

**COURTS:** Jury told accused murderer stabbed elderly couple to keep credit card theft a secret

# Crown claims man killed to cover up theft

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STAFF WRITER

A 22-year-old Thornhill man told an undercover police officer he murdered his elderly neighbours to keep them from revealing that he stole their credit card to impress his girlfriend's wealthy parents by lavishing her with gifts, prosecutors say.

In her opening argument, Crown attorney Karen McCleave said Joel Alexander Clark stabbed William Tweed, 86, and his wife Phyllis, 81, through the heart on Boxing Day, 1995, after they refused to let him pay back the \$4,000 he had charged to their Visa card.

Clark, who lived across the hall from the Tweeds in an inverlochy Boulevard condominium near Yonge Street, has pleaded not guilty to two counts of first-degree murder.

The jury heard York Region police planted Hamilton Wentworth Police Const. Ian

Matthews in Clark's jail cell on Jan. 12, 1996, the day after he was arrested.

According to McCleave, Clark told Matthews, "I went there to tell them what I had done, but they just wouldn't listen. I wanted to pay them back, but no, after all I had done for them. So, well, this is all common knowledge anyway, I stabbed them both through the heart. The credit card, that part I'm truly sorry for, that was an accident."

The jailhouse confession was not recorded.

McCleave said Matthews used a "doodle sheet" and pretended to write a letter so he could take surreptitious notes while he was in a Toronto East Detention Centre jail cell with Clark.

Phyllis Tweed was stabbed once in the heart, twice in the right lung and twice in the neck. William Tweed was stabbed once in the heart.

Clark, who has been in custody since his arrest, also told Matthews that he didn't consider the killings as serious because the Tweeds were elderly, McCleave told the court.

"They were old, anyway. He was 87, she was 81. That's not bad. Like, I ain't no sicko killing kids. That's the worst. Well, no, if you kill a peace officer, that's the worst."

Prosecutors will try to prove that Clark entered the Tweeds' apartment with a key he had access to, then ransacked the apartment to make it appear as though the couple was killed during a botched break-in.

Lead homicide Det. Mark Tatz told the jury Friday he immediately suspected the double-slaying wasn't the work of burglars.

Tatz believes the killer entered through the front door and exited through the patio door, walking backwards through the snow to make it

appear as if a break-in occurred through the patio door.

Investigators first linked Clark to the killings through his use of William Tweed's Visa card, which showed \$3,900 in charges between Dec. 9 and 24, 1995.

Tatz testified that a video sur-

veillance camera captured Clark purchasing a diamond ring in the Eaton Centre, using Tweed's credit card, on Dec. 19, 1995.

As police arrested Clark on Jan. 11, 1996, officers discovered track pants stained with William Tweed's blood in his bedroom.



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