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Woman 'confessed' to stabbing pusher to death

A woman charged with murder admitted to police that she remembered stabbing her victim several times in a Skid Road rooming house, a B.C. Supreme Court jury was told Wednesday.

Sgt. Peter Piecowye testified that Connie Myrna Chartrand, 20, told police in a tape-recorded confession that she recalled stabbing Arthur Wilfred Garceau "twice in the arms and once in the temple" in his Powell Street room.

Piecowye, sergeant of detectives at Prince Albert, Sask, where Miss Chartrand was arrested last Oct. 24, read a transcript of the alleged confession, quoting the suspect as saying that she stabbed "Art" with a "big, big knife," probably a breadknife.

Mr. Justice Henry Hutcheon and the jury of six men and six women were told in earlier testimony to another policeman the accused allegedly admitted that she stabbed Garceau "56 or 57 times with four different knives."

Garceau, known to Vancouver police as a small-time drug dealer, was found dead last May 30 in his suite at the York Rooms, 259 Powell, with 186 knife wounds in his body. His ankles were tied together with a length of electrical cord. Four knives were found at the murder scene.

Louise Ann Lewicki, 21, of no fixed address, was charged shortly after the killing, but she committed suicide in Oakalla correctional centre two weeks after she was ordered to stand trial for murder.

Constable John Hosak testified Tuesday that Miss Chartrand told him it was she, and not Mrs. Lewicki, who killed Garceau. Hosak found Miss Chartrand walking on a Prince Albert street and arrested her after she allegedly spoke to him about the stabbing.

Alone with Garceau

According to Piecowye's evidence Wednesday, Miss Chartrand insisted she was alone with Garceau in his room at the time of the alleged murder.

"...Something must have gotten into me...I stabbed him. I must have...I don't know," the detective quoted her as saying. Piecowye said he and Det. Albert Logue asked Miss Chartrand whether she had killed Garceau.

"Yeah, I must have. Who else was there?" she allegedly replied.

However, she told police she became aware of more than several stab wounds only after reading newspaper stories of the killing testified Piecowye.

The witness said Miss Chartrand told police she had known Garceau for about a month and had met him in a restaurant near the rooming house in the morning on May 30.

Piecowye testified that Miss Chartrand described Garceau as a "very nice, likeable man," but she knew him only as "Art" and that he was in his 60s." (Garceau in fact was 55.)

When she was asked her reason for stabbing Garceau, the suspect allegedly replied, "I don't know...I feel bad about it."

She said she felt like she was "blacking out" and had been treated in hospital for a seizure only weeks earlier.

Shared a bottle of rum

She said she was on drugs and wanted to buy some depressant pills from the man when she saw him at the café, complained to him of not feeling well and accepted an invitation from Garceau to rest in his room.

According to Picowye, Miss Chartrand said she spent about seven hours in the room, during which time she took pills, slept and shared a bottle of rum with Garceau.

The accused said she remembered her host was asleep when she got up and tied his ankles with a cord from an electrical frying pan, the detective testified.

She picked up a knife and "stabbed him a few times, then grabbed my jacket and left" after wiping off the blade and leaving the weapon beside the bed.

Picowye said Miss Chartrand admitted during the interview that she started taking heroin at age 14 and drugs make her "violent" and cause her to "go crazy, because they eat up your brain."

The suspect said, according to Picowye, that she robbed Garceau of \$150 following the stabbing. She went downtown to "score" a cap of heroin and then passed out in a room at an East Hastings Street hotel.

The witness said Miss Chartrand returned to the Powell Street café a few days later and met Mrs. Lewicki's husband, John, who told her that Garceau was dead.

Miss Chartrand left Vancouver shortly after and travelled to eastern Canada before hitch-hiking to Prince Albert, where she was arrested.

Picowye said she told police of a confiding about the murder to a girlfriend in Regina and she thought of confessing to law authorities several times before she allegedly did.

The trial continues.