

## CONTROL CALLED SLAYING MOTIVE MURDER TRIAL OPENS FOR FORMER MENTAL PATIENT IN GIRLFRIEND'S DEATH

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The man who more than a decade ago was found not guilty of brutally murdering two people by reason of insanity and then allegedly murdered again two days after his controversial release from a mental hospital, was back in the courtroom Tuesday.

In her opening statements in Wayne County Circuit Court, assistant prosecutor Nancy Westveld laid out a disturbing picture of the relationship between Donald Kline, 42, and Barbara Baker -- his girlfriend and alleged victim.

The two met at Northville Psychiatric Hospital, where Baker, then a 31-year-old mother, was being treated **for** drug addiction. Kline was sent there after his **trial** in the 1985 **slaying** of a 16-year-old boy and a doctor.

In a decision that still baffles Baker's family, Kline was released from the hospital and soon orchestrated the release of his girlfriend, Westveld told the jury.

"He believed he was the only one who knew what was right **for** her. As long as she did what he wanted her to do instead of what she wanted to do, she'd be fine," Westveld said.

Unfortunately, once Baker began feeling smothered by her boyfriend, her growing yen **for** independence was ultimately squelched by Kline, who Westveld said strangled Baker to death and left her on the back porch of their home in the 12300 block of Wisconsin on Detroit's west side.

"That was grounds **for** termination, according to Mr. Kline, and that's what happened to her," Westveld told the jurors.

Kline was previously found competent to stand **trial** on the first-degree **murder** charges in Baker's death after attempts by one of his attorneys to have him found incompetent.

Dressed in a starched white shirt, navy blue suit and tie, Kline scribbled notes on a legal pad as his lawyer, Donald Cook, told the jury there was precious little evidence against his client.

He said the police didn't bother to investigate anyone but Kline in the killing, though forensic examiners found a pubic hair on her body belonging to someone other than Kline.

On a summer evening in 1996, Baker left their home before her body was found there the next day. Cook said Baker may have been killed elsewhere by someone who, knowing her boyfriend had mental problems, then dumped her body at the house.

Baker's father, Vincent, a retired Ford worker from Monroe, said Kline shouldn't be the only one on **trial** .

"I blame the doctors and the judges and the people who said this man could function in society," the 60-year-old said. "They're just as guilty as he is."

A judge in 1996 ordered Kline's release from the hospital.

In Michigan, people declared not guilty by reason of insanity are transferred out of the criminal justice system and into the civil mental health system.

As mental health patients, they can ask a probate court judge **for** permission to leave the hospital or center every six months. Kline was a regular petitioner.

Testimony in the case will continue today.

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Caption: Photo

A prosecutor says Donald Kline figuratively suffocated, then fatally strangled Barbara Baker.

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