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Good may be witness for Kevorkian

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Back-to-back trials for violating Michigan's ban against assisted suicide hasn't dimmed the ardor of people seeking help from Dr. Jack Kevorkian, according to the founding president of Hemlock of Michigan.

"Not a week goes by that we don't get a request from somebody wanting his help," said Janet Good, a Farmington Hills resident. "I got a call last weekend (April 13-14). It was local."

The trial of Kevorkian was to continue today in Oakland Circuit Court with Good as a possible witness. Besides being a major contact for Hemlock — handling more than 200 calls over five years, she said — Good is a personal friend of Kevorkian.

She also has been diagnosed as having terminal cancer, a condition she said may prompt her to seek Kevorkian's counsel on what she euphemistically refers to as a "soft landing."

Good was slightly miffed last week when she, as a prospective witness, was excluded from the courtroom of Judge David P.

Breck. "I've been at every court appearance," she said. "And I'd like to be at this one."

Good wasn't the only one miffed at the court proceedings. Kevorkian himself walked out of the court Thursday after consulting with Breck who said he could see no legal reason the retired pathologist had to remain in court.

Kevorkian, the 67-year-old retired pathologist now living in West Bloomfield, has made no attempt to hide his disdain for the common law under which he is charged or the prosecution team headed by chief assistant Lawrence Bunting.

"There's more dignity in a jail cell than there is here," Kevorkian said as he left.

Kevorkian wasn't headed for a jail cell. Defense attorneys did not disclose his whereabouts, but Kevorkian is presumably in telephone contact since Breck advised him to be available, if needed.

In court Friday, another pathologist was a main witness. That was Dr. Jubilee J. Dragovic, the Oakland County medical examiner. Dragovic has performed or

signed autopsies on many of the 27 people who ended their lives after consulting with Kevorkian.

On those autopsies, Dragovic has consistently listed the manner of death as "homicides." That classification doesn't mean murder, the medical examiner said, it means somebody else was involved in the death.

Dragovic and lead defense attorney Geoffrey N. Fieger seemed to enjoy sparring while the medical examiner was on the witness stand. "If a physician at Beaumont Hospital withdrew feeding tubes from a patient, would you classify that as 'homicide?'" Fieger asked.

"Certainly," responded Dragovic, although he is not customarily called upon to sign death certificates for people who die in a hospital.

Once, when Dragovic wanted to elaborate on an answer — rather than giving a simple yes or no — Fieger seemed irritated. "If you don't understand the issue (or question), please just say so."

Pointing a finger at the flamboyant attorney, Dragovic said, "It's you who does not understand."


Kevorkian is charged in the Oct. 23, 1991 deaths of Barry Miller, 43, of Roseville and Marjorie Wentz, 58, of Bodus in southwest Michigan. Both died in a rustic cabin in the Bald Eagle Recreation Area.

The defense has said it will call physicians to testify that both women suffered untreatable, intractable pain. Their afflictions may not have been terminal, Fieger acknowledged, but they made their lives a "living hell." They wanted to end their suffering, even if it meant ending their lives, Fieger said.

Dragovic, however, testified the pain Wentz experienced was psychogenic, meaning it originated in her mind. Wentz was like the person who feels the urge to scratch his or her foot even after the limb has been amputated, he said.

The pain was real and excruciating, Fieger said in his opening statements earlier in the week. Despite treatment at the Mayo Clinic and other well known medical centers, she experienced pain that made her howl in the night. "Neighbors thought she was being tortured," said the attorney.

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The auction runs April 30 to May 6 on WTVS/Channel 56.

Some of the great bottles of wine in the world are acquired through this annual sale of donated

goods, said auction manager Megan Miller. She sees the traditional wine nights as a way for viewers to get in on the elegant tradition of wine auctioning while taking it easy at home.

What can the high bidder pick up? This year's list includes a bottle of 1969 Romanee-Conti D.R.C. valued at \$1,500.

According to wine committee chairman Dennis Walsh, owner of


Ye Old Wine Shoppe in Rochester Hills, the value is based on the reputation of the vineyard, which is one of the oldest in the Burgundy region of France. Only four to 6,000 bottles of this wine were ever produced. Walsh considers it one of the great red wines in the world.

"Wines of this value are really collectibles," Walsh said. "Wine

aficionados have a special place in their heart for rare bottles of wine. We were able to double our wine donations this year. There is a lot of local interest in this aspect of the auction."

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