

Lawyer believes 'Silkwood' to be far from the truth

United Press International

AMES, Iowa — The movie "Silkwood" does not give the real story behind the death of Karen Silkwood because the moviemakers feared a libel suit would be filed by Kerr-McGee Corp., a lawyer said Monday.

Dan Sheehan, one of the attorneys who won a \$10.5 million civil suit against Kerr-McGee Corp. on behalf of the Silkwood estate, told students at Iowa State University that the nation's laws do not protect workers like Silkwood.

Silkwood was killed in a car accident in 1974, while she was on her way to meet with a reporter to discuss possible safety violations in the Kerr-McGee Cimarron plutonium plant at Crescent, Okla.

Marks found on her car showed the vehicle was pushed off the road by another car. A manila folder

Silkwood said contained evidence of safety hazards at the plant — and that she planned to give the reporter — was never found.

Particles of plutonium — a man-made radioactive substance considered one of the most toxic in the world — had been found earlier in her apartment. Silkwood had been contaminated by high levels of radiation before her death.

Although the recently released movie has focused public attention on Silkwood's case, Sheehan still has a number of complaints about "Silkwood."

"They were extraordinarily considerate of Kerr-McGee," Sheehan said. He said moviemakers feared a libel suit, so they blackened Silkwood's character and downplayed some of the issues to appease the company.

Sheehan has never been

able to press his claim that Kerr-McGee deliberately exposed Silkwood to plutonium

"They never wanted to kill her," he said. "All they were trying to do was 'max' her out," by increasing her radiation exposure to the lifetime maximum allowed for nuclear workers under federal regulations, "to make her leave, to get her out of their hair."

by placing it in food in her apartment — although he does not suspect the company of trying to kill her with it.

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her," he said. "All they were trying to do was 'max' her out," by increasing her radiation exposure to the lifetime maximum allowed for nuclear workers under federal regulations, "to make her leave, to get her out of their hair."

He also absolves the company of a conspiracy to murder Silkwood, making the death look like a traffic accident.

"They didn't want to kill her," Sheehan stressed. "They just wanted to run her off the road and get those documents back."

Although Sheehan lost a civil suit alleging Silkwood's civil rights were violated by a "federal conspiracy" to prevent her from releasing the documents, he won the damage suit against Kerr-McGee for allowing Silkwood to be contaminated by plutonium from the plant.

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Police murder trial starts

United Press International

MIAMI — An all-white jury called Monday to hear opening arguments in the volatile trial of a Cuban-born policeman accused of killing a black youth in a video arcade, setting off three days of racial rioting.

Luis Alvarez, 24, is on trial without manslaughter for the fatal shooting of Nevell Johnson Jr., a 17-year-old black, at a video arcade in the Overtown neighborhood.

A jury of three men and three women, one of whom is the only black juror on the panel, plus a man and a woman as alternates, was chosen late Friday after eight days of questioning. Circuit Judge David Gersten held off two days in case of appeals and their selection to a higher court.

No appeals developed over the weekend, during which the jury was sequestered.

One juror chosen Thursday had a legal hitch into the selection process when he said he had received an anonymous

teletype telephone call. His statement, which came before a jury was to be sworn, forced an overnight delay in another go-around in the selection process.

The juror, Guillermo Martinez, was scheduled to be sentenced Monday for contempt of court. Gersten cited him for contempt when he found that Martinez had gone to work although he was instructed to remain at

home, and had told several people he was on the Alvarez jury after being ordered not to discuss the case with anyone.

The jurors finally chosen are white middle-class citizens ranging in age from 32 to 67. A number of black activists in the community protested the exclusion of blacks from the panel. The only four blacks considered were dismissed during the challenging process.

Alvarez, an 18-month member of the Miami police force at the time, claimed the shooting of Johnson on Dec. 28, 1982, was accidental. He told investigators he was showing his rookie partner, Louis Cruz, the ropes in a high-crime area when he spotted a suspicious bulge at the pit of Johnson's back.

After determining the bulge was a concealed handgun, Alvarez said he drew his service revolver and pointed it upward. As he asked Cruz to get the handgun, Alvarez said Johnson suddenly jerked around, causing the policeman's gun to fire accidentally.

The bullet struck Johnson in the head and the youth, a Dade County courier with no police record, died the next day. Three days of rioting ensued, during which another man died and 26 were injured.

The police report on the incident said Alvarez was away from his assigned beat at the time of the shooting.

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