

Plea for privacy ignored at victim's funeral

Media pundit questions coverage

BY CHRIS TRABER AND SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writers

Despite pleas for privacy from the family, media swarmed to Julie Crocker's Unionville funeral yesterday.

In addition to private soul-wrenching grief, family and friends of murder victim Ms. Crocker have had to endure the harsh public scrutiny of the media.

From Monday's first report of two women found dead in a Markham home, print and electronic media have descended on Markham.

It has been a sensational story with Ms Crocker's estranged husband, Christo-

pher Little charged with killing his wife and Paula Menendez, the ex-wife of Ms Crocker's new boyfriend, sports broadcaster Rick Ralph.

But when and where do we, members of the Fifth Estate, draw the line?

When does heartbreak take precedence over headlines?

"I don't think there's a simple answer," Sources publisher Ulli Diemer said. "It's hard to find guidelines because each situation is different."

"But, I have to say, the kind of coverage we've seen makes me queasy. When a camera is thrust into the face of a mother and the reporter asks, 'How do feel about your daughter's murder?', we already know the answer. We now want the reaction. That's

not news, that's filming someone's grief. Trouble is, we know it sells."

There's a blurred line between satisfying the public's thirst and right for the truth and invading the surviving families' privacy, the former reporter and editor said.

Funerals, for example, shouldn't become a media circus, he said.

"If the funeral is private, the media isn't welcome inside," he said. "So, should the media park themselves outside the church doors? There's just no iron clad rule."

Mr. Diemer suggests members of the media set their own ethics based on a simple question.

"Journalists and editors should ask themselves, 'If this

happened to you, would you want it done to you?'" he said.

There was a phalanx of reporters and photographers outside the Central United Church on Main Street in Unionville yesterday.

Reporters get their information from Stouffville's Dennis Seeley, who was appointed a spokesperson for the church.

When Mr. Seeley comes out of the church, he is practically mobbed. The reporters want to know how the seating is arranged inside. Are the Crocker and Little families sitting together? Mr. Seeley makes it sound as though the families are melded together rather than separate.

"Both families, they are at ease," he said.



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