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Jury convicts Huntley man of murder

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WOODSTOCK – It took more than five years for the relationship between Robert Signorile and Michelle Mathieu to turn violent.

It took jurors less than 90 minutes to convict the Huntley man of beating her to death.

Immediately after the guilty verdict was returned, Mathieu's adult son, Michael Mathieu-Duran, slumped over in tears. Mathieu's three siblings hugged prosecuting attorneys, shook hands with detectives, and outside the courtroom, called the verdict "bittersweet."

Signorile, prosecutors said, beat Mathieu so severely that he covered her body in bruises, fractured her ribs and spine and caused a head trauma that ultimately killed her.

"Her unfortunate mistake – her fatal mistake – was that she gave all of her love to this belligerent alcoholic," Assistant State's Attorney Robert Zalud said in a fiery closing argument.

"He put all of her love into his hands, into his fists, into his feet, and he killed her," Zalud said.

Signorile turns 45 on Saturday. He appeared calm as the verdict was read with his chin resting on his hand, as it had throughout the trial.

Mathieu and Signorile were living in Sun City Huntley when on March 18, 2012, medical crews found Mathieu unconscious and face down in vomit in the couple's bedroom. She died six days later after languishing in a coma at Sherman Hospital in Elgin.

The trial included three days of testimony from family and friends who said the couple's relationship became increasingly violent after she and Signorile lost a home in Carol Stream. The couple later moved to Huntley where Mathieu felt isolated without friends or family nearby, they said.

In video evidence – taken a month before Mathieu died and retrieved from Signorile's cellphone – jurors saw Signorile asking the woman how she got injured, saying "All those bruises are from alcohol, aren't they?"

"No, because you beat the (expletive) outta me," she responded.

Signorile previously pleaded guilty to an August 2011 battery involving Mathieu. He was

ordered to undergo anger counseling.

In a picture on Signorile's phone taken about 6 a.m. March 18, 2012, Mathieu was face down on the floor and covered in a robe. It was the same position authorities previously testified that they found her in. Earlier evidence showed Signorile buying alcohol at a nearby grocery store at 7 a.m. that day. Paramedics were called about 4:30 p.m.

"He goes out and buys another handle of Skol ... while Michelle's brain is bleeding," Zalud said.

Assistant Public Defender Rick Behof told jurors to dismiss the videos. They didn't show any physical assault between the pair, he said.

"The videos are nothing more than two hard-core drinkers in a dysfunctional relationship," Behof said.

Defense attorneys also argued that Mathieu was an alcoholic and prone to seizures and falls.

Behof conceded that Signorile made mistakes the day Mathieu was taken to the hospital. He never called for medical help, and instead called a friend in Carol Stream who in turn called 911. He never went into the hospital where Mathieu was being treated.

But that wasn't enough to convict him beyond a reasonable doubt, Behof argued in his closing argument.

"Robert is not on trial for being a bad boyfriend, he's not on trial for being an ass, but he is on trial for murder," Behof said.

Had Mathieu been beaten as severely as the state alleged, Behof said, Signorile would have had bruises or swelling on his hands – but he did not.

Signorile will be sentenced Jan. 24 by McHenry County Judge Sharon Prather, who presided over the trial. He faces between 20 and 60 years in prison.