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A mind to kill

Hossencofft testifies he alone plotted death

By Joline Gutierrez Krueger
Tribune Reporter

It was almost the perfect murder, with a cold, methodical genius of a plan, but foiled by rushed miscalculations and the mismanagement of a bumbling accomplice.

Or so Diazien Hossencofft would like jurors to believe.

He would also like them to believe that his girlfriend and first degree murder defendant, Linda Henning, had nothing to do with the Sept. 9, 1999, disappearance and presumed death of his estranged wife, Girly Chew Hossencofft.

On Tuesday, the 10th day of Henning's death penalty trial, smiling, sneering Diazien Hossencofft did his Hannibal Lecter best to chill a crowded Albuquerque courtroom and convince a jury that he alone masterminded the scheme to kill his wife, using Henning, not as an accomplice as prosecutors allege, but as the unwitting source for an alibi.

"This was not a murder by chance," said Hossencofft, already serving a life sentence plus 60 years and 364 days in a Wyoming prison for his wife's death. "This was not by someone who was psychotic at the time. This was a cold, calculative murder."

Those calculations included not Henning, 49, but her friend Bill Miller, who Hossencofft called both an idiot and a militia-minded man with predator qualities.

"He was zee last ingredient," said Hossencofft, 37, his voice hissing and slithering randomly between Japanese, German, Bronx and rattlesnake affectations.

Prosecutors today were expected to continue to chisel away at Hossencofft's credibility, alleging that he may have masterminded the murder but he also masterminded a cover-up to exonerate the woman he refers to in thousands of jailhouse letters as his "Love Kitten."

"I will do anything to set you free," Assistant District Attorney Jack Burkhead read Tuesday from one of Hossencofft's letters to Henning. "Anything at all."

Hossencofft, his shrunken 5-foot-4 frame dwarfed by a "High Risk" red jail jumpsuit and fist-sized wire-rimmed eyeglasses, rarely looked in Henning's direction, casting his dimpled grins to the courtroom crowd and the Court TV camera during more than six hours on the witness stand.

Henning, for her part, kept her eyes averted, hunched over a legal pad, scrawling furiously.

Unlike other days during her trial, she appeared anxious and agitated.

Hossencofft explained to jurors how he began to plot his wife's death long before meeting Henning in July 1999 because his wife was attempting to take away his 3-year-old son, a boy, according to prosecutors, he claimed to have created in a test tube.

Other testimony indicates the boy was the result of an affair with a Japanese woman in Canada. The boy was later adopted, about nine days before Girly Hossencofft's death.

"So they make the choice; they took my son from me," Hossencofft said, referring to his estranged wife and her divorce attorney. "And I make the choice to take her life. It's as simple as that."

The murder plan was divided into two parts, he said: his, which included the cleanup of forensics evidence, and Miller's, which included the actual abduction, killing and disposal of the body.

It was Miller, he said, who botched his end of the killing, leaving the woman's bloodstains in her apartment and her bloody clothes, a bloody tarp and other items strewn along a remote stretch of U.S. 60 west of Magdalena.

"It was beyond stupidity," he said.

Hossencofft said he deliberately didn't want to know how his wife was killed or where her body was taken afterward.

"Who cares?" he laughed.

Still, he said every minute decision was made with precision by him and every sequence in the case foretold, including his arrest.

He said he decided to destroy the DNA from the blood by cleaning it with bleach. He decided further to complicate the issue by planting female blood in his wife's apartment at 8401 Spain Road N.E.

After breaking a vial of blood in his pocket as he got into Henning's Honda to drive to the apartment, he said he had no choice but to use his last tube of female blood, which happened to belong to Henning.

He had expected her blood to disintegrate enough so that it could not be traced to her but only appear to be female blood, thus turning suspicion away from him, at least briefly.

"As long as it is pointing to someone else it doesn't matter to me," he said.

Hossencofft would not explain why he collected blood from different people.

"Let's just say it's for scientific research," he said.

He also explained that he drew Henning's blood without her knowledge, drugging her with a heavy dose of Lorazepam, a medication he takes for anxiety.

Hossencofft said he stole away twice the night of Sept. 9, 1999, to deal with cleaning up Girly's apartment by coming up with excuses to send Henning on errands and then racing back so she would not become suspicious that he had left her home.

Hossencofft admitted that he made a crucial mistake when he opened the tarp later found near the highway in Henning's garage as she was cooking dinner.

The tarp picked up glitter, art sand and cat hair found on her garage floor, he said.

Hossencofft said two tarps were purchased the day before his wife was killed - Henning paid for hers by check; he paid for his by cash.

He bought his tarp and then ran it out to the car while Henning was trying to exchange some paint.

In a Jan. 18 interview with Albuquerque police detectives, however, Hossencofft had said one of the tarps was used to protect a section of driveway where his son played with Henning's art sand and glitter. Testimony indicates that by the time this incident was to have occurred the child had already been adopted.

Hossencofft also testified Tuesday that he purchased a ninja sword the afternoon of the killing as a gift for Henning.

His DNA, found on the braiding of the sword, was meant to be there, he said, because it is Japanese custom to do so.

"I thought it was a nice parting gift," he said.

On Sept. 10, 1999, the day after the abduction and presumed death, Hossencofft said he only told Henning he was moving away with another woman he was going to marry in her home state of South Carolina.

Previous testimony by Henning suggests she knew of his impending move and marriage before then. Testimony Tuesday indicates Hossencofft had also planned to marry Henning.

Henning is charged with 20 counts, including murder and kidnapping. Her attorneys on Tuesday attempted to have the charges thrown out, saying the state had not met its burden to prove them, but Chief Judge W. John Brennan denied the motions.

Once he is done testifying, Hossencofft is expected to return to the maximum-security prison in Wyoming, where he was allowed to serve out what will presumably be the rest of his life after accepting a plea agreement January.

If the jury believes his version of the story, it will be in contrast to the grand jury that indicted Miller, the man he has fingered in the crime, on five lesser charges of tampering with evidence - that for destroying business cards.

Prosecutors had based much of their case against Miller on almost the same testimony Hossencofft gave jurors Tuesday.

"So me being a witness is no good," Hossencofft said in a Jan. 18 interview with Miller attorney Ray Twohig. "No one's going to believe me."

Hossencofft's testimony was scheduled to continue today.

`Rabbit head' boasts of bamboozles

By Joline Gutierrez Krueger
Tribune Reporter

He was born Armand Chavez on March 5, 1965, in Houston.

But perhaps that is all that can be said with certainty about the man who has come to be known as Diazien Hossencofft, a self-avowed con man who has led a lifetime of lies with a plethora of schemes, including the murder plot of his wife, Girly Chew Hossencofft.

"Men, women, whatever," Hossencofft, 37, testified Tuesday of his victims who through the years have apparently believed he could restore youth, thwart cancer, marry them, save the world. "Young, old, feeble, educated, uneducated, anytime, anyplace."

Hossencofft legally changed his name from Chavez in 1992 for reasons he vaguely said had something to do with getting married.

During cross-examination Tuesday, he denied that his first name was Japanese and his surname German - a bow to what prosecutors said was his belief that those ethnicities were master races.

Hossencofft, however, loosely translates from German to "rabbit head," a fact he appeared not to have realized when Assistant District Attorney Jack Burkhead queried him Tuesday.

Hossencofft said he has degrees in biology and chemistry from the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, Calif. But the rest of a lengthy and seemingly impressive curriculum vitae he admits is entirely false.

That includes bogus degrees from the University of Tokyo and Cornell Medical School, work with the National Institute of Genetic Research and the authoring numerous scientific papers.

False, too, is his claim to achieving permanent residence in the United States in 1970.

"It was an arbitrary number," he testified Tuesday. "So what?"

Hossencofft proclaimed himself a doctor, often a thoracic surgeon. Among the people who believed him were Girly Hossencofft and his girlfriend for a time, Linda Henning.

But the closest he ever came to being a physician was around 1990 when he attended medical school for a little more than seven weeks at the University of Utah before he was kicked out for lying on his financial aid forms, he testified.

His last known employment was in 1993, although Hossencofft said he continued to earn an income.

This was through a series of scams, prosecutors say, including convincing Santa Fe heiress Joy Hinson-Rider to pay him hundreds of thousands of dollars for treating her for breast cancer - a disease that eventually killed her.

Hossencofft says he was paid to read to her.

Hossencofft also charged a woman from Aztec, Julie McGuire, $2,500 an injection for a so-called youth serum. McGuire testified earlier that she paid for three injections before she learned Hossencofft was a fraud and that the shots were just B vitamins.

He also asked McGuire to marry him.

By Sept. 9, 1999, he was engaged to three known women: McGuire, Cheryl Culp of South Carolina and Henning.

He was still legally married to Girly Chew Hossencofft, who was kidnapped that day and is presumed dead.

THE LAST FATAL HOURS

The following is based on testimony and previous detective interviews about Linda Henning and Diazien Hossencofft's whereabouts beginning Sept. 9, 1999 - the day authorities say Girly Chew Hossencofft was kidnapped and killed. Hossencofft also details where he believes Bill Miller was that day.

Sept. 9

12:08 a.m.: Linda Henning debit purchase made at Phillips 66 gas station.

1 p.m.: Surveillance begins on Girly Hossencofft to make sure she is at work as a bank teller. Diazien Hossencofft says he is unsure whether Bill Miller or other members of a militia group are doing the watching.

3:19 p.m.: Diazien Hossencofft purchase made at Texaco, Wyoming and Montgomery boulevards Northeast.

3:56 p.m.: Diazien Hossencofft purchase made at Raley's, Montgomery and Wyoming boulevards Northeast.

4-5 p.m.: UFO club member sees fellow members Henning and Miller with Diazien Hossencofft. Henning and Hossencofft are using walkie-talkies.

3:59-7:35 p.m.: Diazien Hossencofft purchases a ninja sword at World of Knives at Winrock Center.

5:15 p.m.: Girly Hossencofft leaves work at Bank of America.

5:40-5:45 p.m.: After mailing a letter to her parents in Malaysia, Girly Hossencofft arrives home at 8401 Spain Road N.E.

6 p.m.: Diazien Hossencofft arrives at his estranged wife's apartment to clean up. He spots blood on the floor and is upset.

6:33 p.m.: Henning purchase made at Walgreens. She says it was for Diazien Hossencofft's prescription. Prosecutors said his medicine was picked up the day before.

7 p.m. (approximate): Neighbor and friend see Diazien Hossencofft in Henning's Honda peel into his driveway, go inside his home at 3900 Moon N.E. and leave shortly afterward. He is covered in a black substance and wearing dark clothing. He heads to Henning's home, tossing Girly Hossencofft's wallet out in the street near Tramway Boulevard and Indian School Road Northeast.

7:30-9 p.m.: Friend calls Girly Hossencofft's home 10 times and gets no answer.

10 p.m.: Diazien Hossencofft asks Henning to pick up juice, flashlight and tile spacers so he can buy time to go back to Girly Hossencofft's apartment to bleach the bloodstains and plant a vial of female blood to confuse detectives. The vial he wants to use breaks, and so he said he is forced to bring a vial of Henning's blood.

10:18 p.m.: Cash purchase of a Maglight flashlight and Ray-O-Vac batteries made at Wal-Mart, Wyoming Boulevard and Academy Road Northeast - a 12-minute walk from Girly Hossencofft's apartment. Prosecutors say Henning bought the flashlight and later stashed it at a friend's house.

10:25 p.m.: Henning ATM withdrawal made at same Wal-Mart.

11:23 p.m.: Henning debit card purchase made at Smith's on Tramway at Montgomery Boulevard Northeast.

Sept. 10

12:30 a.m.: Diazien Hossencofft's "fiancee" arrives at Sunport from South Carolina.

12:30 a.m.: Henning says she and Hossencofft have sex at her home at 9 La Villita Drive N.E.

2:07 a.m.: Fiancee checks into Residence Inn at Carlisle Boulevard and I-40.

3 a.m.: Henning says she leaves Hossencofft's room and goes to her own downstairs. She does not believe he

leaves.

3-4 a.m.: Diazlen Hossencofft visits fiancee at hotel.

8 a.m.: Girly Hossencofft does not show for work. Co-workers are concerned.

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