

Wingard guilty in doctor slaying

By SHIRLEE IDEN

A 28-year-old escaped Jackson Prison inmate, with a criminal record going back more than a decade, confessed Tuesday in open court to be first degree murder of Dr. Cynthia Miller.

Gordon Daniel Wingard of Lapeer County made his guilty plea before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Richard Kuhn.

He also pleaded guilty to a slaying in Colorado for which he had been sought.

Dr. Miller, 29, was found shot to death in her car beside 1496 on July 17, 1976, by a Southfield patrolman on routine duty. She had been the medical director of the Detroit House of Corrections, women's division.

Wingard and Dr. Miller once worked together in the infirmary of Jackson Prison where she was the medical staff. Another employee there, Gail Marie Oliver, 27, has been accused of helping Wingard escape from Jackson on June 28, 1976, and of fleeing with him across the country following the slaying.

Oakland County Prosecutor, L. Brooks Patterson said the Wingard confession was no surprise since he had admitted committing the murder while in custody.

"ALTHOUGH IT wasn't a surprise, it's still unusual," he said. "Very seldom do you get a plea of guilty on first degree murder in court since it means a mandatory sentence of life in prison."

"But this guy is committed to a course of self destruction. He has pleaded guilty to a murder in Denver where the death penalty has been reinstated. He almost made it conditional on them agreeing to execute him."

"It's kind of a Gary Gilmore syndrome. There's no kind of repentance in this man."

Wingard's police record is 200 pages long and begins with violations of miscellaneous ordinances for which he was fined. In May of 1968, he was convicted of larceny after being charged with breaking and entering in a safe burglary.

The charge was apparently reduced to larceny," Sgt. John Hood of the Southfield Police Department said, adding, "He got two to 10 years in Jackson."



GORDON DANIEL WINGARD

Other entries include warrants for assault and battery and a 1969 fugitive warrant. After doing time in the state prison, he was paroled from Jackson on Dec. 7, 1970.

He pleaded guilty to attempted murder in Dec., 1973 and was sentenced to three years and four months to five years. It was that sentence he was serving when he escaped.

WINGARD was free for only 18 days when he met Dr. Miller on the Southfield Highway, took \$5,000 she had withdrawn from an Ann Arbor bank, shot her twice through the head with a 9 mm semi-automatic pistol and fled, according to the police account.

Leaving a trace of \$100 bills taken from Dr. Miller, Wingard and Mrs. Oliver, in her car, and with her two young children, left the state and later abandoned the car in an airport. They were seen in several southern states and finally were arrested in Sacramento, Calif., this past July 21.

Mrs. Oliver was arrested on a shoplifting charge in a Gold Circle Super Market in Sacramento. Investigation showed she was wanted on an FBI warrant in the murder and she revealed where Wingard and she had been living.

FBI agents arrested Wingard but not without incident as he went for a gun. Other weapons were found in the residence.

The pair were returned to Michigan where Judge Norman Feder ar-

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—L. Brooks Patterson

raigned a mute Wingard on the charges. He was held without bail and assigned to a court appointed attorney.

Wingard waived his right to a preliminary hearing and was bound over to Oakland Circuit Court. Charges against him were reduced to one count of first degree murder during the course of a larceny.

Mrs. Oliver, meanwhile, was held as a material witness under a \$100,000 bond. The police will not reveal where she is being held.

Patterson said Wednesday morning that she has been cleared on any complicity in the murder but that she is faced with prosecution on a 10 or 15

year felony charge for the scheme to extort money from Dr. Miller.

"I assume she's still in custody," he said.

Wingard's defense attorney, Otis Underwood of Bloomfield Hills, could not be reached for comment.

Southfield Police Chief Milton Sackett said: "It's always regrettable when a human life is taken. However, as a professional police officer, I look back with pride on the investigative work done by men of this department along with help from the Michigan State Police and the FBI."

Patterson said Wingard will be returned to Colorado to face murder charges and will be sentenced here on Sept. 27.

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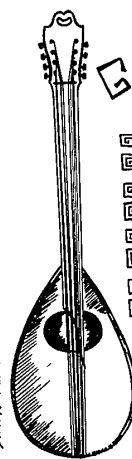
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