

Jury to decide if teen planned dad's murder

By Alice Collins
staff writer

An Oakland County Circuit Court jury is expected to begin deliberating today and perhaps rule this week on the fate of 18-year-old Karl Geisler accused of killing his father on Dec. 4, 1982.

The case will go to the all-woman jury after it receives instructions from trial Judge Francis O'Brien. The judge is slated to deliver those instructions when the trial resumes today.

The court is expected to give the jury a wide-range of alternative charges to consider, including first and second degree murder and manslaughter, in arriving at its verdict in the Bloomfield Township case.

Geisler is accused of breaking into his own house on Old Mill, murdering his father Frederick Geisler with a gun, stabbing his stepmother Sandra Geisler, then robbing them of the money they had on hand.

In addition to the murder charges, the youth is also charged with assault with intent to murder his stepmother and with robbery, larceny and firearms counts — all connected with the same incident.

Witnesses brought to the stand earlier this week by defense attorney Michael Modelski painted Geisler as a behavioral problem from the time he was "age 2 or 3," a mentally disturbed youth, drug user and a person unable to carry out a premeditated murder.

The defense doesn't deny that Geisler killed his father or assaulted his stepmother. But it does deny that it was premeditated or associated with a pre-planned robbery.

"IT'S A QUESTION of intent,"

Modelski told jurors in his opening statement. "There's no doubt that Karl Geisler shot the gun that caused his father to die."

"The question is, what was on his mind," said Modelski.

Prosecutor John Slavin entered as evidence a confession by Geisler made shortly after the incident, and attempted to prove through witnesses that the Andover High School student planned and executed the murder of his father.

Geisler — a lanky, pale youth with curly hair who appeared to be taking notes on a legal pad throughout the trial — did not testify in his own defense.

The defense put three witnesses on the stand — the youth's mother, Gay Ritchie, whom the victim divorced three years earlier to marry Sandra Geisler; Dr. Emanuel Tanay, psychiatrist and clinical professor of psychiatry at Wayne State University; and Dr. Kenneth Adams, chief psychologist at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

TANAY AND Adams, who separately examined and evaluated Geisler at the direction of the court, testified this week that the youth was not capable of premeditating the murder of his father.

Tanay said he "found no basis for an insanity defense" under Michigan law, but "Karl does suffer from mental illness."

It was not possible for him to have gone through a "decision-making process a normal person would do to arrive at the idea to kill his parents," Tanay maintained.

Geisler's confession was full of contradictions, said Tanay, not making clear what he was going to do or why he did it. And afterward "he goes about his business as if nothing unusual happened."

Under cross examination, prosecutor Slavin asked if Geisler's telling three fellow Andover students that he planned to kill his parents was evidence that he planned the murder.

"When you tell other youngsters that you are going to kill your parents," responded Tanay, "my . . . explanation would be you are seeking help."

"MY VIEW IS . . . a disturbed person cannot simply say 'I have a problem.' A disturbed person must demonstrate he has a problem by behavior."

"It's a cry for help, and it's remarkable no one did react to it. No one took it seriously."

"Killing one's parents is highly unusual . . . in our culture, in itself, it is a bizarre idea," said Tanay.

Dr. Adams testified that he found no brain damage "at this time." But he said he found "sub-clinical" motor slowness which he said could have been caused by drug abuse.

Geisler, said Adams, has "substantial, long-lasting psychological problems . . . longstanding resentment built up over his parents' divorce . . . and a history of self-abuse through drugs."

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