Victim 21 from Kevorkian dies as law dies

Southfield, MI — "I don't do anything based on my opinion or my knowledge. I only do things based on what the medical records and the doctors involved in each case say or tell me," Kevorkian said.

It was his first public statement since it was learned the so-called suicide doctor was present at the November 24 death of a 72-year-old woman who inhaled carbon monoxide.

Kevorkian spoke cautiously to reporters at his attorney's office in his first public showing since presiding over the carbon monoxide death of Margaret Garrish, 72.

Garrish, who lost both legs and suffered from several painful maladies, was the 21st person to die with Kevorkian's help since 1990.

Royal Oak police and Prosecutor Richard Thompson are investigating the death, which the county medical examiner has labeled a homicide. So far there has been no decision on whether to charge Kevorkian.

Kevorkian and his attorney Michael Schwartz criticized authorities for continuing to investigate Garrish's death because, according to them, the anti-assisted-suicide law has expired.

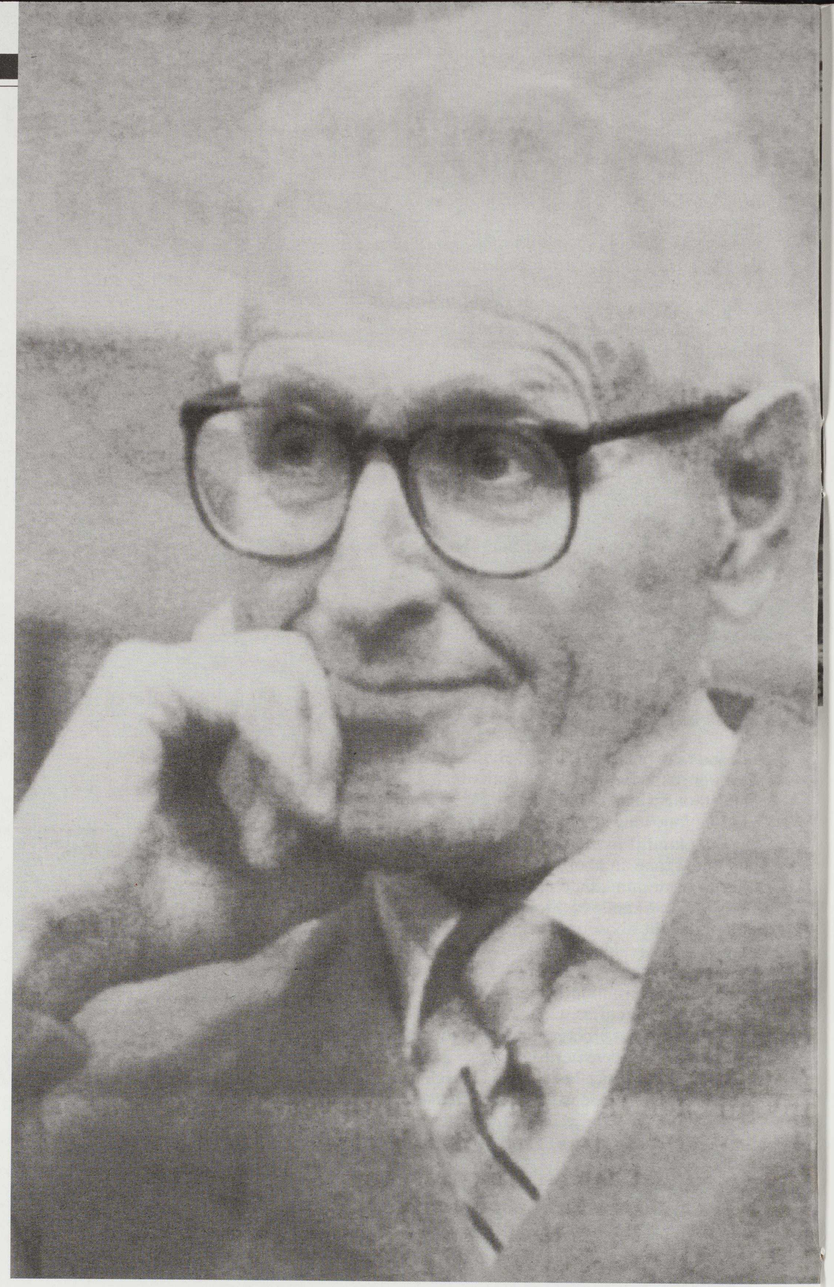
"There is nothing else to investigate. There is no reason to investigate whether a law that doesn't exist was broken," Schwartz said.

There is disagreement over whether Michigan's temporary ban on assisted suicide has expired.

The ban was enacted in February 1993 as part of a law that also set up a commission and gave it 15 months to report to the Legislature on assisted suicide. The ban was to expire six months after the Legislature received the report.

Two doctors who criticized him said Kevorkian and his lawyers spurned their offers to help Margaret Garrish before she killed herself. The Royal Oak woman suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, colonic diverticulitis, osteoporosis and other ailments.

The physicians, both pain specialists, said they contacted Kevorkian's lawyers after Margaret Garrish appeared on a videotape with Kevorkian in March and said she wanted to end her life because of her unbearable pain.



Kevorkian

Dr. Pavan Grover, who runs a pain clinic in Houston, said he had contacted Kevorkian's chief attorney, Geoffrey Fieger, in April to offer his services and information on new pain relief technology.

"They said they didn't want my help," said Grover, who debated Fieger on CNN's Larry King Live show April 18.

Dr. John Nelson of Traverse City, Mich., also said his offers to help went unanswered, adding that Kevorkian likely did not explore all avenues available to Garrish.

Nelson also criticised Kevorkian's approach to counselling his patients, saying it is not geared toward healing and finding solutions. "He is a pathologist. The only thing he ever prescribed was formaldehyde." Nelson said. "I believe that something could have controlled her pain."

The Michigan Supreme Court is currently reviewing the assisted suicide matter, including the constitutionality of the state law against the practice that expired Friday, the day before Garrish died. ■

Hill gets "life" and death sentences

Pensacola, FL — In two separate courts, Paul Hill, slayer of abortionist John Britton and his bodyguard, James Barrett, was sentenced to life in prison and death.

In federal court, where Hill was convicted of violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, he was sentenced on December 2 to two concurrent life sentences, one concurrent 120 month sentence, one consecutive 60 month sentence, and several fines and restitutions including the cost of Barrett's funeral.

Federal Judge Roger Vinson, after refusing Hill's request that he watch the pro-life video *Eclipse of Reason*, told the 40-year-old minister that, "God didn't approve of the killing."

Donna Bray of Defenders of Defenders of Life said, "The government should be in the business of protecting human life. Instead they are in the business of protecting hired mass-murderers — and presuming to know the will of God better than Reverend Hill."

Just days later, on December 6, Florida State Circuit Judge Frank Bell sentenced Hill to the death penalty for his conviction of double murder on state charges. The jury had unanimously recommended the death penalty after the trial.

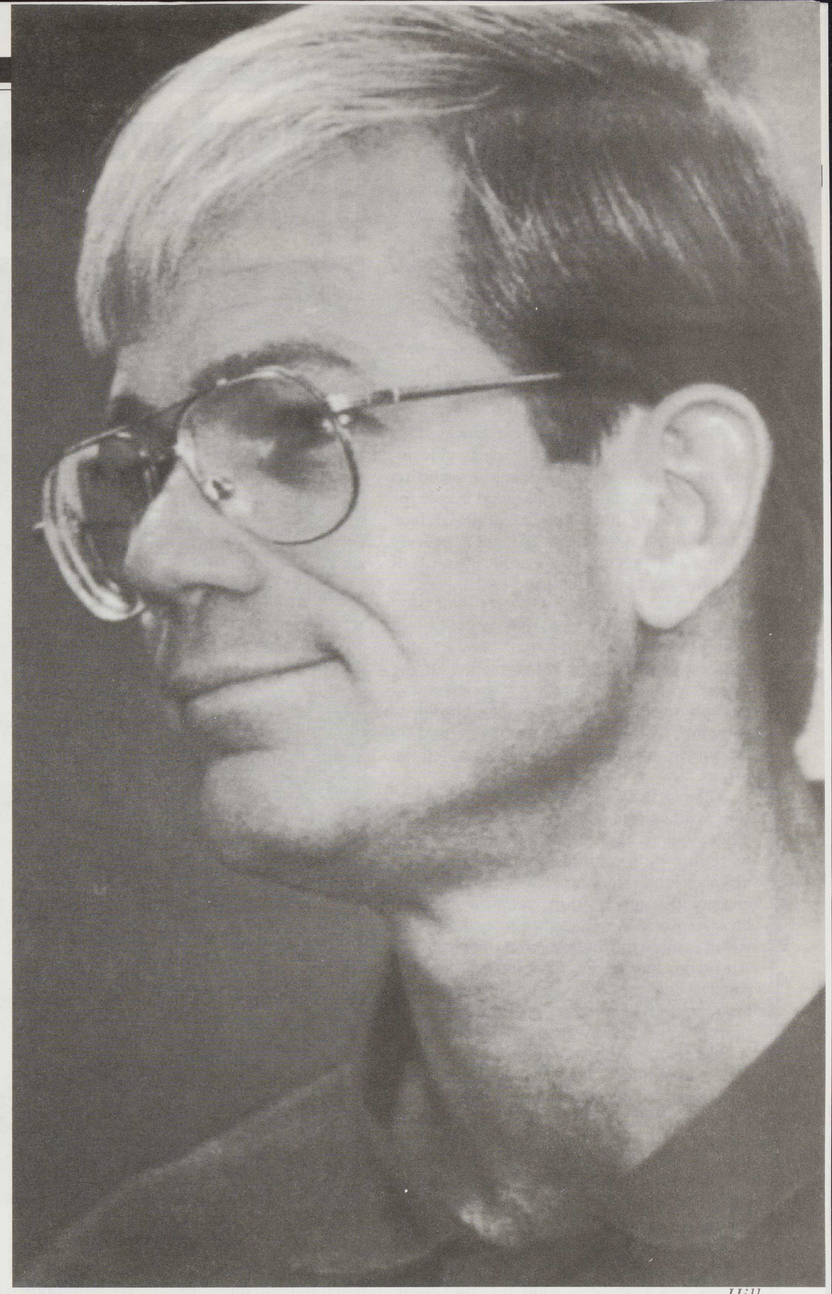
Bell intoned, "May God have mercy on your soul."

To which one spectator, Regina Dinwiddie, a Missouri pro-life activist, shouted aloud in the courtroom, "This man is innocent, and his blood will be on your hands, the hands of the people of the state of Florida and on the jury!"

Dinwiddie was arrested for "disturbing a public assembly" and was held for four days.

Response to the death penalty varied among pro-life groups. Operation Rescue National's Flip Benham, who had called for the death penalty after Hill's conviction, issued a press release which called the death sentence "hypocritical" while simultaneously proclaiming that those who take life, like Hill, "must necessarily forfeit his own."

Matt Trewhella, founder of Missionaries to the Preborn in Milwaukee, Wisconsin said, "When baby-killing is abolished, as it surely will be, future generations will view Paul Hill and Michael Griffin as the sanest and bravest men of our age."



Hill

Hill remained silent during the hearings in much the same way he had remained silent during his two trials. In both trials, Hill was not permitted to offer a true defense.

Under Florida statute, the death penalty sentence will receive an automatic review by the State Supreme Court. Two attorneys are preparing *amicus* briefs to submit on Hill's behalf.

The day after the state sentencing, Henry Felisone of Queens (New York) Pro-Life Group was picketing outside the Pensacola Ladies Center abortuary where Britton was killed, and said, "The next time it won't be Michael Griffin or Shelley Shannon or Paul Hill, but 'person or persons unknown.'" ■