

Judge's allegations may reopen Kevorkian exam

BY WAYNE PEARL

STAFF WRITER
It isn't the first time district Judge James Sheehy and the Oakland County Prosecutor's office have been at odds.

But their most recent dispute could prove the final word in one of the country's most celebrated legal cases.

The long-simmering feud boiled over this week with the Rochester Hills district judge's allegations he was investigated by the prosecutor's office while presiding over February's preliminary exam for Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

Sheehy, of the 52nd District Court, Rochester Hills, alleges the prosecutor's office questioned his law clerk to determine whether he would dismiss murder charges against Kevorkian, a much-publicized advocate of assisted suicide.

FEUD

"The integrity of the Court has been breached," Sheehy said in a prepared statement.

The prosecutor's office issued its own statement, calling the allegations a "paranoid interpretation."

"What happened was a sheriff's deputy heard a rumor (Sheehy would dismiss the case) made a phone call, found out otherwise and that was it," chief assistant prosecutor Gerald Poisson said. "The whole thing was over in about an hour."

Kevorkian's attorney, Geoffrey Fieger of Southfield, said he would seek to have the case dismissed based upon Sheehy's statements.

Kevorkian is charged with murder for assisting in the deaths of



Judge James Sheehy



Prosecutor Richard Thompson

two Oakland County women.

At the preliminary exam, Sheehy had ruled there was sufficient evi-

The case is pending before Oakland Circuit Judge David Breck.

A spokeswoman for Breck's court said Fieger filed a motion Tuesday, though declined specifics. Fieger was unavailable for comment.

In a prepared statement, Sheehy charged county prosecutor Richard Thompson "conducted an unauthorized clandestine investigation" and charged an assistant prosecutor, as well as a sheriff's sergeant, questioned his clerks about the case.

Sheehy indicated he would file a complaint with the state Attorney Grievance Commission, the judge initially filed a complaint with the Michigan Supreme Court, though the high court said the matter was best handled elsewhere.

Sheehy declined comment to the media, beyond his "written statement."

At the time of the Kevorkian exam, Sheehy was being sued by the prosecutor's office for dismissing 48 criminal cases, allegedly in secret.

Thirty-seven of the disputed cases involved drunk drivers, chief county probation officer John Paul Jones said. Other cases ranged from resisting arrest to breaking out of jail.

The suit was dismissed after the prosecutor's office received access to probation records and the cases were placed before another judge.

Ten years ago, former prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson said Sheehy overruled 110 cases, most of them traffic offenses.

Sheehy has been a district judge since 1980 and ran unsuccessfully for the Oakland Circuit bench two years ago.

County Democrats gather to honor Googasian, Kaplan

Phyllis Law Googasian of Oakland Township and Steven Kaplan, president of the Southfield Board of Education, were honored during the 8th annual Oakland County Democratic Commissioners' reception Wednesday in Pontiac.

Googasian is a member of the Oakland University Board of Trustees. A former campaign worker for Sen. Phil Hart, U.S. Rep. Sander Levin, Gov. James Blanchard and presidential candidates Hubert Humphrey, Jimmy Carter and Mi-

chael Dukakis, Googasian was honored for her dedication to Democratic candidates and causes.

She is also a member of the Oakland Township United Way Board and the Michigan Association of Governing Boards.

Kaplan, a candidate for Oakland County prosecutor, received the commissioners' Alex Perinoff Award. He is an assistant prosecutor in Macomb County. Kaplan pre-

viously received a certificate of merit from the Michigan School Board Association.

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