

South Jersey

Jackson's death could affect jurors in wife's trial

Wednesday, December 1, 2004

By JASON NARK
Courier-Post Staff

Despite the death of her husband Tuesday, Vanessa Jackson will still have her day in court. How the death of her husband Raymond will affect her case is unclear however, local attorneys said Tuesday.

As the remaining defendant, Vanessa Jackson faces aggravated assault and child endangerment charges for her part in the alleged starvation of their four adopted sons inside their former home on the White Horse Pike in Collingswood.

On Tuesday, Raymond Jackson died of complications from a major stroke he suffered two weeks ago. His death came less than a week before he was set to appear in court for a status conference.

Rocco Cipparone, a former federal prosecutor and instructor at Rutgers Camden School of Law, said Raymond Jackson's death could have little effect on his wife's prosecution but could stir emotions among jurors.

"That's always a concern because juries are human," said Cipparone. "If the jury gets the idea that the stress of this cost him his life, there could be a spillover for the wife," he said.

As long as prosecutors focus on the individual perspectives of each defendant, they can continue their case without a hitch, said Cipparone.

"Just from a generic perspective, I would now want to solely focus on the wife's individual conduct," he said.

Haddon Township attorney Mike Pinsky said the death of one defendant could have a wide range of effects on a codefendant.

"It depends on whether they had more evidence against the husband or wife," said Pinsky. "I think it's more of a problem for the defense, but then again it may not have any effect at all. They still have to find her guilty beyond a reasonable doubt."

Pinsky said a judge in any trial would instruct the jury to disregard Raymond Jackson.

Raymond Jackson's attorney, Richard Josselson, said Tuesday he did not know whether he would help defend Vanessa Jackson with Newark attorney Alan Dexter Bowman. Bowman did not return phone calls for comment.