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Jury selection to start in Morris murder trial

By BILL RILEY

Jury selection is slated to begin this week for the first murder trial to be conducted in Morris County in more than two years, as a millionaire businessman goes on trial for the 1986 "love triangle" murder of his wife.

Chatham Township resident John Dreher, 45, is accused of strangling his wife, Gail, 39, on the morning of Jan. 2, 1986.

Dreher reported finding his wife's body, tied to a column in the basement of their house on Huron Drive, when he returned home from work that evening.

Police said the woman had been strangled with a piece of nylon cord, then was subjected to postmortem blows from a heavy cobbler's tool and multiple knife wounds.

The slaying of the mother of two, well-known in Chatham Township for her involvement in civic and PTA activities, shocked the affluent Morris County town, as did the arrest of her husband for the crime in May 1987.

At that time, authorities revealed that a woman whom they identified as his mistress, Nance Seifrit, 30, had turned state's evidence against Dreher under a grant of full immunity.

Seifrit, now living at an unknown location in another state, is slated to be the state's "star witness" against her former lover.

According to information previously disclosed by authorities, the woman had been Dreher's paramour for several years and admitted being present when Mrs. Dreher was killed.

The authorities said Seifrit admitted that she got a knife from the Dreher kitchen and, along with Dreher, inflicted some of the wounds to the dead body of Mrs. Dreher, who authorities said was planning to divorce her husband.

Seifrit also confessed that she

helped him make the slaying appear to be the work of a robber by ransacking the house and taking a fur coat, jewelry and the murder weapon.

Those items, never recovered, were thrown into a dumpster outside a Livingston cocktail lounge where Seifrit was employed as a manager, authorities said.

Dreher has denied any involvement in the murder. Authorities are faced with disputing an alibi that he was at work at the tannery he owns in Newark and that the last time he saw his wife was when he left home about 8 a.m., after their two sons departed for school.

Authorities said Dreher drove to his tannery with his father that morning, but they charge that he returned to his house and killed his wife.

Morris County First Assistant Prosecutor John O'Reilly has mentioned in court hearings that defense attorney Raymond M. Brown may assert that Seifrit alone committed the murder and will escape punishment because she was granted immunity.

Brown has mentioned that Seifrit gave authorities more than one version of the events of Jan. 2, 1986, which will lead him to attack her credibility.

The prosecutor's office is not seeking the death penalty against Dreher, who faces life in prison if convicted. Morris County Prosecutor Lee Trumbull said his staff found none of the aggravating factors in the case that would justify capital punishment.

Superior Court Judge Donald Collesler has the matter listed for trial Tuesday, but the case may be carried on a day-to-day basis pending the completion of another proceeding that began last week.

Lawyers believe that once a jury is selected in Morristown, the trial will run for about two weeks.

Six charged in drug busts

Six people have been arrested in Orange on drug possession and trafficking charges, according to Police Director Charles Cobbert.

He identified the suspects as Orange residents Tommie Roberson, 46, of Reynolds Street; Elizabeth McCarthy, 27, of South Day Street; Tijuana Royster, 21, of Hillyer Street; Paul Hollingsworth, 40, of South Center Street; Roy Stewart, 20, of Chapman Street; and Robert Gregory, 46, of Hamlin Avenue, East Orange.

Hollingsworth, arrested at his home, was charged with possessing 27 bags of marijuana, possession of drugs

with the intent to distribute, assault and battery on three police officers.

Gregory, nabbed at Central Avenue and Central Place, was charged with illegal drug possession, resisting arrest and destroying evidence.

McCarthy, nabbed outside a housing project at South Essex Avenue and Mechanic Street, was charged with drug possession, possession with intent to distribute and selling drugs within 1,000 feet of the Lincoln Avenue School.

Sgt. Joseph Pagano and Officer Charles Folston, while on a patrol, arrested Stewart outside one of the city's housing projects on Wilson Place.

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