

Houston woman aimed vehicle at husband, stepdaughter says

By Pam Easton
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — An expressionless Clara Harris said nothing as her husband pleaded for her to stop as she ran over him with her Mercedes-Benz after catching him with his lover, the woman's stepdaughter testified Wednesday.

"She stepped on the accelerator and went straight for him," 17-year-old Lindsey Harris recalled for jurors in her stepmother's murder trial. "He was really scared. He was trying to get away and he couldn't."

Clara Harris, 44, is accused of intentionally running over her husband David Harris in a hotel parking lot July 24.

She has claimed her husband's death was an accident. Defense attorney George Pamham has said she only wanted to save her marriage and family.

Prosecutors say the defendant became enraged when her husband chose a woman he was having an affair with over her after a confrontation at the same hotel where David and Clara Harris were married on Valentine's Day a decade earlier.

Lindsey Harris, who was a passenger in the luxury sedan,

testified her father was struck once and then her stepmother circled around and hit him two more times, never once trying to avoid him.

She said she screamed and tried to get out, but couldn't because the car was moving so fast.

"She stepped on the accelerator and went straight for him."

— Lindsey Harris
17-year-old stepdaughter of Clara Harris

When the car finally stopped, Lindsey Harris said she jumped out and hit her stepmother.

"I knew she had killed my dad," she testified as Clara Harris sat with her hands covering her face.

"She said, 'I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. It was an accident.' She knew what she did and she wasn't sorry."

Lindsey Harris also told jurors that her stepmother had told her just before her father's death that "she could kill my

father for what he's done and get away with it."

The teen testified that days before her father's death, he had confessed to Clara Harris about his affair with Gail Bridges, one of his office workers.

Lindsey Harris, who had suspected the affair, said she was upset with her father for what he had done. She said her father and stepmother had grown apart after the birth of their twin boys three years earlier.

The relationship between her father and stepmother seemed to improve after Clara Harris fired Bridges and she thought everything was going to be all right, Lindsey Harris said.

She said Clara Harris later learned her husband was still sneaking off to meet Bridges, which prompted her and her stepmother to search for him on July 24.

In earlier testimony Wednesday, the victim's father, Gerald Harris, said he still goes to church with his daughter-in-law and talked with his granddaughter on the telephone about once a week until the murder trial began Jan. 21. Prosecutors asked the grandparents to refrain from contacting Lindsey Harris because she was feeling "pressured."

Andersen lawyer central in Enron case dismissed from lawsuit

By Kristen Hays
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — The in-house Arthur Andersen lawyer whose suggestion to alter a company memo led a jury to convict the firm of obstruction of justice is among several partners released from a massive shareholder lawsuit filed in the aftermath of Enron Corp.'s collapse.

U.S. District Judge Melinda Harmon released lawyer Nancy Temple and four other former Andersen partners from the \$25 billion lawsuit late Tuesday because plaintiffs didn't adequately specify what she and the others allegedly did wrong.

Thirteen other Andersen partners, including former chief executive Joseph Berardino, remain as defendants in the lawsuit led by the University of California and other investors that lost millions of dollars when former Andersen client Enron went bankrupt in December 2001.

Andersen spokesman Patrick Dorton said nearly all the partners addressed in Harmon's ruling no longer work for the firm, but he declined to specify who. Temple's lawyer, Mark Hansen, didn't return repeated calls for comment.

Andersen was convicted in June of obstruction for destroying Enron-related documents in October and November 2001 as the Securities and Exchange Commission investigated the energy company's tangled finances. Harmon presided over the trial.

Jurors zeroed in on Temple because she advised David Duncan, a former Andersen partner in charge of Enron's account, to remove a sentence and her name from an internal memo about Enron's earnings. Jurors said her action interfered with the investigation.

Temple has not been charged with any crime. Last month, the House Energy and Commerce Committee asked the Justice Department to investigate whether she lied to Congress a year ago when she told the committee she didn't advise document destruction to thwart the SEC.

Her testimony focused on an Oct. 12, 2001, e-mail she sent to Andersen's Houston office reminding workers of a little-known policy to destroy unneeded documents. Mass shredding of Enron documents later ensued.

Duncan was fired in January last year and pleaded guilty to obstruction in April for advising the Enron team to follow the policy. He is cooperating with prosecutors, and is slated to be sentenced in May.

Andy Ramzel, one of the Houston lawyers who represents Andersen and several of the partners, said he was pleased that Harmon released five of them and "we expect our remaining clients will be vindicated when all the facts are presented."


Harmon's 58-page ruling said most of the lawsuit's allegations target nearly defunct Andersen as an entity and called allegations against the individuals "fatally vague and conclusory."

But the 13 individuals who remain as defendants — partners at Andersen's headquarters in Chicago and in its former Houston office — could have had control over policy or decisions regarding Enron's audits and whether to keep the failed energy giant as a client, she said.

Trey Davis, spokesman for the university, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, said it didn't appear Harmon's ruling "will ultimately have much impact on the ability of the class to achieve a meaningful recovery."

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