

Accused in Hunt murder obsessed

SPRINGFIELD (AP) — The arraignment of a former prosecuting attorney who is accused of slaying a mother of 12, and allegedly targeted women across the country, who was postponed after he appeared incoherent.

Lane County District Judge Darryl Larson called off the hearing Tuesday after Clark Michael Jennings failed to respond to questions, managing only to roll his head and stick out his tongue.

Jennings, of Blythe, Calif., is facing a murder charge in the Monday killing of Arlene Hunt, 41.

Jennings, 51, has a history of mental problems, had violent obsessions involving Hunt and several other women.

"He had fixated on her and thought that she had caused him some problems in his life," Lane County Sheriff Bob McManus said Tuesday. "He apparently felt he needed to deal with her."

"For some reason, he has targeted our victim and three other women, one in Portland, one in Denver and one in Georgia, that he has crossed paths with," McManus said.

He also allegedly targeted people in Yakima, Wash., and thought first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., were part of a dangerous conspiracy.

"He started getting these hideous, hideous delusions about this big conspiracy of awful women he thought were sending bombs against Russia," his sister Jamie Jennings of Blythe said.

"It was a great conspiracy that was out to do all these evil things to the nation, to himself and to his loved ones."

Jennings, who first met Hunt 20 years ago, was arrested by Lane County sheriff's deputies Monday night after a brief struggle at a motel in downtown Eugene.

Jennings apparently had been in the Lane County area for the last week, Lane County District Attorney Doug Harclerod said. Officers suspect that he had been stalking Hunt.

"We believe at this point that we can place him in the residential area of our victim on two separate days prior to the murder," McManus said.

Hunt was slain after she interrupted a telephone conversation with a friend to answer a knock at her front door. She screamed when she opened the door. Struck by gunfire at least once, she fell and died in the entry hall.

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— Jamie Jennings, accused's sister

Within seconds of hearing the commotion, a next-door neighbor saw a bearded man in blue jeans walking quickly from the Hunt home.

Hunt, wife of Eugene adoption attorney Greg Hunt, was alone in their Springfield home at the time of the shooting. The Hunts have one biological child and 11 adopted children.

Karen Beswick, Arlene Hunt's friend for 15 years, was the last person to speak to her.

"We were doing our normal chitchat of the morning when she heard something at the door," Beswick said. "She had a cordless phone and she went to answer the door."

"The next thing I knew, I heard her screaming. I didn't hear any words. I kept yelling her name, but she didn't respond."

"I hung up and called 911 and her husband and her parents."

McManus said Jennings lived with Hunt's parents in Washington after his release from the military in the late 1960s. He was reportedly a member of the Green Berets.

He developed an interest in Hunt during his stay with the family, while he was attending law school.

He worked for about a year in the 1970s as a deputy prosecuting attorney for Yakima County, Wash.

He later worked for his father's real estate firm. He became extremely disconsolate following the death of his father. He once was hit by a truck while walking on a freeway in Washington. He had reportedly been warned to leave the freeway before the accident by a patrolman who spotted him reading a Bible in a lane of traffic.

Suspect's problems date back to Vietnam

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — An attorney who worked with Clark Michael Jennings in the county prosecutor's office says he knew Jennings had problems, but never expected they would lead to tragedy.

Jennings, 51, is accused of gunning down Arlene Hunt, 41, at her home in Springfield on Monday. Hunt, wife of a Eugene adoption attorney and mother of 12, knew Jennings when they both lived in Yakima in the 1970s.

"There are a lot of people who will look at the world differently," said Adam Moore, a Yakima criminal defense attorney and former county deputy prosecutor befriended him 20 years ago.

"It will never be the same for her family, for Mike's family," Moore said of Hunt's death. "It's horrible. It's beyond words. I'm absolutely numb with the pain and the confusion of these events."

Moore said he believes Jennings' problems date back to his tour of duty in Vietnam, though Jennings went on to graduate from the University of Washington law school in 1971.

A deputy prosecutor for 18 months starting in 1971, Jennings did mostly civil cases, county Prosecutor Jeff Sullivan and others said Tuesday. A records check showed he "did his job and was not a problem," Sullivan said.

After leaving the prosecutor's office, he worked for his father, Clark Jennings, in real estate, authorities in Oregon said.

Jennings "worshipped his father" and struggled with his death in the late 1970s, Moore said.

A few years later, a state trooper found Jennings sitting in the eastbound lanes of Interstate 90 near George, Wash., reading the Bible, Moore said. The trooper made him move off the roadway, but Jennings soon returned to attempt suicide and was seriously injured.

"He cracked years ago when he ran in front of the semi-truck at George," Moore said. "It's a miracle he even lived."

After painful rehabilitation of a shattered hip and leg, Jennings seemed to drift, occasionally dropping in on Moore and his family.

The relationship changed when Moore learned last summer that his wife's name appeared on what authorities now allege is a kind of hit list written by Jennings.

"We were concerned, but to believe he was capable of this ... no," Moore said. "In our hearts we didn't believe it. ... All my wife did was cook good meals for him."

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