

## **SUSPECT, DEMONS OF HIS PAST ARE ON TRIAL DEFENSE WILL PORTRAY MAN AS A CASUALTY IN THE DEATHS OF WIFE, SON**

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It will be easy for a jury to hate **Paul Harrington** .

He has shot to death at point-blank range not one but two of his own families -- two wives, three children in all.

He has been a three-fifths-a-day alcoholic. He has terrified coworkers by losing control and committing acts such as ramming a hi-lo into an uncooperative vending machine at Hercules Drawn Steel in Livonia.

Prior to shooting his first wife in 1975, **Harrington** physically abused her and the couple's children -- acts he admitted during a videotaped hypnosis session with a Southfield psychiatrist in 1980, which was viewed recently by the Free Press.

**Harrington** was charged with murder in 1975 but found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1977. He spent 2 months in a psychiatric institution -- and soon after remarried, neglecting to tell wife No. 2 about wife No. 1.

A year ago, on Oct. 15, **Harrington** , 54, shot to death his second wife, Wanda, 45, and the couple's 3-year-old son, Brian, in their Detroit home. He stands trial beginning today on first-degree murder charges.

He has pleaded not guilty by reason of mental defect. **Harrington** 's court-appointed attorney, W. Frederick Moore of Detroit, said he hopes to convince a jury to pity rather than hate **Harrington** , and to see **Harrington** as not just a killer but a casualty -- of mental illness and of a life filled with violence from childhood.

**Harrington** has never denied committing either killing or being an alcoholic, Moore points out. He immediately called authorities after both killings. And he told a police detective shortly after the 1999 killings about the 1975 case.

"They should have put me away then," **Harrington** told the detective.

"That shows this man is crying out for help," Moore says.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Ralph Elizondo says **Harrington** knew what he was doing and plans to document that by focusing on **Harrington** 's behavior before and after the killings.

Psychiatric testimony will dominate the trial. **Harrington** will not testify, Moore says.

Moore and other observers say **Harrington** 's case raises questions about Michigan's mental health system and shortage of residential treatment facilities.

Others, including Elizondo, argue that **Harrington** failed to take adequate personal responsibility, choosing, for example, to drink alcohol while taking anti-depression medications.

**Harrington** was born in 1946 in Tuskegee, Ala., and grew up in nearby Union Springs. He and his three siblings had different fathers, **Harrington** told psychiatrists in the 1970s. **Harrington** 's father abandoned the family when he was young.

His mother was abusive, he said. He barely managed to graduate from high school in 1962 and joined the U.S. Army just as the Vietnam War was escalating. By then, he had married his first wife, Becky, also from Union Springs.

**Harrington** was in the First Calvary division, he said during the 1980 hypnosis interview with now-deceased psychiatrist Bruce Danto, who taped the session. Danto's wife and **Harrington** 's defense attorney from his first trial have kept copies of the tapes.

While on maneuvers, **Harrington** was ambushed and shot in the right calf and in the face. He spent 2 months in a hospital then returned to combat.

When Danto asked **Harrington** if he had killed anyone in Vietnam, **Harrington** whispered, "Yes I did."

He described how his good friend, named Roberts, "got wasted." Roberts was blown up next to **Harrington** , who said he had to peel Roberts' skin and blood from his own face. After that, the unit vowed to "take no prisoners," he told Danto.

Soon after, while on patrol, **Harrington** heard movement in nearby bushes. He fired into the bushes, laughing with his buddies, "just payin' back for Roberts.

"And I walked up there, I was laughin' and laughin', I looked in. That's when I stopped laughin'."

**Harrington** had killed a mother and four children, one a baby who "couldn't be no more than 2 months old," Harrington said. "Every time I went to sleep, I saw that kid."

**Harrington** said he stayed "high or drunk" to get to sleep after the incident, but "night after night after night after night after night, I kept seein' those faces."

**Harrington** received an honorable discharge in 1968 and worked for Ford Motor Co. until 1972, when he joined the Detroit Police Department as a plainclothes detective. One night, he was hit over the head with a steel pipe, causing headaches for years.

**Harrington** 's marriage was troubled. On Dec. 19, 1975, **Harrington** told Danto, he went to a psychiatrist. He told that doctor he had abused his family and had had fantasies of killing his wife and children. He admitted pushing his wife down stairs and pulling a gun on her once.

**Harrington** told the doctor "how I was feeling, how my life seemed to be in a matchbox, getting closer and closer and closer ...Things just caving in around me ...He asked me if I thought I needed to be in the hospital. I said I didn't care what he did. He said I should be in the hospital."

But for reasons not made clear on the videotape, the doctor put off committing **Harrington** until after Christmas. And, **Harrington** said on the tape, the doctor told Becky that "since it was so close to the holiday that I didn't need to be by myself and her and the kids should come back home."

The doctor gave **Harrington** a prescription and warned him not to drink alcohol. That same day, **Harrington** picked up his two daughters -- Cassandra, 4, and Pamela, 9 -- from school, took them to Burger King and went back to the house.

"All of a sudden," **Harrington** said, "I don't know if it was the dope pill, the telephone, or what. I heard this ring. All I remember is this ring."

" **Paul** ," Danto asked, "could that ring be the echo from your shots?"

"I don't know. I don't know," **Harrington** said.

**Harrington** said he next remembered being in a jail cell.

In fact, he had killed Becky and the girls and gone immediately outside to wave down police officers. He was hospitalized at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry in Ypsilanti on Dec. 22, 1975, and stayed there until July 7, 1976, when he was found competent to stand trial. He was acquitted in 1977 and released after 2 months' hospitalization.

He was diagnosed with severe depression and personality disorders. In their final report June 21, 1977, two forensic psychiatrists wrote that **Harrington** did not meet criteria for required commitment.

"He has been treated with anti-depressive medication ...Both psychiatrists felt strongly that Mr. **Harrington** , although not committable, should be encouraged to seek outpatient psychiatric treatment on a voluntary basis," the report stated.

It is unclear whether **Harrington** had regular psychiatric treatment after that, but 24 years later, he committed a nearly identical killing.

Shortly after his son, **Paul** Jr., then 15, left for high school, he shot to death Wanda and Brian, placing Brian carefully next to his mother on the couch after shooting him -- an act, Moore contends, that illustrates **Harrington** 's emotional chaos. He immediately called 911 and made a full statement to police.

**Harrington** had been seeing a therapist and was voluntarily committed to a hospital for a few days the summer of 1999.

But he had lost his job at Hercules Drawn Steel in Livonia in April 1999 and had run out of his psychiatric medications that "keep me from hearing voices" about a week before the killings, he told a police detective. He hadn't slept much in many nights. He borrowed a .32-caliber pistol from a neighbor the night of Oct. 14. He said he decided to shoot his wife and child the next morning, and did so at 9:30 a.m.

**Harrington** is being held at the Wayne County Jail. Wanda **Harrington** 's family has declined comment until after the trial.

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MULTIPLE; CHILD; COURT

Caption: Photo DAVID P. GILKEY/Detroit Free Press file photo; Photo

**Paul Harrington** sits at his preliminary examination Jan. 24 in the killings of wife Wanda and son Brian.

Wanda and Brian **Harrington** were killed last October. **PaulHarrington** has admitted killing them; his trial starts today.

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