

NORTHWEST HERALD

Trial begins in Sun City beating death

Published: Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2013 12:39 p.m.

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WOODSTOCK – Prosecutors say a Huntley man accused in the beating death of his girlfriend had a history of abusing the woman.

Michelle Mathieu's death on March 24, 2012, was the culmination of a violent relationship with Robert Signorile, Assistant State's Attorney Patrick Kenneally said.

Signorile, 44, is on trial this week on first-degree murder charges stemming from Mathieu's death. McHenry County Judge Sharon Prather is presiding over the trial.

Authorities on March 18, 2012, responded to the home the couple shared in Sun City, Huntley. They were called there by a friend of the couple who lived in Carol Stream.

Police and paramedics testified Tuesday that Mathieu, 52, was found naked, unconscious and face-down in her own vomit. She was taken to Sherman Hospital in Elgin where she underwent emergency brain surgery but died six days later.

Signorile told investigators that Mathieu was an alcoholic and fell often.

In his opening statement, Kenneally called that explanation "asinine" and a "tired, unimaginative excuse."

Prosecutors are expected to call doctors to testify that her injuries were not consistent with a fall onto a carpeted floor, or into furniture. Mathieu had bruises covering her body, fractured ribs and spine, a blown pupil, and significant head trauma.

"This was not an accident. This was not an unlikely happenstance," Kenneally said. "We're going to ask you to call it what it is – a crime."

When outlining his defense, Assistant Public Defender Angelo Mourelatos said there were no reports from neighbors that evening. Signorile had no outward injuries, or signs that he struggled with Mathieu, testimony revealed.

"Robert did not have the appearance of injuries on his body whatsoever," Mourelatos said. "Not even his hands. Everything was in place at the home Robert shared with Michelle."

Mourelatos said Mathieu was an alcoholic who suffered from seizures and delirium tremens, or shaking as a result of alcohol withdrawal.

Other witnesses for the state testified that the couple's relationship was deteriorating and they believed Signorile had abused Mathieu in the past.

Bette Lemke, a friend of the couple, made the 911 call on March 18. She testified that Mathieu began showing signs of physical abuse in the months leading up to her death. She saw Mathieu with bruises, black eyes, and an egg-shaped lump on her head before she died.

Those same witnesses also said they had never witnessed a physical altercation between the couple.

Seven months before her death, Signorile pleaded guilty to battery for an incident involving Mathieu. He was given two years of supervision and ordered to undergo anger counseling.

The trial will resume at 9 a.m. today.