Judge considers declaring Piper mistrial

Officer's testimony refers to 2 other motel murder cases

By Elizabeth Kutter

Gazette staff writer CEDAR RAPIDS — An Illinois police officer took the stand in the first-degree murder trial of Donald Piper Friday morning and referred to two other motel murder cases, including one in which Piper was convicted of murder.

That has prompted the judge to consider declaring a mis-

trial and start-

Even before

ing all over.

defense attor-

ney Alfredo

Parrish could



Alfredo Parrish Defense lawyer wants mistrial

object to officer Bryant Seraphin's testimony, Judge Linda Reade sent the jury out of the court-

Piper, 40, is on trial for the Sept. 4, 1997, murder of Zurijeta Sakanovic, 21, who was working as a maid at the Budgetel Inn in Clive when she was stabbed to death.

Piper was convicted of another murder and has not been ruled out as a suspect in a third. However, those cases had been carefully kept from the

Officer Seraphin testified that he had been asked by Iowa authorities to present photos of six men, including Piper, to Lonnie Mitchell of Champaign, Ill.

Mitchell had been a guest in the motel the night before Sakanovic was murdered and told police he met a man coming into the hotel as he was leaving between 7 and 8 a.m. on

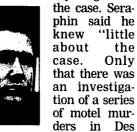
Polk County Assistant Attorney Steve Foritano asked Seraphin if he knew anything about

"little

Only

maids and one

guest were



Donald Piper

Charged in death of maid killed."

tower he saw

nice guy.

good

He's just a

His humor

old-

is hip in a

With the jury out of the courtroom, Parrish rose to speak.

"I am shocked and amazed; I cannot imagine that this had happened in this trial. I cannot imagine that the state did not take the time to alert the witness ... after we've worked so

"I think I have to ask for a mistrial," he said.



Gazette photo by Jim Slosiarek

Small Sakanovic (left) father of Zurijeta Sakanovic, wipes his eyes after Assistant Polk County Attorney Nan Horvat showed him a picture of his daughter during testimony Friday in the first-degree murder trial of Donald Piper.

The attorneys and judge had agreed in advance of the trial that no mention of other cases linked to Piper would be brought into the courtroom. All jurors who had any knowledge of Piper's June conviction in

the 1993 murder of University Park Holiday Inn guest Patricia Lange, 36, were excused.

Piper has not been ruled out as a suspect in a third, unsolved West Des Moines motel murder. In 1998, Ecuadoran im-

migrant Mariana Redroban, 15, was found stabbed to death at Walnut Creek Inn in West Des Moines, where she worked as a housekeeper.

The judge and attorneys agreed to consider a mistrial 398-8263 or betsyk@fyiowa.com

and alternatives over the week-

Reade invited the jurors back into the courtroom. Parrish made an objection to Seraphin's last response and the judge sustained it.

Seraphin said Lonnie Mitchell could not identify with certainty any of the six photos shown to him. However, he said one of the men looked like the man he saw entering the motel on the morning of Sept. 4 as he was leaving. The photo Mitchell recognized was of Pip-

Also on Friday, Smail Sakanovic, the father of a Zurijeta Sakanovic, testified about his daughter.

Speaking through an interpreter Sakanovic, 50, said he had been a construction worker in Bosnia before the family moved to the United States in 1996. "We came to U.S. because of the war. There was no life there.

"I came to live your life," he said.

Sakanovic said his daughter was a shy girl who did not go out except with her parents and her brother.

She was murdered after the family had been in Des Moines only 10 months.

"This case has happened," he said "and I have to continue my life in the United States.'

Contact writer Betsy Kutter at (319)

Piscopo's hip, but old-fashioned

By Diana Nollen Gazette staff writer

CEDAR RAPIDS — Joe Piscopo isn't just another face in the crowd. With the snap of a brim or a well-placed grimace, he becomes Frank Sinatra, James Brown or Bruce Spring-

And always, he's Joe Cool. Especially when he wails on a tenor sax. He was funny on

COMEDY REVIEW

"Saturday Night Live," and he was even funnier Friday night live at Penguins Comedy Club.

He kicked off a weekend run that's mostly sold out, but you may be able to grab a ticket for Sunday's 7:30 p.m. show.

He breezed through an hour like a breath of fresh air. He didn't utter a single obscenity. he was nice to his audience, he shook hands with his fans, he even bought a couple of drinks for the guy in the front row d just lost his job.

And he spoke most sincerely about the strength of America's spirit rising from the ashes of a

way. His jokes are equal parts groan and guffaw, especially when he's mocking his "dork man" ways in a voice reminiscent of Jerry Lewis.

He conjures up so many alter-egos that you might wonder which persona is really his.

He's at his best when he mixes his music with his muscle. His tribute to Sinatra ringa-ding-dings the right bell, as does his soulful Springsteen. But when he raps, you roll with laughter.

Stan Stankos opened the

pack a one-two punch.

Joe Piscopo Former "SNL" performer visits

fashioned

And when he plays the drums, you just say "wow."

show with his take on subtitles, game shows, the Internet marriage — finding some thing extra in the ordinary.

Together these wise guys

Former rec boss pleads guilty to theft charge By Kristophere' Owens Gazette staff writer MARENGO — Sue Norris, a

former Williamsburg recreation director accused of taking more than \$2,600 in theme park tickets last summer, has pleaded guilty to second-degree theft.

Norris, 33, entered an Alford

Sue Norris

Former

Williamsburg

Recreation

director

plea to the charge in Iowa County District Court. An Alford plea means the defendant doesn't admit to all aspects

of a charge but concedes that prosecutors have enough evidence to get a conviction.

"She feels strongly that she never had any intention to use any tickets without paying for them, but she realizes that given the fact that she didn't do things in the right order, and that people don't trust her about it, that

attorney, Randy Larson of Iowa

⁶In her (Sue Norris) mind, it's a misunderstanding. She always had intended to pay for the tickets. "

Randy Larson, attorney

City.

Also during the Dec. 28 court appearance, Norris was sentenced to three years' probation and ordered to pay \$2,978.30 to the city of Williamsburg.

Williamsburg police charged Norris with second-degree theft July 27 after city officials found 105 tickets missing to Six Flags Great America in Gurnee, Ill., and to Noah's Ark Family Park in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

The tickets — 50 adult and 30children's tickets to Six Flags and 25 tickets to Noah's Ark are valued at \$2,695.

Norris resigned July 9 after a short and rough lour-month they certainly could find her career with the city, where she guilty of theft," said Norris' earned \$25,000 annually.

She told The Gazette on July

11 that she had a general lack his client were prepared to go of support and cooperation to trial, Norris was concerned from her co-workers and had to about the expense of proving fight for every single activity she did.

Since her resignation, Norris has accepted a job offer outside Iowa and has moved there with the court's consent. Tammy Sinn of Williamsburg became the city's new recreation director Dec. 1.

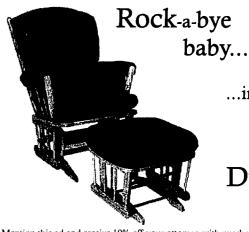
Larson said although he and

her case. Also a concern was having a criminal record. Her record will be clean if she successfully completes probation. "She wants to put this behind her," Larson said. "In her mind, it's a misunderstanding. She always had intended to pay for the tickets."

Contact writer Kristophere' Owens at (319) 398-8311 or kriso@fyiowa.com

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Revamping delayed UI scoring of school tests

CEDAR RAPIDS --school districts have had to wait longer than usual for the results of standardized tests taken early this fall by students.

David Frisbie, associate director of the Iowa Testing Program at the University of Iowa, which produces the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Iowa Test of Educational Development, said there was a delay in distributing results this year because the software needed to create the reports took longer than expected to create.

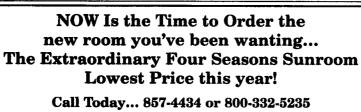
"This year we introduced our newest edition of the ITBS and ITED, and in doing that, we needed to revamp our scoring services," he said.

The test results reports are being generated by the Iowa Testing Programs' publisher, Riverside Publishing Co., located in Illinois.

Frisbie said reports began going out to schools last week for students who took the test more than two months ago.

Ordinarily the process takes about 15 working days, he said.

The Cedar Rapids school district received notice that its test results should be in by Jan. 18.



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