

Carpenter's lawyers call ex-lover to stand

By Cynthia Baran
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NEW LONDON — Hai-man Clein, the former law partner and lover of Beth Carpenter, is scheduled to take the witness stand today as Carpenter's attorneys continue to press their motion to move her murder trial to another judicial district.

Carpenter, 36, is charged with capital felony murder and conspiracy in the alleged murder-for-hire of her brother-in-law, Anson "Buzz" Clinton in March 1994. Clein, who has pleaded guilty in the case and is awaiting sentencing, is expected to be a key witness against Carpenter. Clein was an accomplice in the alleged murder plot.

New Haven attorneys Hugh F. Keefe and Tara Knight, who represent Carpenter as special public defenders, did not reveal Wednesday why they are calling Clein in connection with their motion for change of venue. However, a brief on the motion, filed earlier with Superior Court Judge Susan B. Handy, gives some clues.

The brief states Clein practiced law extensively in New London. His "contacts with the New London Judicial District are significant. A once successful real estate attorney, he represented a number of individual banks, businesses and institutions in the New London area."

According to the brief, Clein had dealings with New London's town attorney and represented the main synagogue in New London. "He knew many New London attorneys both professionally and socially and kept his law office directly across the street from the courthouse from November 1992 until March 1994."

Given the strong New London area ties of Carpenter and Clein, as well as the Clinton family, and the publicity the case has generated, the defense maintains it would be difficult to seat a jury. The possibility of a mistrial is also greater if the case stays in New London, the defense claims. They are suggesting the Carpenter case be tried in Superior Court in Bridgeport.

On Wednesday, Handy admitted into evidence dozens of newspaper articles and television broadcasts that are about the homicide and the principals in the case. She rejected a motion by the Norwich Bulletin to quash Keefe's subpoena of their articles. The Bulletin, which has no electronic data keeping of its issues, maintained that it would be a burdensome task to go through years worth of newspapers. Handy ordered the Bulletin to do it, have the information ready for court today and to present Keefe a "reasonable bill" for the service.

Handy also overruled the objection of WTNH Channel 8 to providing written scripts of their news broadcasts about the case.