

"Dr. Death" indicted for murder in assisted suicides

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Sherry Miller was physically unable to remove the mask giving her a lethal dose of carbon monoxide gas, according to Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson.

Thus Miller, one of two women to die Oct. 23 with the assistance of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, "was unable to change her mind about dying," Thompson said Wednesday at a press conference called to announce murder indictments against the retired Royal Oak pathologist, commonly referred to as "Dr. Death."

Miller, 43, and Marjorie Wentz, 58, both died in a remote cabin at the Bald Mountain Recreation Area in Oakland Township with the assistance of Kevorkian. Miller died from carbon monoxide poisoning, according to the medical examiner, and Wentz died from poisoning by multiple drug injections.

Brush up on study skills

Adult students may sometimes be more serious about school, but may have more distractions and/or be out of the study habit.

The Oakland University Continuum Center is offering a three-session workshop to help overcome those barriers, "Student Saver: Easy Study Skills To Get You Performing."

It is scheduled 7-9:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, Feb. 12, 19 and 26, in the Continuum Center, 478 O'Dowd Hall on the Rochester campus.

Linda Roth will illustrate easy immediately usable skills for reading with greater retention, expanding memory, filtering information and recognizing important study points.

Other topics include maneuvers to use during tests to manage mental block, stress and time allotment. Techniques will be given for handling essay questions and for making educated guesses when you don't know the answers.

Fee is \$59. MasterCard/VISA are accepted. Call 370-3033 to register.

How to serve on a board

Whether you are on the board of a private corporation, non-profit or school district, the course "How to be a Successful Board Member" may be appropriate.

It's 7-10 p.m. Wednesday at the Bloomfield Township Library, Telegraph and Lone Pine roads, sponsored by the Oakland University Continuum Center.

Corporate vice president James Hopkin will present an outline of the ingredients for success in board work, such as the unwritten and unspoken expectations made of board members, liability and the difference between profit and non-profit boards.

Techniques will include making effective use of time and resources as a board member, when to arrive early and stay late, and when to become involved or keep quiet.

The fee is \$39. Mastercard/VISA are accepted. Registration is through Monday at 370-3033.

AAUW hosts newscaster

Joe Weaver, editorial director of WJBK-TV-2, will be the guest speaker Wednesday at the American Association of University Women's luncheon at the Birmingham Athletic Club, 4033 Maple Road.

Guests are welcome at the noon luncheon. Charge is \$17 and reservations should be made by calling 649-6161 or 335-5698. There is no charge to hear the talk, "The Importance of Public Service," which should begin about 1:15 p.m.

During his nearly 30 years at WJBK-TV, Weaver has written and produced over 250 documentaries, many of which have been syndicated nationally. In 1970 he organized TV-2's first special projects unit to broadcast a weekly news documentary.

Weaver has received many professional honors, among them numerous Emmys as well as Michigan UPI and AP awards.

Have a heart for a kid

Be a Valentine for a kid. Volunteer to spend 2-4 hours each week with a needy kid. Oakland County Youth Assistance Volunteer Programs will hold a two-part training session from 7-9 p.m. next Wednesday and Thursday.

The sessions will be held in the Probate Court Conference Room on the second floor in the east wing of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Pontiac.

To register, call 858-0041, any time, day or night, and your call will be returned.

The grand jury voted to indict Kevorkian Monday, after hearing four days of testimony in January in the deaths of Miller and Wentz.

Kevorkian was arrested without incident Wednesday and stood mute when arraigned on two counts of murder and one count of delivering a controlled substance. Circuit Judge Richard D. Kuhn set bond at \$5,000 on each charge. The physician was released after posting bond.

KEVORKIAN'S OUTSPOKEN attorney, Geoffrey N. Fieger, was vocal at the arraignment and denounced the charges against his client. As he has in the past, Fieger

alleged the prosecutor was filing charges based on his own personal moral convictions rather than existing law.

Fieger predicted his client would be acquitted, just as he was found innocent of murder charges in the first assisted suicide case involving Janet Adkins.

Kevorkian is scheduled for preliminary examination at 1:15 p.m. Tuesday in District Court 52-III in Rochester Hills.

Fieger claims — and at least one district court judge, Gerald McNally of Clarkston, agreed — Michigan has no law against assisted suicide. Thus, he claims, Kevorkian is within his

rights, and the law, to assist chronically ill patients to end their own lives.

McNally was one of 10 witnesses to testify about Kevorkian before the grand jury. Thompson said McNally's testimony was important because it included the legal rationale for his dismissing murder charges against Kevorkian in the June 1990, assisted suicide of Janet Adkins, the 54-year-old Alzheimer's disease victim from Portland, Ore.

At THE TIME, Thompson said he disagreed with McNally's dismissal, although he would not appeal it to the higher courts. Instead, he called

on state lawmakers to enact legislation to prohibit assisted suicides in Michigan.

At Wednesday's press conference, Thompson reiterated his disagreement with McNally's dismissal of murder charges. Thus, he said, he would press murder charges in the deaths of Miller and Wentz even if their circumstances were similar to those of Janet Adkins.

"That's my duty under existing state law," Thompson said.

But circumstances in the deaths of Miller and Wentz were significantly different than those surrounding the assisted suicide of Adkins, Thompson said.

It was in that context that Thompson said Miller, a Roseville divorcee stricken with multiple sclerosis, was unable to remove the mask he said Kevorkian placed over her mouth and nose so she could end her life.

"Sherry Miller was physically capable of turning on the carbon monoxide," Thompson said. "But she could not remove the mask" in the event she changed her mind about committing suicide.

Thompson was asked if that was a "smoking gun," something indicating Kevorkian took a more active role in the death of Miller. "I think there are several smoking guns," Thompson responded.

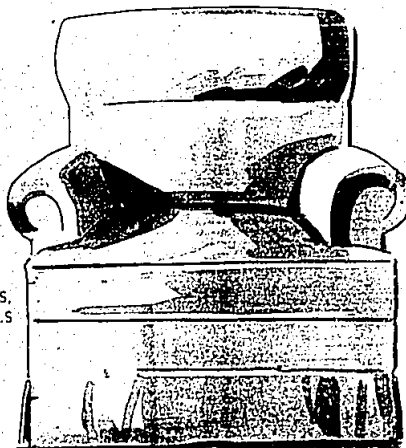
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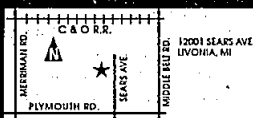
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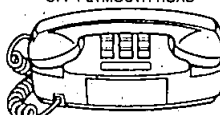


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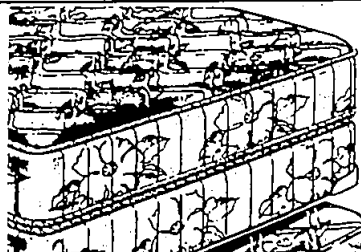
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