

## Court orders, cameras not enough to protect Arlington Hts. murder victim

By Jamie Sotonoff | Daily Herald Staff  
Published: 3/10/2008 12:08 AM

After they broke up last year, Cindy Bischof did everything she could to keep her ex-boyfriend, Michael Giroux, away from her.

She asked him to move out of her two-story colonial home in Arlington Heights, but friends said he returned one night when she wasn't home and trashed the place, throwing cans of paint all over the furniture, walls and carpet.

Rattled by the incident, Bischof obtained an order of protection against him. She installed security cameras outdoors around her home. In court, the staff nicknamed her "the girl with the wish list," her brother said, because she always came with a list of ways she was going to ask the court to help protect her from Giroux.

But Giroux kept harassing and threatening her, according to her family and police. Her brother, Mike Bischof of Barrington, said his sister was so fearful of her ex that she wouldn't take a shower unless her mace spray, cell phone and keys were within reach. She even changed residences a few times in the last few months to avoid him.

One time, she came home to find him waiting for her in her dark garage, Mike Bischof said.

"This was eight months of terror," he said. "She had a constant fear for her life. She tried everything. The system failed my sister."

Arlington Heights Police Sgt. Richard Marcinkowski confirmed Sunday that police arrested Giroux "a few times" for violating his order of protection against Bischof in the past year and held him in their lock-up. But Marcinkowski said they "hadn't seen him for a while" -- at least a few months.

It appeared things between the two had simmered down. But apparently, in Giroux's mind, they hadn't.

On Friday, police said Giroux, 60, waited for Bischof, 43, outside her office at Darwin Realty at 970 N. Oaklawn Ave. in Elmhurst and fatally shot her in the parking lot as she left. He then fatally shot himself in the head, police said.

An autopsy was conducted on Bischof Sunday but details were not released. Elmhurst police also would not release additional details Sunday.

A family friend said the Giroux family had no comment.

News of Bischof's murder has devastated her family, friends and neighbors.

Bischof grew up in Mount Prospect and was the star of Prospect High School's class of 1982: homecoming queen, student council president, National Honor Society member, and voted "most likely to succeed."

She went to Indiana University but transferred to DePaul University and earned a bachelor's degree in finance. She was married briefly to Prospect classmate John Wooden, but they had been amicably divorced for roughly 14 years, Mike Bischof said. She did not have children.

Attractive and bright, Cindy Bischof worked as a successful commercial Realtor and earned dozens of impressive professional accolades, including being named one of the most powerful woman Realtors in the Midwest in 2006.

"She was a woman in a male-dominated industry and you have to work harder when that happens," Mike Bischof said. "She was good because of her aggressiveness, her insight, and her ability to put deals together. She's been in the business since she was 19 years old."

Cindy Bischof became involved with Giroux, an attractive furniture salesman 17 years her senior, about three years ago. He lived a few blocks away in the Pioneer Park neighborhood of Arlington Heights and the two struck up a friendship.

Shortly after their relationship began, Giroux took a job in Atlanta. When he returned a short time later, he moved into Bischof's house, Mike Bischof said.

At first, the relationship seemed happy and normal. They would travel together, golf, spend time with family and friends, and go to Bischof's second home in Florida.

"My impressions of him was that he was enamored with the lifestyle that she was able to provide," he said. When they broke up "there was a lot of angst that her lifestyle would stay the same and his lifestyle would take a nose dive."

Neighbor Mark Felcansmith said Bischof and Giroux seemed normal whenever he saw them together.

From time to time, Felcansmith said he had a pleasant "Hey, how ya doin' " conversation with Giroux across the fence. Since the vandalism incident, neighbors were aware of Bischof's order of protection against Giroux.

"Mike seemed like a nice enough guy. I'd be playing with the kids in the backyard, he'd be practicing his golf swing in their backyard. On the surface, everything I saw, he seemed pretty normal, average ... this is so shocking. So tragic," Felcansmith said.

Giroux had a troubled past, however, and in the last few months, everything in his life seemed to unravel.

A native of Kansas, Giroux was the divorced father of four adult children and grandfather of two.

Records show he filed for bankruptcy in 2003. In 1998, records show Giroux had a federal tax lien of nearly \$37,000 placed on a condo he owned in Northfield.

Police said Giroux had recently spent time as an inpatient at mental health facilities, but would not comment on the mental health issues involved.

The most recent hospitalization was last fall, Mike Bischof said, and Giroux was released around Thanksgiving.

Since moving out of Bischof's home, he lived in Chicago and Palatine, records show.

A wake for Bischof is being planned for Thursday night at Glueckert Funeral Home in Arlington Heights, with the funeral Friday at St. Anne Catholic Church in Barrington.

The Bischof family is planning to set up a scholarship fund in Cindy's name and advocate for domestic violence victims -- especially strengthening the orders of protection.

"There are going to be a lot of people like Cindy, after Cindy, unless things change," Mike Bischof said.