



✓ Hayes' attorney goes after credibility of latest witness

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SANTA CRUZ — Defense attorney Jon Minsloff zeroed in Tuesday on the character and credibility of a Minnesota woman who has testified against his client, accused double-murderer Royal Kenneth Hayes.

As he did with two previous witnesses in Hayes' trial on charges of multiple murder, assault, imprisonment and drug violations, Minsloff focused on the fact Mrs. Johnson knowingly participated in several crimes in Minnesota. Those crimes included the murder of a man who owed her drug-dealer husband \$1,700.

Mrs. Johnson is married to Jim "Big John" Johnson, the man who allegedly manufactured a silencer and fitted it to the pistol Hayes is accused of using to kill two persons during an alleged drug-money ripoff here in 1981. Jim Johnson and Hayes reportedly were friends and crime partners who met in prison.

Mrs. Johnson, 47, repeatedly has testified that she so desperately wanted someone to love and care for her that she was willing to start a life of crime at age 43, after being married to a school principal

and raising two children. Her son is studying to be a policeman, she said.

"I believed if I helped him," she said, "then he'd love me, and then he'd change, and then we'd live happily ever after — I was living in a dream world.

But "I was operating on my own free will," she said. "Nobody forced me to (commit crimes). I'm not proud of my judgment, but I did it."

She admitted to drug dealing, buying carrying and practicing with weapons, and heavy cocaine use in the two years between meeting Johnson and their arrests. But she said she has changed her attitude, her values and her life since then.

She buried her face in her hands and refused at first to look when Minsloff displayed an enlarged color photograph of her and previous witness Diane Susan "Big Red" Weller.

The two women are dressed in delicate underwear in the photo, snorting cocaine next to a prominently displayed .45-caliber pistol. She testified her husband's sexual relationship with Weller disturbed her, and said she hated the mannequins he kept their bedroom for her to deck with negligees and lingerie.

Minsloff also made it clear to the jury

that Mrs. Johnson's husband, Jim "Big John" Johnson, was not in Minneapolis for a period of time in late December, 1981.

The murders with which Hayes is charged are alleged to have occurred Dec. 29, 1981

Minsloff told the eight-woman, four-man jury when the trial began that he would prove someone else killed Hayes' ex-lover Lauren DeLaet, 36, and her companion Donald MacVicar, 32, and buried the mutilated torsos on the UCSC campus.

Minsloff has refused to discuss the case outside court. He will not say who he proposes to be the killer. The pointed reference Wednesday to Johnson's "coincidental" absence is the only obvious reference he has made to others he may propose are involved. He declined to discuss what involvement, if any, he feels Johnson may have had in the killings here. "Wait and see," he said. "It will all come out in the trial."

Sondra Johnson has testified her husband was on a cocaine run to Florida when the killings occurred.

Minsloff also questioned Mrs. Johnson aggressively about the killing of Tommy "Scratch" Carroll in Minneapolis in October 1981

Carroll was an associate of the Johnson's who owed them money, and who wouldn't give Jim Johnson "respect," Mrs. Johnson testified. Her husband also thought Carroll was planning to kill him, she testified, and decided to kill Carroll first.

Minsloff has not elicited the full story of the Carroll killing from Mrs. Johnson. But some of the details he has brought out are similar to the killings in Santa Cruz.

Carroll was lured to a lonely spot with a promise of drugs, Mrs. Johnson testified. She and her husband took him on their boat, the "Mary Wanna," to an island in the Mississippi River where marijuana was said to be stashed.

There, he was shot in the back and in the head, and his body was covered with garden lime before being buried in a shallow grave.

The bodies here were also covered with garden lime, apparently in an attempt to aid decomposition. But garden lime preserves tissue. Quicklime dissolves it.

Minsloff did not ask Mrs. Johnson why garden lime was used in Minnesota, but testimony indicated it was a mistake on Johnsons's part.

After Hayes was arrested here in the first weeks of March, the Johnsons and associates of theirs were arrested in Minneapolis.

They eventually pleaded guilty to federal

firearms violations in connection with the silencer Hayes is alleged to have used. Jim Johnson also pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in connection with the Carroll killing, and is serving a total prison sentence of 16 years, authorities here say.

Sondra Johnson, who agreed to cooperate with authorities after nine months in jail, also pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit murder. She is serving a total of five years in the coeducational federal prison in Pleasanton. She is scheduled for release in 1986, she testified.