. He testified that he watched her removal from the time it started until the time Tisdale and Wooten entered a barn and he saw no aggressive behavior by her. His testimony was corroborated by Tisdale's video of the arrest. Wooten claimed that he was on duty but he had no radio, handcuffs or patrol car that day. When presented with a certified copy of a Dawson County duty roster that showed he was off duty and thus subject to limited arrest procedures, he had no explanation.

Burt admitted telling Wooten to "*send her back to Fulton County where she belongs*" instead of arresting her. When asked how he knew she was from Fulton, Burt said he saw her license tag. When asked how he knew which car was hers, he said: "*It was the last car in the parking lot.*" Burt said he told Wooten that: "*...as soon as I entered the barn.*" When Attorney Catherine Bernard mentioned the rally was still in progress and parking lot full of cars, Burt could not explain his answer.

The jury's verdict on two felony counts will likely hinge on who they believe.