

# Cochran bound for murder trial

By Jerry DeRoche

CRYSTAL FALLS—The early fall morning must have felt like most others to 53-year-old Christopher Regan. He woke up early and headed off to his job as team leader of the military assembly unit at Oldenburg Group Inc.

It was Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2014. It turned out to be the last day of his life.

Regan went missing later that day and was never seen again, and what happened to him that night and who is responsible for his death is the focus of the case against 34-year-old Kelly Cochran, a northwest Indiana native who lived in Caspian at the time of the incident.

Cochran, who was a co-worker of Regan's at Oldenburg, is accused of aiding her husband, Jason Cochran, in the murder and dismemberment of Regan.

Jason Cochran was later found dead in Lake County, Ind., on Feb. 20, 2016. Kelly Cochran was charged with that murder by Indiana authorities in mid-August.

In April, Kelly Cochran was charged with homicide open murder in the death of Regan. She was also charged with second-degree home invasion, conspiracy to commit dead bodies — disinterment and mutilation, concealing the death of an individual, lying to a peace officer in a violent crime investigation and accessory after the fact to a felony.

According to testimony during the preliminary hearing Sept. 13 in Iron County Trial Court, Cochran had been involved in an intimate relationship with Regan right up until the time of his murder.

Cochran, who has been held on a \$5 million cash bond at the Iron County Correctional Facility since mid-May, appeared at the hearing shackled at her wrists and ankles and guarded by sheriff personnel. She remained quiet through-

out the day-long testimony and showed little emotion other than briefly tearing up at one point.

At the close of the prelim, Judge C. Joseph Schwedler bound Cochran over on all the charges except the home invasion charge. That was amended to larceny in a building.

Arraignment is set for Oct. 11 at 11:30 a.m.

Prosecuting Attorney Melissa Powell brought 11 witnesses to testify at the prelim. The most detailed testimony was offered by Iron River Police Chief Laura Frizzo, who conducted several interviews with Kelly Cochran at various times over the last 23 months.

Frizzo testified that she was on duty Oct. 27, 2014, when Regan's friend, Terri O'Donnell, arrived at the police department. Frizzo said O'Donnell was crying because she was worried about Regan, whom she hadn't been heard from in two weeks.

O'Donnell testified that she had gone to Regan's apartment next to Jubilee Foods on Oct. 23. She had spoken to Regan's coworker, who said that Regan hadn't been at work. O'Donnell went back to the apartment the next day and then again on Oct. 27, when a locksmith opened the door.

"I was alarmed. I knew something had happened to him, and he hadn't been in the apartment for a while," O'Donnell said.

She later saw Regan's gray 2013 Hyundai Genesis at the MDOT Park-and-Ride on U.S. 2 at the Bates-Amasa Road intersection on Oct. 27. She contacted police the same evening.

O'Donnell said she told IRPD officer Cindy Barrette that she had heard rumors that Regan "was hanging out with a Kelly and that she was married."

Barrette, who has since retired, filed a missing person's report and then drove to Regan's apartment. She then headed to the Park-and-Ride, where she was able to gain entry into Regan's car.



Kelly Cochran

witnesses that her husband knew of the relationship and was not bothered by it.

Frizzo later testified that Cochran said she and her husband were separated but still living together. Cochran told Frizzo that she and her husband had moved to the area in February 2014 and she had obtained employment at Bigari Ace Hardware and then at Mr. T's Family Restaurant. She eventually was hired by Oldenburg as an electrical assembler in May of that year.

Cochran also told Frizzo that her husband had "some depression and physical ailments and that he was a worrier."

According to MSP detective Chris Bracket, Cochran said that her husband was suicidal at times and checked himself into a psychiatric

ward in Rhinelander in September 2014. She said he had not threatened to harm her and that she wasn't afraid of him.

Around the same time, Cochran also began a relationship with Oldenburg co-worker Eric Erickson. According to Erickson's testimony, he and Cochran started hanging out shortly after he became employed at Oldenburg in early September.

During one of their text exchanges, Erickson said Cochran asked him to meet her at the Park-and-Ride, a location Cochran later told investigators she was unaware of.

Erickson said the relationship ended in late October. In later testimony, Frizzo stated Cochran told her that Erickson was supposed to be the victim of the crime, but that later changed to Regan, though "she didn't know why."

Powell also called Cochran's neighbors, David Saylor and his grandmother, Caroline Miatch, to the stand. Saylor said he met Jason in early October 2014, and the two saw each other daily. He conflicted Cochran's statements that Jason wasn't upset about her extramarital relationships.

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Among other items, Barrette said she discovered a Post-it note with handwritten directions to what turned out to be 66 Lawrence St. in Caspian, Kelly and Jason Cochran's residence.

Barrette said she went to the residence and met with the Cochrans. Kelly Cochran confirmed her relationship with Regan and said her last contact with Regan was on or about Oct. 15.

Cochran also told Barrette and other investigators and

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"They were fighting because she was cheating on him," Saylor said. "He said he was heartbroken."

Saylor then said he later heard "constant sanding" in the middle of the night coming from the Cochran residence.

Miatech testified that she heard a gunshot late one night in the fall of 2014 and then a loud voice. She said she looked out the window and saw a woman and a car with its headlights on across the street.

Previous testimony stated that the Cochrans owned only a truck.

Miatech said she then heard a man say, "Let's hurry up and get the hell out of here."

The first search warrant executed at the Cochran's home was on March 5.

The next day, another neighbor reported that he saw Kelly Cochran outside with a flashlight and that the couple left after law enforcement finished with its search warrant.

Saylor said Kelly Cochran called him a couple of days later and told him they drove to her mother's home in Indiana.

"Kelly said they were sick of the (police) harassing them and couldn't stand to look at the house again."

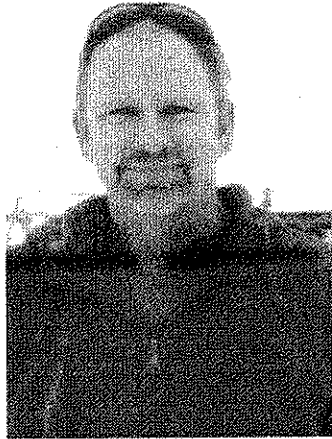
He said that the Cochrans never returned to their house in Caspian, but Kelly Cochran would call him to ask if the police were back at the house.

"She was always looking for information about the investigation," Saylor stated.

The lengthy investigation took an abrupt turn when Jason was found dead in Hobart, Ind.

According to Lake County court documents, Jason Cochran died of asphyxia due to strangulation that was complicated by heroin intoxication.

Hobart detective Jeremy Ogden said in those court documents that in the course of investigating Jason Cochran's death, he spoke with Kelly Cochran at least 40 times and that the majority of those conversations involved Regan.



**Kelly Cochran will be tried on charges related to the 2014 death of Christopher Regan, shown above.**

She was free at the time of the conversations.

Frizzo had contacted the Hobart Police Department in June 2015 to assist in DNA search warrants of the Cochrans, and the Hobart Police were aware of the suspicions surrounding the Cochrans vis-à-vis the Regan murder.

On April 26, 2016, Kelly Cochran fled Indiana to Wingo, Ky.

She was arrested there after charges were filed against her in Iron County in the disappearance of Regan.

Frizzo said that Cochran's cooperation increased after she became concerned that her husband had mailed a letter to the IRPD.

"She was quite fearful of what the letter might contain," Frizzo stated. "Then she began to talk."

In different conversations with investigators, Cochran claimed she was victimized by her husband and that he had threatened to kill her.

She also asked for immunity for her cooperation, a request Frizzo denied.

During the interviews, Cochran recounted her version of the events of Oct. 14, 2014. She told Frizzo that she and Regan had engaged in sexual activity right after Regan arrived at her residence.

Cochran said her husband then shot Regan in the back of the head from the basement.

The barrel and the receiver

of the .22 rifle were later discovered in the Caspian pit by a Michigan State Police dive team, and the gun's magazine tube was eventually located at the Cochran home.

The serial number on the rifle barrel had been ground down, according to Michigan State Police diver Austin Hessler.

According to her testimony, Frizzo said Cochran told her she wouldn't help her husband dismember Regan's body but did attempt to dig the bullet out of his head with a pair of forceps.

She said she also retrieved a cord for a reciprocating saw that her husband used for the dismemberment.

"She said she couldn't get the sight of body parts out of her mind," Frizzo testified.

Cochran then told Frizzo her husband drove Regan's car to the Park-and-Ride and she followed behind in their truck.

They then took multiple garbage bags containing body

parts to Pentoga Trail and disposed of them in the woods.

In separate occasions in March and May, Cochran accompanied Frizzo and other investigators to Pentoga Trail. Eventually, human remains, including a skull, were found, along with wire-rimmed glasses and a plastic tobacco container believed to be Regan's.

Iron County Medical Examiner Danny Yarger testified that he and the University of North Texas Human Identification Forensic Services Unit identified the remains as Regan's.

Frizzo also stated that the blade of a reciprocating saw and components of Old Navy jeans were found in the fire pit in the backyard of the Cochran residence.

Other items, including Regan's watch, his cellphone and what Cochran claimed was her husband's "trophy" or "trinket bag" containing items from supposed previous murders, have not been located.