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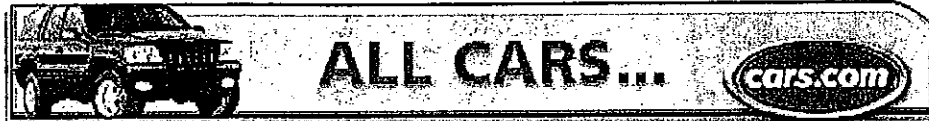
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Trial Won't Be Moved

By COLIN POITRAS
 The Hartford Courant

October 11, 2000

MIDDLETOWN - An Old Saybrook lawyer accused in a murder-for-hire plot has lost her bid to have her jury trial moved out of New London County because of extensive pretrial publicity.

New London Superior Court Judge Susan B. Handy ruled Tuesday that Beth Ann Carpenter's right to a fair trial has not been jeopardized by extensive media coverage and that the trial can proceed in New London County.

On the same day that the ruling was issued, Assistant State's Attorney Paul Murray filed a motion asking that one of Carpenter's defense attorneys, Hugh Keefe of New Haven, be disqualified because he might be called as a witness.

Keefe could not be reached for comment late Tuesday. Carpenter's other defense attorney, Tara Knight of New Haven, is also expected to withdraw from the case if Keefe is removed. Knight and Murray also could not be reached for comment.

Dee Clinton - whose son, Anson "Buzz" Clinton III, was killed - said Tuesday that she was delighted by Handy's ruling, which happened to come on her 54th birthday.

"It's wonderful," an exuberant Clinton said from her East Lyme home. "I love the justice system."

Carpenter, 36, is accused of conspiring with her former law partner, Haiman Clein, with whom she was having an affair, to pay a hit man \$10,000 in 1994 to kill Clinton, who was her brother-in-law.

According to police, Carpenter believed that Clinton



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was abusing her then 3-year-old niece. Carpenter and her parents once tried to obtain custody of the child but failed.

Police say the plot was carried out on March 10, 1994, when Clein's drug dealer, Mark Despres, lured Clinton, 28, to a secluded road off I-95 in East Lyme and shot him five times in the chest.

Clein and Despres have already pleaded guilty to murder as part of a plea agreement with prosecutors. They are awaiting sentencing.

Carpenter has pleaded not guilty to charges of capital felony, murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Although it is an applicable option under the law, prosecutors have agreed not to pursue the death penalty against Carpenter. The maximum punishment she faces, if convicted, is life in prison without the possibility of release. She remains held in lieu of \$1 million bail.

In their argument to have the case moved to another part of the state, Keefe and Knight said that the case's vivid details of illicit sex, drugs, murder and betrayal have led to a saturation of media coverage that has tainted any potential jury pool.

To support his claim, Keefe commissioned a survey of potential jurors in New London, which revealed that about 83 percent had either heard of or read something about the case.

Murray argued against moving the case, citing Keefe's own survey that showed 68 percent of the people polled said they could maintain an open mind despite having prior knowledge about some of the facts.

In requesting that Keefe be disqualified, Murray said it is likely that the famed criminal defense lawyer will be called as a witness if Carpenter's case proceeds to trial.

Part of Carpenter's case will probably deal with whether she fled the state and moved to Europe as police were closing in on Clein and other suspects months after Clinton's death.

Keefe has steadfastly maintained that Carpenter did not flee and that she cooperated fully with investigators looking to find Clein.

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