

Court could reinstate conviction of au pair

But it could be months before the Massachusetts court makes its decision

By Alexis Chiu
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Prosecutors asked the state's highest court Monday to reinstate Louise Woodward's murder conviction and send the English au pair back to prison, arguing that the judge at her trial had no right to throw out the jury's verdict.

"The only one who could say what the truth was, was the jury," prosecutor Sabita Singh told the Supreme Judicial Court. "The judge had no reason to touch the verdict."

The defense, however, contended that medical evidence showed Woodward did not kill the 8-month-old boy — an argument that got a skeptical reaction from the court.

"You're asking us, who are not trained in this area, to say that your evidence is so clear that it simply shuts the case down?" Justice Charles Fried asked defense attorney Andrew Good.

"That's correct, your honor," he said.

Woodward, 20, was accused of shaking and slamming Matthew Eappen to death. The defense contended he succumbed to injuries sustained weeks earlier.

A jury disagreed and in October convicted Woodward of second-degree murder. One week later, Judge Hiller Zobel reduced the conviction to involuntary manslaughter and set her free, sentencing her to the 279 days she had already served since her arrest.

If her murder conviction is reinstated, Woodward will have to serve at least 15 years in prison. Prosecutors said that if the manslaughter conviction is allowed to stand, she should at least be resentenced more harshly. Manslaughter carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

It could be months before the court decides.

Woodward was ordered to remain in Massachusetts while the case is appealed, and was seated with her parents during the appeals hearing.

The hearing was broadcast in England, where several dozen supporters of Woodward gathered in The Rigger pub in her hometown of Elton to watch.

Awareness



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Linda Hoover and the Fowl Players, David Bayless, Marisa Tabizon, Benjamin Litton, and Kris Winter perform "Drawing the Shades," a drama that was aimed at raising rape awareness. The troupe presented in the Ben Linder room in the EMU Monday night.

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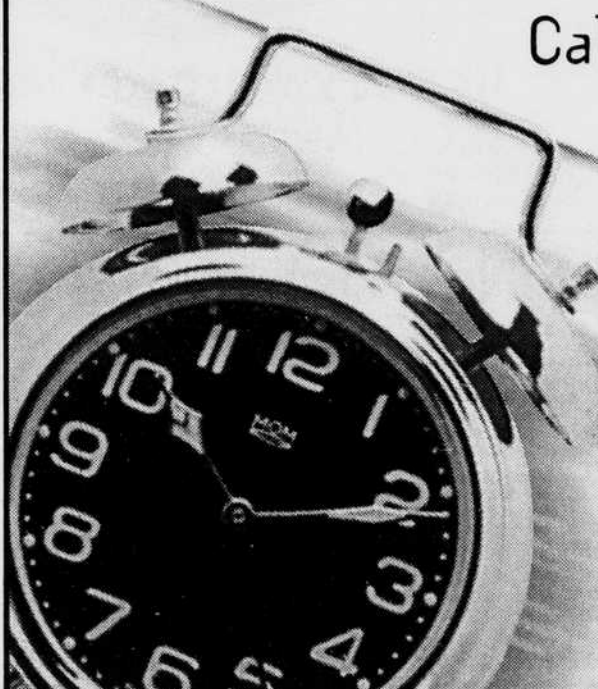
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