

# Bandler witness made threats against victim, man testifies

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SANTA CRUZ — The murder trial of noted psychotherapist Richard Bandler got under way in a sense Friday, with the questioning of a defense witness who will be out of the country when actual proceedings begin in July.

Michael Weal testified that the key prosecution witness in the case against Bandler threatened to have harm done to the victim, Corine Christensen.

Weal's testimony was videotaped to be used at Bandler's trial. Weal will be working in West Germany when that trial is set to begin July 6.

Weal said he was renting a house from that key witness, James Marino, at the time of Christensen's death.

He said Marino told him he was mad at Christensen because he had caught her in bed with a friend. Marino and Christensen had been romantically involved but after the discovery, according to Weal, Marino said he didn't want to see her any more.

Weal said Marino told him he also suspected that Christensen had set Marino up for a beating suffered a little more than a week before her death.

Marino testified at a preliminary hearing in the case that he was beaten up at a Halloween party on Oct. 25, 1986. Christensen was shot to death in her Live Oak townhouse early on the morning of Nov. 3.

Weal said that the day after that beating Marino gave him a .357-magnum revolver for protection in case the men who had beaten Marino

came to Weal's house looking for Marino. Weal said Marino took the gun back in a few days.

On cross-examination by Assistant District Attorney Gary Fry, Weal said Marino made the threat against Christensen when Marino had been drinking.

Weal said he told deputies Marino always acted tough and "mouthed off" when he was drinking.

Weal said he volunteered the information about the threat to detectives after his girlfriend was questioned by detectives and was told Christensen had been disfigured during the attack.

Later, Weal said, he learned Christensen had not been disfigured and apologized to Marino for telling his suspicion to detectives.

Weal also related that Marino told him shortly after the killing that Bandler shot Christensen during an argument.

It was undisputed at the preliminary hearing that Marino and Bandler had gone together to Christensen's townhouse on the morning of her death.

But, the two men are pointing the trigger finger at each other.

Defense attorney M. Gerald Schwartzbach called Weal to testify

to bolster Schwartzbach's contention that Marino had the motive to kill Christensen.

Prosecutor Fry has not painted a clear motive for Bandler, but, by law, he doesn't have to show or prove a motive for a murder.

Schwartzbach also sought Friday to impeach Marino's testimony at the preliminary hearing, and he did. Marino had said he did not suspect that Christensen had set him up for the Halloween party beating.

Also, Weal contradicted Marino on issues of cocaine use and dealing. Marino had testified he was not dealing the drug or using it for some time prior to Christensen's death.

Weal said he saw Marino inject cocaine just a few weeks before the killing. Also, Weal said, Marino told him at about the same period of time that he was going to stop supplying Christensen with the drug.

One issue Fry claims was not impeached was Marino's version of what happened that morning in Christensen's townhouse.

"He (Marino) told Weal the same story about the shooting as he told deputies and he told him right away. He had no reason to make up a story to him (Weal)," Fry contended after hearing the testimony Friday.