

Prosecutor Sets Stage In Meyer Murder Trial

By WILLIAM BASHAM
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The government today opened its case in U.S. District Court against Ray Crump Jr., charged with first-degree murder in the shooting last Oct. 12 of Mary Pinchot Meyer.

Assistant U.S. Att. Alfred Hantman took 38 minutes for his opening statement and set the scene of the murder on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal towpath, where Mrs. Meyer was found dead of two bullet wounds inflicted by a .38-caliber pistol. Hantman said it was a "classic textbook case in circumstantial evidence."

Crump, 26, of the 1900 block of Stanton Terrace SE, listened as Hantman spoke what he said were the last words shouted by Mrs. Meyer before she was shot: "God, somebody help me."

Addressing Judge Howard F. Corcoran and a jury of seven women and five men, Hantman said the 43-year-old victim, who lived at 1523 34th St. NW, suffered the shock of being shot in the head, but remaining conscious.

Tree With Blood Promised

Hantman said she was first shot in the head near the left ear about 12:23 p.m. He said she grabbed her head, then held on to a tree.

"We will bring that tree into the courtroom with blood on it," he added with emotion.

The prosecutor said Mrs. Meyer fought her assailant after the shot, and resisted being pulled down the embankment. She ran back across the towpath toward the canal when the gunman fired a second bullet into her back, Hantman added. It tore laterally through her

chest, severing the aorta, he said.

Mrs. Meyer, a niece of the late Gifford Pinchot, the noted conservationist and Governor of Pennsylvania, was in the "high noon of her lifetime when death struck viciously and violently," Hantman said. Her body was found less than a mile west of Key Bridge.

The government attorney said two men working on a disabled car on Canal Road above the towpath heard the screams and the shooting. He said one of the witnesses later identified Crump as the man seen standing over the victim's body immediately after the second shot was fired.

Hantman said the witness couldn't identify a dark object in Crump's hand. The murder gun was never found.

Hantman ripped into Crump's claim at the time of the murder that he had been fishing nearby and had slipped into the Potomac River. He was arrested less than an hour after the murder and was soaking wet.

The prosecutor said that more than one witness could identify the plaid cap and tan jacket he claimed Crump threw away as he fled from the scene. He added that police blocked off the area minutes after the murder and that the only logical route of escape was the river itself.

He also hit at Crump's claim that he had fallen asleep and that his fishing gear must have fallen into the river. No gear was ever found.

Mrs. Dovey Roundtree, Crump's defense attorney, told Judge Corcoran that she would withhold her opening remarks until later in the trial. Government witnesses were to begin their testimony today.