

Expert says victim was ravaged by Alzheimer's

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

was no murder, no crime."

FEIGEN SAID he expects the judge, Gerald E. McNally, of the 52nd District Court in Clarkston, to dismiss the charges.

Indeed, whether Kevorkian committed a crime by medically assisting Adkins to end her life is the crux of the proceedings that have attracted national attention because of its implications.

Although Michigan law can be interpreted differently, the prosecution claims Kevorkian is guilty of murder even though Adkins was a willing participant.

Defense attorneys do not dispute that Kevorkian invented the suicide machine or that he made it available to Adkins while advising how to use it.

They contend, however, that physician-assisted suicides are not illegal in Michigan and the prosecution is over zealous in pressing murder charges against the doctor.

Adkins, 54, came to the Detroit area from her home in Portland, Oregon, specifically to use the suicide machine.

One of the first witnesses to testify

Wednesday said Adkins had advanced Alzheimer's disease.

DR. JACOB CHASON of the Bloomfield area said he did not see Adkins when she was alive, but was hired by the medical examiner's office as a consultant to examine her brain.

Her case was extremely advanced, Chason testified. In the thousands of Alzheimer's victims he had seen, only one or two were as severely ravaged by the disease, he said.

Other witnesses gave the packed courtroom a glimpse of the hours before and after Adkins activated the suicide machine.

Michael Podewitz, an investigator for the medical examiner's office, testified that he was summoned to Groveland Oaks County Park near Holly about 3 p.m. on June 4 where

he met Kevorkian, dressed casually in clothes splattered with blood.

Kevorkian was polite and cooperative, Podewitz said, and apologized for the blood stains as he was wiping them off with tissue.

Podewitz said he took numerous pictures of Adkins' body and the scene.

When the prosecution introduced three as exhibits, the defense objected.

"THESE PICTURES are being offered solely for sensationalism," said Fleger, who objected that the photos would stir emotions against his client. "Nothing else."

Judge McNally ruled them admissible.

Another witness, Detective Sgt. David Haire of the Michigan State Police, said Kevorkian readily told him Adkins committed suicide by ac-

tivating the trigger on his suicide machine.

Kevorkian said he initially intended to have Adkins use his machine in a private residence in Detroit, Haire said.

The physician said those plans were canceled — and the suicide moved to his van parked in Groveland Oaks — after the owner of the home had second thoughts. "I didn't want to get involved in a physician-assisted suicide," Haire testified.

Kevorkian also said he initially couldn't get his suicide machine to function properly and spent time making adjustments, the detective said.

The physician further said he had difficulty finding a vein in Adkins' arm that could accommodate the needle that would later allow the

lethal injection to flow into her body, Haire testified.

KEVORKIAN TOLD him Adkins became unconscious within minutes of activating his machine and within five minutes, the EKG reading was "flat," indicating she was dead, Haire testified.

The detective testified that Kevorkian told him the first call he made after the flat line EKG reading was to Adkins' husband — staying in a Madison Heights motel — to say she was dead.

Haire said Kevorkian voluntarily accompanied him back to the state police post where he willingly gave a complete written statement.

The prosecuting attorney said he expects to call six witnesses today, including Dr. Bledzyski and the waitress who served breakfast to Adkins on the day she died.

insults, allegations precede exam

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Verbal sparks between the defense and the prosecution continued to fly during the preliminary examination of the controversial suicide doctor accused of murder.

Lawyers on both sides in the day-long examination of Dr. Jack Kevorkian raised frequent objections and often raised their voices to interrupt each other, although they were never admonished by District Judge Gerald E. McNally who was to continue proceedings today in Clarkston.

On numerous occasions defense attorney Geoffrey Fleger and Oak-

land County assistant prosecutor Michael Modelski gave mocking or sarcastic answers to each other.

They argued the merits of first degree murder charges against Kevorkian, 63, of Royal Oak who admits helping Janet Adkins of Portland end her life with his invention last June 4.

VERBAL SPARKS are normal in court proceedings. But Wednesday's were preceded by separate press conferences at which each side insulted the other, and leveled accusations of professional misconduct.

Kevorkian's attorneys, Fleger and Michael Schwartz, accused Oakland

County Prosecutor Richard Thompson of being overzealous.

They even claimed Thompson may have ignored a memo written by a former assistant prosecutor that advised Kevorkian that assisting in a suicide is not a crime in Michigan.

The defense attorneys suggested that advice may have been a factor in the Royal Oak physician's decision to use his suicide machine for the first time in Michigan.

"The prosecution of Jack Kevorkian... is the act of a rogue prosecutor," Schwartz alleged.

"In his obsession to bring Dr.

Kevorkian to a point where he will be placed in jail for the rest of his life, Mr. Thompson has engaged in acts that can only be described as despicable acts of misconduct which I believe constitute gross professional misconduct and which should cause the prosecution to be dismissed," Schwartz said.

AT HIS PRESS conference Tuesday, Thompson accused Fleger of lying and playing "loose" with the facts.

Thompson said Kevorkian never claimed he was told by the prosecutor's office that assisting a suicide is legal.

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