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Mourners crowd services for cheerleader as new details on stabbing emerge

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By Mike Bucsko, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

Norm Brozovich of Memory Makers White Dove Releases frees the first of 21 white doves as mourners gathered following the funeral of slain Gateway High School cheerleader Demi Cucci at the Monroeville Assembly of God yesterday.

Demi Cuccia stumbled bleeding out of her Monroeville apartment last week and yelled, "He stabbed me," before she spotted her attacker, screamed "I hate you" and lost consciousness and collapsed, according to an affidavit filed in the suspect's criminal case.

Demi, a 16-year-old Gateway High School cheerleader, died about 45 minutes later at Forbes Regional Hospital. An autopsy revealed she was stabbed 16 times. Allegheny County police recovered a knife with a 3.5-inch blade in the apartment where the assault occurred.

Demi was buried yesterday following a service at Monroeville Assembly of God church, a day after more than 1,000 fellow students, faculty, friends and family participated in a memorial service for her in the high school gymnasium.

The day before the fatal stabbing, Demi received a text message on her cellular telephone from John J. Mullarkey Jr. "indicating he intended to harm" her, according to the affidavit for probable cause filed by Allegheny County police in Mr. Mullarkey's homicide case.

And three days before the attack last Wednesday, Mr. Mullarkey and Demi engaged in a "loud violent argument" at her apartment on Elliott Road in Monroeville, the affidavit says. Demi's friends have said Mr. Mullarkey was a possessive and jealous boyfriend throughout their two-year relationship.

Allegheny County police Sunday charged Mr. Mullarkey with homicide in Demi's death. He is hospitalized in Allegheny General Hospital recovering from a self-inflicted stab wound. A preliminary hearing for Mr. Mullarkey, who graduated from Gateway this year, has tentatively been scheduled for Friday, but will depend on Mr. Mullarkey's physical condition, according to county police.

A witness told police they saw Mr. Mullarkey's pickup truck parked near the entrance to the apartment complex where Demi lived. The truck was parked outside Demi's apartment when the witness returned home from work about 6 p.m. About 10 minutes later, the witness heard "loud, hysterical and horrible" screaming while in an apartment next door to Demi's, according

to the affidavit.

Shortly after the witness left the apartment, Demi stumbled out of the apartment, her chest covered with blood, and yelled, "He stabbed me." Mr. Mullarkey then came out of the apartment and she screamed, "I hate you," three times before she collapsed.

Mr. Mullarkey, suffering from the stab wound in his neck, walked a few feet and collapsed. When Monroeville police arrived, an officer asked him whether the weapon was in Demi's apartment and Mr. Mullarkey nodded his head.

A paramedic asked Mr. Mullarkey, "Who did this to you," while she provided initial treatment to him before he was taken to Forbes Regional Hospital.

"[Mr.] Mullarkey replied by pointing to himself and stating, 'I did this,'" according to the affidavit.

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