

Mrs. Bowerbank's Mother Testifies Against Dr. Clark



INTERESTED — A demonstration on how interest can be developed in children in classic literature and the independent thinking that can evolve from this interest was held recently in Duckel Junior High School by Farmington Area PTA Councils, sponsors of the Great Books Program. Taking part were Kenbrook pupils Alan Bohne and Pat Fitzpatrick. (Evert photo)

FARMINGTON — The pre-trial examination for Dr. Ronald E. Clark, former Farmington physician, resumed yesterday (Tuesday) in Marshall, with testimony being taken from one of the key witnesses in the case.

Clark has been charged with manslaughter in the March 20, 1967 death of Mrs. Hannah Bowerbank, his former office manager. He is now serving a 3-15 year sentence in Jackson State Prison after being convicted of manslaughter in the Nov. 3, 1967 death of Mrs. Grace Neil of Livonia, another former office manager.

Witnesses in the case were Mrs. Ellen Winsper, 87-year-old mother of Mrs. Bowerbank. The examination was shifted from Detroit Recorder's Court to Marshall because Mrs. Winsper is too ill to travel.

Recorder's Judge James N. McNally III granted the examination after being shown letters from Mrs. Winsper's doctors submitted by Avery Wetwasser, assistant Wayne County prosecutor assigned to the case.

Mrs. Winsper, who is dying of cancer, was living with Mrs. Bowerbank in Detroit at the time of her death. Clark was in Mrs. Bowerbank's Detroit home with Grace Neil when the doctor discovered Mrs. Bowerbank dead.

That day, Clark had told Mrs. Winsper that Mrs. Bowerbank was ill and sleeping in an adjoining room. Later that day, Clark informed Mrs. Winsper that her daughter had died.

Police believe Mrs. Bowerbank may have died in Farmington Township and transported to her home in Detroit.

MRS. WINSPER and Mrs. Neil were the only ones in the Bowerbank home the day she died. The prosecution hopes Mrs. Winsper's testimony will be sufficient to convince Judge McNally to ask for a jury trial.

Purpose of a pre-trial examination is to determine whether or not a crime has been committed and to establish "reasonable cause" to believe the accused committed the crime.

The manslaughter warrant was issued by the Detroit Police Department almost four years after Mrs. Bowerbank's death. In November 1967, following the death of Mrs. Neil, Farmington Township police dug up Mrs. Bowerbank's body and state police investigators found traces of sodium pentothal on her brain.

Sodium pentothal, the "truth serum," was said to have caused the death of Mrs. Neil, Clark, who had administered the drug to Mrs. Neil, was found guilty of manslaughter in that death.

Mrs. Thomas testified that, in her opinion, Mrs. Bowerbank was only suffering from a cold at the time of her death. The neighbor told the court she does not believe Mrs. Bowerbank died of a heart attack. Clark signed the death certificate for his office manager and attributed cause of death to heart failure.

Other witnesses testifying in the examination include Earl Teeples and Lt. Russ Conway who, as Farmington Township detectives, investigated the deaths of Mrs. Neil and Mrs. Bowerbank.

Teeples, now Farmington Township supervisor, testified it was his opinion Clark was a necrophiliac, (a person who receives pleasure from having sexual relations with corpses or persons who appear to be dead).

Teeples gave his opinion in response to a question asked by the defense attorney, James E. Wells of Grosse Pointe. It is believed Wells is laying the groundwork for an insanity plea.

TESTIMONY has also been taken from the State Crime Laboratory chemist who made toxicology tests on Mrs. Bowerbank's brain after the body was exhumed in November 1967.

Olsen also testified he performed autopsies on two other patients of Clark's who also died of unnatural causes. The first two, however, Olsen said he believed were accidental deaths.

The prosecution is expected to end its case this week and ask Judge McNally to bind Clark over for trial.

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