

Mother faces lesser charge over beaten child's death

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Abusive relationships have marked the life of a 32-year-old single mother who surrendered herself and her three children to the domination of a brutal and secretive ex-convict, Surrey provincial court was told Tuesday.

Glenda Mae Walters paid for her attraction and submission to "a brutal and evil person" with her youngest daughter's life on Aug. 8, 1991, and lost custody of her other two children.

When an autopsy indicated the six-year-old girl had been beaten, Walters was charged with assault causing bodily harm in the death of her daughter, Candice Marie Walters, and would have faced trial on that count.

But "the truth finally came out," as her defence lawyer Tony Serka told Judge Norm Collingwood.

Crown counsel Wendy Dawson said the information now available convinced her to accept a guilty plea to a lesser offence and recommend a suspended sentence for Walters with three years probation.

Dawson said the appropriate charge under the circumstances now known was 'failing to provide the necessities of life' because as a parent she had the ultimate responsibility. She failed in her duties by not summoning medical aid for Candice and by failing to protect her and the other children from her common-law husband, Robert Daniel O'Sullivan, 37.

Serka told the court the four-to-five-hour delay in dialling 911 was dictated by O'Sullivan, who did not want the child to go to hospital because he feared an investigation.

"He kept the children under a reign of terror. He did not want anyone to know he was there."

Referring to a neighbor's statement to police about seeing O'Sullivan speeding away from the Surrey home as the first emergency vehicle arrived to help Candice, Serka said O'Sullivan threatened the family if they revealed he had been present and "took off before police arrived."

The early investigation of the child's death was hampered by the lies and half-truths of the mother, her 12-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son. All claimed O'Sullivan was not there that night.

Also, medical opinions were, at best, inconclusive. At least some of the bruises on the girl's body could have been caused by the family's

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LAWYER TONY SERKA

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efforts at cardio-pulmonary resuscitation.

The autopsy showed Candice had "well-established bronchiapneumonia" and had aspirated material she had regurgitated. Traces of the drug Ipecac, which induces vomiting, were found in the child's urine. O'Sullivan purchased Ipecac at a Surrey pharmacy that morning and charged it.

Surrey Memorial Hospital reported receiving phone calls from an anonymous female beginning at 8:30 a.m. inquiring about a drug to induce vomiting. Walters later admitted she made the calls.

Serka told the court O'Sullivan stood beside her during those calls and did not allow a 911 call until 11 a.m., though they had been trying to revive her since sometime between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m.

At hospital, the little girl was found to have suffered full cardiac arrest and a brain scan showed no activity.

Police searched the family home and found documents showing O'Sullivan was receiving welfare as head of a family of five, that he was obtaining methadone from Drug Freedom Inc. three times a week, was being counselled for "anger management," and had a record for violent crimes dating back to Toronto.

Investigators learned Walters sometimes picked up methadone — a heroin substitute — for O'Sullivan, and that after Candice's death, he asked for the drugs to be sent to Kelowna for him.

From interviews with Winnipeg friends of Walters, police learned that O'Sullivan was serving two years in a Manitoba prison for assault and forcible confinement when Walters met him. Friend Elizabeth Bonner said Walters started writing O'Sullivan and when he got out, he moved in with her and took over her life.

Another friend, Shelley Grant said "Bob likes to slap women around and push kids around. He always had needles and drugs. He blackened Glenda's eyes. As soon as that man arrived in Glenda's life, her whole life changed."

Prosecutor Dawson told the judge O'Sullivan is now facing trial in Supreme Court in New Westminster for sexual assault and forcible confinement involving an incident last April.

Judge Collingwood said the relationship between Walters and O'Sullivan involved "a classic case of mistreatment of women and children by a brutal and evil person who inflicted a reign of terror on this family."

He agreed with the joint submission by Crown and defence and put Walters on three years probation with the order to take counselling as directed by the probation officer.