

Jury questioning raises debate

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

A court showdown on assisted suicide is expected to begin in Circuit Court Monday before Judge Justina R. Cooper, despite a Michigan Court of Appeals ruling Friday that could affect jury selection for the trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

"That was how attorney Geoffrey N. Fieger reacted on Saturday to the appeals court planned review of whether lawyers should be allowed to probe for what Fieger called jurors' "biases or prejudices" during the selection process. Fieger said those biases could include assisted suicide.

With the court showdown on assisted suicide yet to begin, lawyers on both sides of the issue have already crossed legal swords... quite possibly a hint of things to come in the trial of Kevorkian.

Jury selection in the trial of the retired pathologist was scheduled to begin today. However, the Oakland County prosecutor's office on Friday challenged the line of questioning of potential jurors planned by Fieger in the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Prosecutor Richard Thompson claimed Fieger was invading the privacy of prospective jurors by asking specific questions about religious preferences.

He said it would have a "chilling and detrimental" effect to ask jurors their specific religious views or their opinions on assisted suicide.

Fieger said his questions were designed to screen out the people who might have religious feelings that would prejudice them against his client — people the outspoken attorney has frequently referred to as "religious nuts."

The prosecution "wants to stack the jury against a fair trial," said Fieger, referring to religious fundamentalists as preferred jurors.

Thompson, however, insisted it was the defense that was out of line.

"The questionnaire is more like a Gallup poll than a list to be asked of prospective jurors," said Thompson. Fieger "could get the same information with a routine question, namely: 'Is there anything that would prohibit you from following the instructions of the court on assisted suicide?'"

Fieger "doesn't have to ask if they consider themselves to be Born Again Christians or whether or not they like their church," said Thompson, referring to prospective jurors. "People will feel intimidated."

The prosecutor filed an appeal

with the Detroit office of the Court of Appeals asking for emergency consideration and a stay of judicial proceedings until the issue is resolved.

"I don't expect jury selection to be delayed," he said. Based on previous experience — when his office challenged the questions to be asked of jurors, known as "voir dire."

In a related development Friday, Fieger called a press conference with Kevorkian in his Southfield office to announce the filing of a \$10 million law suit against the American Medical Association for defaming and slandering his client. The suit states an AMA spokesperson referred to Kevorkian as a "killer" and claimed he was engaged in "criminal activities."

Fieger had notified the media of his intent to sue the AMA last fall, but he chose to announce the actual filing as Kevorkian's trial was about to begin.

Kevorkian is facing two four-year felony charges for the 1993 deaths of Merian Frederick, 72, of Ann Arbor, and Dr. Ali Khalili, 61, of suburban Chicago. Frederick died Oct. 22 and Khalili died Nov. 22, both in the apartment of Kevorkian, who at that time lived in Royal Oak. The retired physician has since moved to West

Bloomfield.

Fieger said his client is emotionally ready for the trial that will vindicate him completely. "We're both ready," said the attorney who has previously characterized Thompson — as well as Gov. John Engler — as "Nazis" because of their opposition to assisted suicide.

The prosecution is also ready, according to Thompson, who acknowledged that his office has an up-hill battle.

"We're very conscious of public opinion polls that show many residents would favor legislation that would allow some kind of assisted suicide under controlled conditions," he said.

"Our goal will be to convince jurors to focus on the law itself, rather than what the law ought to be," Thompson said.

He promised a tough and potentially bruising legal battle.

The assistant Thompson has chosen to make the state's case is Clarkson resident Greg Townsend, a seasoned prosecutor who has handled numerous murder trials.

"Greg is an outstanding career prosecutor," said Thompson. Also important, Townsend is a "serious, unflappable attorney who won't be sidetracked by any of Fieger's antics."

Good from page 1A

"With bells on," Good said. "It's important that he get support and that he be acquitted. People like me need his assistance."

Good is no stranger to death or assisted suicide.

When she was president of Hemlock of Michigan — which she and some friends helped organize in 1989 from her living room — she often received calls from people seeking help. Some of the calls were peculiar, but others were "terrible, hopelessly despairing calls," Good said.

Good said she considers Kevorkian, the retired pathologist known as "Dr. Death," to be a kind, compassionate man of conviction. "It would be an honor to die with Dr. Kevorkian, an honor indeed," she said.

"Nobody else had the guts to help these people," she said, referring to the 27 people known to have died after consulting with Kevorkian.

Now, Good trusts Kevorkian will have the compassion and guts to help her, if she needs it.

Good, who has been quoted extensively because of her activity in Hemlock and her association with Kevorkian, sees a touch of irony in the possibility of her opting for a "soft landing," the term sometimes used for exercising what she sees as her assisted suicide option.

"Almost every reporter I've talked to has asked to be put in contact with someone seeking to commit suicide with Dr. Kevorkian's help," she said. "But nobody was willing to talk (to the press) out of fear they would lose their option. But now, I'm in that position."

Good and her husband, Ray — a former commander of the 13th Precinct in the Detroit Police Department — are philosophical about their plight in life. "We get de-

Good, who has been quoted extensively because of her activity in Hemlock and her association with Kevorkian, sees a touch of irony in the possibility of her opting for a "soft landing," the term sometimes used for exercising what she sees as her assisted suicide option.

pressed at times," she said. "But we can't dwell on it. It's important to enjoy every moment we have."

Good is looking forward to Kevorkian's trial because she's confident the physician will be vindicated. But she's also looking forward to Feb. 26, when she will be "roasted" by her sister feminists.

Fliers promise a 12-course Chinese dinner at the "Peking House" in Royal Oak (Contact: Carole Chienmy, (313) 961-5660). Those same fliers tout a good-natured "Toast & Roast" with "no tears, no mawkishness."

Good classifies herself as a pro-choice Catholic and a Republican. In 1991 she was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for, among other things, having spearheaded the drive to make sexual harassment illegal in Michigan.

Good was recently honored by the Log Cabin Society, an organization of gay Republicans, for her work in counseling AIDS victims and their families.

Academy from page 1A

Such an academy is a "conflict" with the district's mission that all children can learn, he said at the study session.

More so, he sees it as appealing state legislators who want public schools to be market driven.

"They feel this is a good demonstration to the state: You don't have to mess with us. You don't need to mandate this. We do it on our own," York said Wednesday.

"I think the state's real aim is to institute a voucher system as a backdoor to parochialism. This opens the door..." Superintendent Bob Maxfield

said he shared some of York's concerns.

Maxfield added, "I believe the heavy emphasis on foreign language and heavy emphasis on the I.B. (International Baccalaureate) curriculum, this is a school of choice worth looking at."

Other trustees appear receptive but only Cathy Webb spoke out at the study session.

"I hope you take the initiative to let our legislators and our governor know that our schools are supportive of choice as long as it supports the needs of students and the needs of special inter-

ests," Webb said to Okma.

West Bloomfield, Birmingham, Rochester, Ferndale, Berkley, Oxford, Lake Orion, Troy, and Avondale districts are in the consortium. Oakland Intermediate Schools enforces the program.

Students spend the first two years preparing for the International Baccalaureate curriculum, which is a pre-university course and used by more than 200 public and private schools in the U.S. and Canada.

Students are graded in six subjects, including 90-minutes daily of instruction in a second lan-

guage. Those offered include: Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Chinese and Russian.

Students must also pass a theory of knowledge course, write a 4,000-word essay and take part in co-curricular and community service projects.

Juniors would still be required to take the Michigan High School Proficiency test.

Academy students attend 208 days from the first week of August until late June.

WINTER SPECIALS

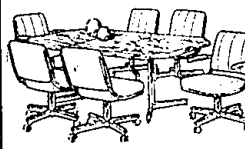
Value! Value! Value!

DINETTES

No one equals the quality and durability that is manufactured into Chromcraft, the line that offers the important features you want, appreciate, and deserve. The closer you look at styling, engineering, and quality. The Better We Get. So for yourself, stop in at any Dining Furniture location and our professional sales staff will show you.



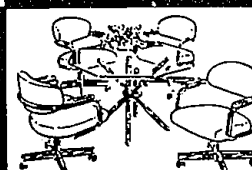
5 PC. SET
\$799⁹⁹



7 PC. SET
\$1,099⁹⁹

These Chromcraft Casual Dinettes at these prices. One Week Only! Good at all Dining Furniture locations.

CHROMCRAFT



\$649⁹⁹

Special Orders Only

DINING FURNITURE
• Stools • Bar Stools • Counter Stools • Tables • Chairs
ROSELLE 778-8510 WATERFORD 874-7177 PLEASANT RIDGE 844-3322

AWAKEN YOUR VALENTINE'S SIXTH SENSE
Realin Fragrances for men and women that engage the five senses you know and awakens the sixth.

Jacobson's

330 W. MAPLE RD., BIRMINGHAM • PHONE: 644-0900 • FAX: 646-8007
LAUREL PARK PLACE • LIVONIA • PHONE: 501-7006 • FAX: 501-0227
GREAT OAKS MALL • ROCHESTER • PHONE: 651-0000 • FAX: 651-7473