

N.J. man gets 25-year sentence for killing mistress in Hightstown, dumping body in N.Y. pond

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By Lisa Coryell/For The Times

HIGHTSTOWN -- More than three years after Rosario DiGirolamo killed his mistress, hacked up her body and dumped it in a pond, the former Millstone computer analyst was sentenced to 25 years in prison Wednesday.

Looking disheveled and bloated in a jail-issued jumpsuit, the 36-year-old divorced father of two showed no emotion as a judge described the killing of 27-year-old Amy Giordano as a heinous plot to rid the financially strapped DiGirolamo of his increasingly demanding girlfriend.

DiGirolamo pleaded guilty to aggravated manslaughter in the June 2007 killing.

He didn't speak during his sentencing. In a report prepared before the hearing DiGirolamo said he killed the mother of his 11-month-old son with one hammer blow to the head during an argument in her Hightstown apartment. The couple was arguing because Giordano was demanding a new apartment and threatening to tell his wife about their affair, he said.

The attack was an act of passion that sent him into a panic, DiGirolamo said. By the time he'd calmed down enough to administer aid to Giordano she was dead, he said.

Superior Court Judge Edward Neafsey rejected that account, noting that evidence found on DiGirolamo's laptop computer showed that in the days before Giordano's death someone had Googled the terms "martial arts, lethal blows to the head."

DiGirolamo knew exactly what he was doing when he "willfully took Ms. Giordano's life," Neafsey said.

"He studied how to do this and learned his lesson well," Neafsey said. "What the vicious nature of the crime showed was his anger for the victim and his decision to eradicate her, totally eliminate her, from his life."

DiGirolamo sawed up Giordano's body and stuffed parts of it into suitcases that were later dumped with the aid of a buddy. One suitcase containing her torso was found in a pond in New York. The rest are still missing.

"Even in death you did not give dignity to Amy Giordano," Neafsey said.

In the report DiGirolamo said "financial and social pressures" led him to attack Giordano that day.

But Neafsey said it was DiGirolamo's own decision to maintain two separate households — one with his wife and son in affluent Millstone and one with his mistress and other son a mile away in Hightstown.

He rejected DiGirolamo's statement in the report that he felt remorse and regret after killing Giordano.

"The time to show remorse and regret was after you killed her, not on your judgment day," he said.

Assistant Prosecutor Al Garcia, who prosecuted the case along with Assistant Prosecutor Thomas Meidt, said Giordano spent her last day alive grocery shopping with DiGirolamo and their son.

"She was with the man she loved. She was with her son. On that day Amy thought she was going to start a new life. She thought she was going to get a new job and a new apartment. But the defendant destroyed those dreams."

No friends or family spoke on DiGirolamo's behalf at his sentencing.

No one was there to speak for Giordano either.

Marsha Kaller-Apter, Giordano's biological sister, wrote a letter to the judge saying she and Giordano had been put up for adoption when she was 3 and Giordano was an infant. She said the two briefly got in touch when Giordano was a teenager but then lost contact with each other.

Kaller-Apter said she had always dreamed of meeting her sister in person. Because of DiGirolamo, that reunion will remain a dream, she told the judge.

Under the terms of his sentencing DiGirolamo must serve 85 percent of his sentence — more than 21 years — before becoming eligible for parole.

Garcia and Meidt said justice has been served.

"Given the evidence in the case this is a good resolution," Meidt said. "It's always a risk when you go to trial. Twenty-five years in a case like this is a very good resolution."

Defense attorney Jerome Ballarotto called the killing a "tragic loss of two lives."

"Obviously her life and his life too," he said. "He got 25 years (in prison.) That's a significant portion of his life lost."

Ballarotto said DiGirolamo did not intend to kill Giordano and had intended to go to trial until prosecutors discovered the evidence on his computer screen.

He said the information doesn't prove DiGirolamo was looking for ways to kill his mistress, or even that DiGirolamo himself did the search.

"But considering that the judge was going to allow the jury to see that evidence, my client made a decision not to take the risk of a jury finding him guilty of planning to kill her," he

said.

DiGirolamo faced 30 years to life if convicted of murder.

Ballarotto said he will appeal the judge's decision to allow the computer evidence, and a saw seized from DiGirolamo's garage into evidence at trial.

"This case may not necessarily be over," he said.

After killing Giordano and dumping her body DiGirolamo abandoned the couple's son in a Delaware hospital and fled to Europe. Relatives recognized the child in television news accounts and police discovered that Giordano was missing.

Her body was still missing in March of 2008 when DiGirolamo was arrested and charged with her murder. Days later DiGirolamo's longtime buddy John Russo of Staten Island, charged with tampering with evidence in the case, led police to the suitcase in the pond and agreed to testify against DiGirolamo.

Meidt said the sentence marks the closure of one of the longest investigations in the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office.

"It's very satisfying," Meidt said. "Sometimes you work a case for a long time and never solve it. This is a case where all the hard work paid off and we got a good disposition on it."

source: https://www.nj.com/mercer/2011/02/nj_man_gets_25-year_sentence_f.html