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Trial Begins: Homicide Suspect Hoped To Reunite With Monroeville Girl

John Mullarkey Accused Of Stabbing Gateway Student Demi Cuccia

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Mourners remembered 16-year-old Demi Cuccia at a service in Monroeville in August 2007.

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PITTSBURGH -- Demi Cuccia and John Mullarkey had a tumultuous teenage relationship that ended when a neighbor heard "blood-curdling screams" and saw the 16-year-old Gateway High School student emerge from her home covered in blood from stab wounds that proved to be fatal, according to opening statements in a downtown homicide trial.

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Deputy District Attorney Mark Tranquilli told the jury at the Allegheny County Courthouse that Cuccia and Mullarkey often argued and cheated on each other before Cuccia was slain on Aug. 15, 2007.

According to a neighbor on Elliott Road, Cuccia said, "He stabbed me, he stabbed me," followed by, "Stay away from me, get away from me, I hate you," and died soon after, Tranquilli said in his opening statement.

The criminal complaint said that Cuccia was stabbed 16



times in the upper torso and died of a shoulder wound.

Defense attorney Bob Stewart told the jury that Mullarkey -- then a recent Gateway graduate and now 20 -- was not himself that day and doesn't remember much of what happened when he went to Cuccia's home hoping to get back together with her.

Mullarkey recalls fighting with Cuccia and watching her run from the home bleeding and screaming -- at which point he wondered what he must have done, and then slit his throat and hoped to die, Stewart said.



Demi Cuccia

Mullarkey was on Accutane -- a prescription acne medication -- at the time of Cuccia's killing, and may have suffered side-effects suicidal tendencies and depression, said Stewart, who added that he will call witnesses to discuss those medical issues during the trial.

Tranquilli dismissed the Accutane factor, pointing to text messages that he said Mullarkey was sending throughout the day that Cuccia died.

"I have to see her. I just hope I don't do something stupid," Mullarkey told a friend before he went to Cuccia's home, according to Tranquilli's opening statement.

Two of Cuccia's neighbors and two police officers were among the prosecution witnesses who testified Tuesday. Testimony will continue Wednesday in Judge Jeffrey Manning's courtroom.

Friends are leaving condolence messages on [a Facebook.com page](#) called "R.I.P. Demi Cuccia."

"Words can't describe my emotions, but I miss you," one message said. "You are watching down over everyone. You are our angel."

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