

LOCAL

Guilty: Derby police credited for help in case

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victim now can hopefully end this chapter in her life of domestic violence, abuse and terror," Gaetano said.

Niemeyer's attorney, Tara Knight, said she met in private with Niemeyer after the verdict and he cried and hugged her.

"He said, 'Thank you. You did a great job,'" Knight said.

A woman who said she was Niemeyer's mother also cried and left the courtroom when the verdict was announced. She declined further comment.

Jurors left the courthouse quickly and could not be contacted for comment.

Knight, who did not present any defense witnesses, attacked Siok's credibility throughout the two-week trial. She claimed Siok lied under oath and moved in again with Niemeyer after the beating.

During her testimony, Siok admitted she was using drugs and alcohol the night of the beating.

Dr. Evan Stark, director of the Domestic Violence Training Project, testified that lying, using drugs and going back to an abuser are common behaviors of battered women.

"The state did a great job in prosecuting, and given the seriousness of that injury, I can see how the jury decided as they did," Knight said. "There are shades of gray in every story. In each incident of domestic violence there are shades of gray. I think people forget that."

The trial took a bizarre twist in February when Niemeyer allegedly kidnapped Siok and her sister, Rose Siok, and drove them to New York in an apparent attempt to keep Dawn Siok from testifying against him. A mistrial was declared and new trial held.

Niemeyer was arrested in New York Feb. 8 after a routine motor vehicle stop. Kidnapping charges from that incident are pending.

Battered women's syndrome is focus in Niemeyer case

By Kerry Tesoriero
Register Staff

MILFORD — Tony Niemeyer's attorney argued Monday that Niemeyer's alleged victim has no credibility because she went back to him after he allegedly abused her.

But Assistant State's Attorney Paul Gaetano tried to show that Dawn Siok fits the description of a victim of battered women's syndrome.

An expert in domestic violence testified that lying, resuming a relationship with an abuser and abusing drugs and alcohol are typical behaviors of some battered women.

Niemeyer, 27, of Derby is charged with first-degree assault and kidnapping. Siok is the state's star witness.

Niemeyer is accused of beating Siok on Feb. 9 and 10, 1996, and would not let her go to the hospital for about 22 hours, an arrest warrant affidavit states.

Surgeons at Griffin Hospital found Siok's liver and a small artery were torn and she could have bled to death, they testified.

The case took a bizarre twist in February when Niemeyer allegedly kidnapped Siok one day into the trial and drove her to New York in an apparent attempt to keep her from testifying.

A mistrial was declared and a new trial began last week in Superior Court. Evan Stark, a sociology professor at Rutgers University and director of the Domestic Violence Training Project in New Haven, said battered women's syndrome can occur when a woman is beaten so badly she believes her abuser may eventually kill her.

Gaetano posed a hypothetical

question about a scenario like the one Siok testified that she found herself in.

Gaetano asked Stark if someone with battered women's syndrome might — after being beaten for hours by her companion of four years — obey his order to shower and wash off the blood.

"A person is going to be afraid and is going to do what they're told," Stark said.

Niemeyer's lawyer, Tara Knight, has argued that Siok was never kidnapped and that she went back to Niemeyer willingly following the alleged assault in 1996.

Stark said a battered woman might go back to a man who beat her even after having him arrested, which is what Knight argues Siok did.

"Even if she's deathly afraid of him?" Gaetano asked.

"It's because she's deathly afraid of him that she returns," Stark said.

"A woman may rightly believe she's safer doing what the abuser wants her to do, Stark said.

"The victim actually feels safer when she knows where the guy is," Stark said. "By complying with his wishes . . . she can prevent herself from being hurt."

Knight asked if there might be other reasons that a woman would go back to a man after having him arrested.

"A woman might love the man," Knight suggested. "She might need money. Women lie sometimes, don't we?"

"We all lie sometimes," Stark said. "Even those of us that tell the truth."

"You don't know she has battered women's syndrome, do you?" Knight asked.