

Suspect awaiting sanity ruling

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VANCOUVER, Wash. — A hearing to determine whether Donald Robert Blake will be acquitted on grounds of insanity or stand trial for first-degree murder continued Tuesday with the defense attorney calling the last of his witnesses.

Blake, 31, has pleaded innocent by reason of insanity in the April 25 death of his girlfriend, Linda L. "Dusty" Rush, 35, who was stabbed in the chest with a pair of scissors.

Prosecuting attorney Jim Peters was to call Dr. Brett Trowbridge of Western State Hospital in Steilacoom, Wash., his only witness, to the stand. But Trowbridge was delayed Tuesday morning because his car broke down in Chehalis, Wash.

Roy Fagan, who shared a Clark County jail cell with Blake for about two months, testified Tuesday that Blake often would spend hours staring into a mirror and would talk to himself.

Once, when Blake and Fagan were teammates for a ping pong match, Blake "suddenly started swinging at me," Fagan said.

Defense attorney Steven Thayer called neighbors and friends who testified that Blake appeared depressed and cried after church services the day Rush was killed.

Clark County Superior Court Judge John Skimas will decide whether to

give Blake a term of up to life in the state mental hospital or to send the case to trial.

Sgt. Robert Kanekoa, who headed the Vancouver Police Department's investigation of the death, testified that during an interview with Blake after his arrest, Blake said he killed Rush to relieve her of the misery of the cancer in her ankles.

Rush had told neighbors that she was in great pain because of the cancer, although medical records obtained by police indicated that she did not have cancer, Kanekoa said.

On the night of the stabbing, Rush and Blake were arguing in the upstairs bedroom of a Vancouver apartment they shared at 2411 Neals Lane, Kanekoa said. Rush was lying on the bed when she was stabbed.

Rush's 12-year-old daughter told police she saw Blake running downstairs carrying a bloodied pair of scissors, which he left on a kitchen counter before fleeing through a patio door, Kanekoa said.

Rush ran outside and collapsed in her front yard near her apartment door. There she told police that "Don did it, Don did it," Kanekoa said. She died later that night at St. Joseph Community Hospital.

Blake was arrested after walking about a mile from the apartment.

Dr. Barry Maletzky, a Portland psychiatrist, and Peter DeCourcy, a Port-

land psychologist, testified that Blake had a history of paranoid schizophrenia and, during their examinations, Blake said he killed Rush on a command from God.

Peters asked Maletzky if there was any way of testing whether Blake actually received a message from God. Referring to the internationally known evangelist, Peters asked if Billy Graham said he had received messages from God, could he also be declared insane?

"I don't know," Maletzky said, "I haven't examined him."

Maletzky, in answer to a question from Skimas, said he did not necessarily believe that a person who claims to have received a message from God was hallucinating.

"Is there, in fact, a God?" Peters asked Maletzky.

"I'm an agnostic," Maletzky said. "I don't know."

DeCourcy said that during an examination in June, Blake's attention span was limited, and he had delusions and phobias and talked in "loose associations." Blake also said he had an "evil eye," DeCourcy said.

Under questioning from Peters, DeCourcy said he thought Blake was aware that thrusting the scissors into Rush's body would result in her death.

Blake's trial has been delayed during psychiatric examinations and treatment.

DeCourcy said medication had caused "a great improvement" in Blake.