## **Transvestite Murder Trial Underway**

CAMBRIDGE - Jurors were asked last Wednesday to decide whether a Watertown man strangled his sexual partner after discovering he was a transvestite, or if the transvestite died in the man's bed from smoking crack cocaine.

Opening arguments were made in Middlesex County Superior Court in the first-degree murder trial of William Palmer. He is accused of strangling Roman Pickett, 23, of Chelsea, in November 1995 at Palmer's Watertown apart-

"What this case is about is two people went home for a sexual encounter and one of them was killed," said Middlesex Assistant District Attorney Adrienne Lynch, who referred to Pickett as a woman.

Palmer apparently met Pickett, who used the name Chanel, and his twin. who uses the name Gabrielle, at the

Playland Cafe near Boston's Combat Zone — the city's adult entertainment district, investigators have said

The victim's twin brother has said Palmer was a regular at the bar and knew the pair were transvestites

Lynch said Palmer invited the twins, who were dressed as women, back to his apartment, but that only Roman

"That was a mistake that cost Chanel Pickett her life," Lynch said Wednesday

The two were together in the bedroom for hours and were having sex when "he discovered that she was a he," Lynch said. Palmer then allegedly beat Pickett on the face and head before strangling him.

Pickett was wearing jeans and a woman's top when he was found.

But defense attorney Walter Prince said the prosecution was misguided in

"This case is not about sex and murder as the prosecution would have you believe," Prince said, referring to Pickett as a man. "This case is about drugs.

Prince said Pickett used crack cocaine in the bedroom and "suffered a psychotic attack" during which he shouted, "God will never die! The devil won't allow it! The devil is king!

Prince urged jurors to ignore the sexual aspects of the case and said the prosecution cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Palmer strangled Pickett.

"It was an accident - a tragic accident," Prince said. "Someone lost their life but there was no intent to murder.'

The jury was scheduled to view the outside of the Boston bar and Palmer's home on Thursday morning before the prosecution called its first witness that

## Gay **Candidate Wins** San Mateo Seat

SAN MATEO — Gay and Leshian Victory Fund candidate, Richard Gordon, has won the April 8 special election for the San Mateo, Ca. Board of Supervisors. Gordon racked up an overwhelming 41 percent of the vote in the seven way, non-partisan race. His closest competitor came in second with 32 percent.

"Richard's decisive victory is a real tribute to the fair-mindedness of San Mateo's voters," says Victory Fund political director Kathleen DeBold. They have sent the clear message to the rest of America on the value of judging candidates on their qualifications rather than their sexual orientation.

Uniquely qualified for this office, Gordon has devoted his career to making San Mateo County a better place for all its residents. A two-term member of the San Mateo Board of Education, Gordon is executive director of Youth and Family Assistance (YFA), a non-profit agency that provides a wide range of services to homeless youth

Among his numerous civic activities, he is president-elect of the Redwood City Chamber of Commerce, co-chair of the San Mateo County Task Force on Violent Crime Against Women and a member of the San Mateo County Criminal Justice Coun-



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## **Finding Suggests Pitt** Discriminated **Against Lesbians**

PITTSBURGH — The University of Pittsburgh discriminated by refusing to extend health coverage to the Lesbian partner of a former writing instructor, a civil rights panel has decided.

Deborah Henson, a lawyer who taught legal analysis and writing, filed a complaint against the university in January 1996, saying the policy violated a city ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The city Human Relations Commission concluded this week that the policy "has resulted in disparate treatment (for homosexual employees) in comparison to heterosexual employees

The case now proceeds to a private settlement conference. If both sides fail to agree on a resciution, the commission will schedule a public hearing on the complaint.

Pitt spokesman Ken Service said he had not seen the commission's report but added, "We believe our current policy in regard to benefits for domestic partners will withstand any legal chal-

Henson, who left the university faculty a year ago, had wanted to enroll her female partner of nine years in Pitt's health care plan.

She said heterosexual employees could get coverage for "virtually all" opposite-sex partners because the university did not require documentation of marital status

"Transvestite Murder Trial Underway." Update, 23 Apr. 1997, p. A-3. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/VHRGUP388443762/AHSI?u=mlin\_b\_bpublic&sid=bookmark-AHSI. Accessed 5 Apr. 2023.