

Defendant sane at time of killings, jurors are told

But lawyer disputes prosecutor

By Hillary Chura
The Associated Press

A Scottsdale man who fatally shot his wife and her lover and later held two people hostage wasn't insane and showed no remorse for the slayings, a prosecutor told a jury Thursday.

However, Richard Jay Griffin, 35, went temporarily insane when he heard the woman he had considered a soul mate laughing with their neighbor about him, defense attorney Michael Walz said in closing arguments.

Griffin is charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the April 16, 1992, slayings of Helen Griffin and Thom Kennedy, and with two counts each of kidnapping and aggravated assault in the hostage-taking. Those taken hostage at a Dillard's department store at Paradise Valley Mall where Griffin worked were his boss and another supervisor.

Griffin could face 98 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

"Jay's been through a lot," Walz said. "That's why he's going to a psychologist, and that's why they prescribed medication and continue to prescribe medication."

However, Griffin killed his 24-year-old wife and Kennedy, 30, because they were having an affair, prosecutor Noel Levy told a Maricopa County Superior Court jury.

Helen Griffin and Kennedy each were shot multiple times.

"He made Thom kneel down and shot him," Levy said. "He wanted Thom Kennedy dead. He didn't just want him wounded. He wanted to execute him."

"Richard Griffin was in control, was aware of what he was doing, and knew he had murdered his wife, Helen, and her lover, Thom. He was not insane."

During the trial, each side called experts who disagreed on Griffin's mental state.

Walz said Griffin is a responsible father and was a dedicated employee and generous husband, who became insane temporarily.

"Jay will probably suffer for the rest of his life," Walz said. "He said Helen was the first woman he ever let inside."

"He saw in her the possibility of truly finding a soul mate."

Under Arizona law, a defendant can be found innocent by reason of insanity if it can be proved that a mental disease or defect kept him from knowing the nature or quality of the act or whether the acts were wrong.

Closing arguments in the courtroom of Judge Cheryl Hendrix are scheduled to continue today.