

Murder suspect Bandler's cocaine woes

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SANTA CRUZ — Murder suspect Richard Bandler was abusing cocaine so badly that victim Corine Christensen put him on rationing, James Marino testified Monday at a preliminary hearing for Bandler.

Marino, who said he witnessed Christensen's shooting death last Nov. 3, ended six days of testifying Monday afternoon.

Marino, who spent five of those days answering questions by defense attorney M. Gerald Schwartzbach, said Christensen had limited Bandler to an ounce a week.

An ounce of cocaine, authorities say, is still a major amount.

Marino, who was given immunity from prosecution for testifying about drug use, estimated the cost of an ounce at between \$900 and \$1,200, but said he believed Christensen was giving Bandler the cocaine a lot cheaper, if not for free.

Marino said that when he sold cocaine in 1984 and '85 he supplied it to Bandler for free.

Marino testified that Bandler showed him how to get started dealing drugs. Primarily, he said, Bandler taught him how to ship cocaine without getting caught by airport security checks.

When asked to tell how, Municipal Court Judge Tom Kelly interjected, "It's not necessary to get into that."

Marino testified that Bandler was

keeping a half-kilo of cocaine in his safe for Christensen at the time of her death. He estimated the cost of a kilo at about \$48,000.

But, Marino said he was not sure if Bandler was using cocaine the morning he drove Marino over to Christensen's townhouse on Charlene Lane.

Earlier in his testimony, Marino said he saw Christensen snort cocaine just before Bandler shot her in the head.

Marino said Bandler was shaking and acting irrational, as he usually did when he was on cocaine.

He said Bandler was like a different person when he was on cocaine. "It was as if his little brother took over," Marino explained. "It was like Jekyll and Hyde," Marino said.

Marino, who has said he only used "minute" amounts of cocaine, testified that he had urged Christensen, his former lover, to give up the drug. "It was dangerous and I feared for her life," Marino said. He said he tried to get her interested in going to church in an attempt to get her to give up cocaine.

Marino said he met Bandler one night at the Crow's Nest restaurant in 1980. "We thought he was dealing drugs," Marino testified.

Instead, he said he learned that Bandler's Neuro-Linguistic Programming enterprises were near bankruptcy.

He said he helped Bandler get

back on his feet financially and even helped him buy a house in Soquel by getting the owner to agree to waive the down payment.

Bandler had been living in a motel, Marino testified.

He said the two developed a close relationship.

Still, Marino testified, he believed Bandler was going to kill him after Bandler shot Christensen.

Schwartzbach continued to hammer away at why Marino didn't try to escape if he feared for his life.

Twice, Marino said, he was alone — once upstairs and again in the garage — while Bandler held a gun on Christensen.

He had access to several telephones upstairs but said he didn't call 911 because he knew Bandler would just kill him when the police showed up.

Marino said he'd been told that a real estate agent friend had created a crawl space in the garage where Christensen could hide drugs. He said the agent had told him it also provided an exit.

He said he opened up the crawlspace but didn't go in.

"How did you expect to escape if you never crawled in?" Schwartzbach asked. "I looked in at the darkness but couldn't see anything," Marino answered.

He said he didn't try to escape after the shooting when Bandler drove him to the Capitola Wharf and

told him to walk out and drop the gun into the bay.

Terry Parker, a member of the sheriff's dive team, later testified he found the gun under the wharf.

Marino said he later was taken to a doctor's appointment but didn't tell the doctor of the killing. It wasn't until later in the afternoon that he told anyone.

Marino was suffering from a fractured skull at the time, the result of a beating he suffered at a Halloween party. He said he in pain and in shock.

He said he called a friend, Dr. Robert Dunne, who sent Marino's attorney, J.D. Wells to get him. He said he was hysterical on the phone

to Dunne, a local chiropractor.

Marino said Wells drove him to Christensen's home. After discovering the body, Wells called the sheriff's office.

Schwartzbach contends that Marino, not Bandler, committed the murder.

Prosecutor Gary Fry has said he has evidence to support Marino's testimony that Bandler pulled the trigger. He has not said what that evidence is.

He will call more witnesses when the hearing continues today.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Kelly will rule whether there is sufficient evidence to order Bandler to stand trial on the charge.