

# Gorcycya drops charges against Kevorkian

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

The physician known as "Doctor Death" smiled broadly as he and people close to him gathered to talk about the dismissal of the remaining criminal charges in Oakland County stemming from his role in 10 assisted suicides.

But in the end, dismissing the charges really didn't matter, Dr. Jack Kevorkian said.

"I feel somewhat vindicated," the retired pathologist said Friday at a press conference in the Southfield offices of his attorneys. But the charges never intimidated him, the West Bloomfield resident said. And the charges would have little, if any, influence on

his decision to help somebody end their suffering.

"This (the issue of assisted suicide) never belonged in court," Kevorkian said, not in the Oakland courts or the U.S. Supreme Court. It's a medical issue that should be resolved by physicians, he said.

Oakland County's new prosecutor, David C. Gorcycya, agreed. "Assisted suicide will never be resolved in the courts," he said at another press conference, two hours earlier in Pontiac.

Gorcycya, who has been in office less than two weeks, made that point repeatedly as he announced he was dismissing 20 charges against Kevorkian and two associates, Neil Nicol of Waterford Township and Georges Reding of

Kalamazoo. After careful review of police reports, state law and other relevant data, Gorcycya said he concluded the charges "were issued in haste."

The prosecutor said "... this does not mean Dr. Kevorkian or anyone else now has a blank check to assist suicides in Oakland County. Any deaths resulting from assisted suicide will be investigated on a case-by-case basis."

Gorcycya urged the state Legislature to draft appropriate legislation to address assisted suicide, by passing what he called "enforceable" laws against it, or by taking measures to regulate the practice.

"There's no sense wasting tax money and judicial resources by prosecuting

Kevorkian under existing law," Gorcycya said. "There could never be convictions."

Geoffrey N. Fieger, Kevorkian's lead attorney, praised Gorcycya's decision and called on the medical community to take the lead on making assisted suicide a viable alternative for people in intractable pain. Physicians need no longer fear that authorities in Oakland County will "persecute" them for helping patients end their suffering.

Janet Good, a Farmington Hills resident who previously said her terminal cancer may prompt her to seek Kevorkian's help to end her suffering, said she also considered Gorcycya's dismissal as an inconsequential.

"The charges didn't influence my plans," said Good, 73, who was diag-

nosed as having cancer in 1995 and given a year to live.

Kevorkian and Good still face criminal charges in Ionia County stemming from the death of Loreita Peabody, 54, an Ionia County resident who died in Oakland County on Aug. 30.

Those charges are still pending, Ionia County Prosecutor Ray Voet said late Friday. "I thought the issue (and the charges) through very thoroughly," he said. "That's why I took the charges to the grand jury."

Richard Thompson, the Oakland prosecutor Gorcycya replaced Jan. 1, said he was "disappointed, but not surprised" by his successor's decision. "Mr. Gorcycya capitulated to political pressure," Thompson said.

## Managing stress begins in the mind

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Now is the winter of our discontent made even more stressful by new deadlines and pressures of the new year.

With rush hour traffic snarls, computer program crashes and the many demands of family and work in full gear after the holiday break, many people have traded holiday stress for another kind.

"People are getting back into the swing," said Caroline Smith, health programs coordinator for Botolph General Hospital's Health Development Network. "Sometimes they try to do too much."

Botolph in offering two sessions on stress management that focus on attitude and mental healing. Although many people make New Year's resolutions to lose weight, exer-

cise and curtail other unhealthy practices, they may not take into account the accompanying mental stress those otherwise healthy choices bring.

"Heal Your Attitude, which is on Thursday from 7-9 p.m., focuses on creating peace within yourself regardless of what's happening around you."

Among the precepts of attitudinal healing are the loss of interest in judging, worrying and acting out of fear coupled with a realization that health is inner peace and healing is letting go of fear.

Smith said people often react differently to the same event, such as a roller coaster ride. While one finds it a frightening experience someone else would find it exhilarating.

"It is a matter of perception," she said. "Our attitude can influence that."

Among the errors people make are to set

goals that are unrealistic.

"Too much change all at once is not good or effective," she said.

Another way of managing stress is through meditation.

"The Art of Meditation" is Thursday, Jan. 23, and teaches practical exercises to quiet the mind, lower blood pressure and decrease the response to daily stress situations through meditation.

"This class is always full," she said. "Every time we offer it, especially in winter, it fills up."

The sessions are from 7-9 p.m. at Health Development Network, 39750 Grand River in Novi. The cost for each session is \$15. Because space is limited, preregistration is required.

For more information or to register, call (810) 477-6100.

### House cleaning



Multi-task: After watching her daughter Lyndsay's freshman volleyball game, Pat Boring goes through her purse in the stands and weeds out receipts she no longer needs.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMLEUX

### OBITUARIES

**BETTY WHITTENBURG**  
Betty Whittenburg, 100, of Farmington, died Jan. 7 at Star Manor Nursing Home in Northville.

Born June 1, 1896, Whittenburg was a homemaker. She is survived by friends Ruth Barker and Kenneth Stickney of Farmington.

Burial took place in Belchertown, Mass.

**Helga I. Klettke, 85, died Jan. 2 at her home in Farmington Hills.**

Born March 14, 1911 in Sweden, Klettke was a self-employed housekeeper.

She is survived by brothers Taura, Erik and Gunnar Hannedahl and sisters Sadie Ellis and Signe Hannedahl of Sweden.

Her remains will be buried at North Farmington Cemetery.

**DAVID A. VARBLOW**  
David A. Varblow, 49, of Lake Mary, Fla., died Jan. 7.

Born April 20, 1947, Varblow was a former resident of Farmington Hills. The owner of his own security business, he also worked as a locksmith and belonged to DAV Seminole Chapter #30 and VFW Post #10108 in Fla. Varblow served with the Army in Vietnam and received a bronze star.

He is survived by wife Judy; daughter Amy; brothers Carl,

Cory, John, Paul and Roger, and sisters Carolyn Airhart and Claudia Varblow.

A memorial service will be held at noon on Monday, Jan. 13, at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington. Visitation will take place from 10 a.m. until noon Monday.

Memorial tributes may be sent to the American Cancer Society, 29350 Southfield Rd., Ste. 110, Southfield, 48076.

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