

Experts: Blake saw self as agent of God

BY **Cynthia Tank**

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Donald Robert Blake thought he was acting as an agent of God when he killed Linda Rush last April, a psychologist and a psychiatrist testified Monday.

Testimony in Blake's insanity hearing was not confined to the accused murderer's odd behavior, however. The mental condition of evangelist Billy Graham and the existence of God also were discussed, although no conclusions were drawn.

Blake is charged with first-degree murder in the April 25 death of the 35-year-old Rush. She died after being stabbed in the heart with a pair of scissors.

Defense witnesses Monday painted a strange picture of Blake's mental condition at the time of his arrest. He asked Vancouver police if he could call the Pentagon to find out whether he had just stabbed someone or had only dreamed about it.

Blake also told police and several doctors who later examined him that he killed Rush because she had asked him to and because God ordered him to. She was suffering from extreme pain because of cancer in her ankles, he said. Rush had indeed told several neighbors that she had cancer, but medical records do not bear that out. Deputy prosecutor Jim Peters said she may have been suffering pain from arthritis.

Peter DeCourcy, a clinical psychologist in Portland, and Dr. Barry Maletzky, a Portland psychiatrist, both said Monday they thought Blake was legally insane at the time of the stabbing.

DeCourcy said the defendant "seemed to not know who or what he was" when he spoke to him. He said Blake talked about two persons in "this body," pointing to himself, and that sometimes he felt he should kill "this body" because it contained "an evil eye." Blake told DeCourcy he tried once to kill "this body" — a suicide attempt — but the results were disastrous because now there are two "evil eyes."

The psychologist's diagnosis was that Blake had difficulty distinguishing reality

from fantasy, believed he was being persecuted and believed he was selected by God.

"Briefly, what I'm saying is the man was insane," DeCourcy said. "He did what he believed he had to do and did what he believed was right."

According to Maletzky, Blake told him that when Rush came out of the shower on April 25, she lay down on the bed and said she didn't want to know when it was going to happen. A voice commanded Blake to kill her. He picked up a pair of scissors lying nearby and stabbed her in the chest. When she screamed, he became frightened, pulled the scissors out of her, and ran down the stairs.

"I am convinced Mr. Blake felt he was doing the right thing... that he was acting as an agent of God," Maletzky said.

Reports on Blake's bizarre behavior while in jail include strange staring spells and his eating dust balls and cigarettes.

In cross-examining Maletzky, Peters asked the doctor if he would think anyone who said he received messages from God was insane. Maletzky said that isolated fact was not enough to make that kind of diagnosis.

Peters asked the doctor if he thought evangelist Billy Graham was insane because he receives messages from God.

"I don't know," Maletzky solemnly answered. "I'd have to examine him."

"Is there, in fact, a God?" the prosecutor asked.

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

Maletzky and DeCourcy said they did not think Blake could have been faking his delusions and odd behavior. Both said his response to anti-schizophrenic medication confirmed their opinions, because someone faking the condition would appear drugged from the medication. Instead, Blake became more alert and his condition improved, as is the case with schizophrenics under such medication.

Testimony in the case was to continue today.