

Trailside Murders

Local

Carpenter's lawyer asks for leniency

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The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Defense attorneys for convicted Trailside Slayer David Carpenter today asked jurors to "put a stop to the cycle of violence" by sentencing Carpenter to life in prison instead of to execution in the gas chamber.

Deputy Public Defender Steve Wright, wrapping up closing arguments in the penalty phase of Carpenter's trial, also said that despite the prosecution's arguments, the death penalty was not inevitable.

"There is no necessity to vote for death. Life without the possibility of parole will punish and will protect," Wright said.

He said that the punishment and abuse Carpenter received as a stuttering youth were important considerations.

"That's the same boy sitting over there, so warped and twisted," Wright said.

After Wright concluded, jurors were to be instructed in points of law and were expected to begin deliberating in the afternoon.

On Wednesday, a defense attorney said Carpenter is "socially dead" because of his crimes and should not be sentenced to death.

"Walk with me on David's long and tragic journey to these crimes," defense attorney Larry Biggam told jurors Wednesday before recounting stories of Carpenter's childhood abuse, stuttering, and psychological problems in closing arguments.

Biggam argued the 54-year-old Carpenter felt "he was living in a war zone" as a child. He also read from court and prison reports that as early as 1946 referred to Carpenter's mental problems.

In prosecution arguments, Santa Cruz County District Attorney Arthur Danner told jurors that Carpenter was not under the "influence of extreme mental or emotional disturbance" when he committed two trailside slayings.

"We have not one indication of emotional stress," except for the testimony of defense psychological experts, Danner said. "What the defense wants you to do is accept their theory of the case, which says the defendant is not morally responsible."

Biggam said state agencies failed to provide the treatment Carpenter needed when he was arrested for lesser crimes and "it was probably all predictable that the scars of child abuse would persist into adulthood."

"Now the state comes to you and asks you to kill him," Biggam told the jury of eight women and four men. But, Biggam argued, "spending the rest of one's life in a small cell is a very severe punishment."