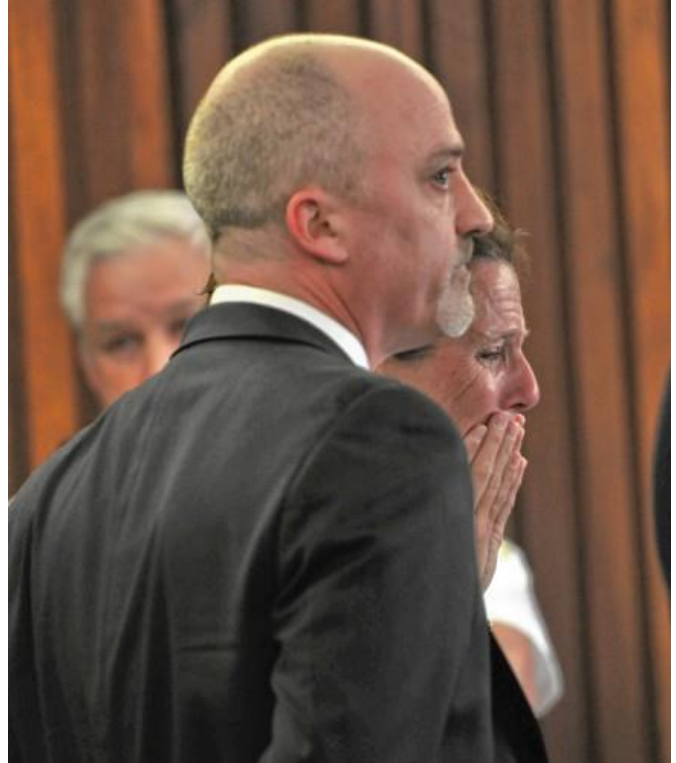


Cara Rintala guilty of first-degree murder



Cara Rintala is handcuffed and escorted out of the courtroom after being found guilty of first-degree murder in Hampshire Superior Court on Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS



Defense attorney Luke Ryan stands next to Cara Rintala as she reacts after being found guilty of first-degree murder of her wife, Annamarie Cochrane Rintala, in Hampshire Superior Court, Friday. GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS



Defense attorney Luke Ryan stands next to Cara Rintala as she reacts after being found guilty of first-degree murder in Hampshire Superior Court on Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. Gazette Staff/CAROL LOLLIS

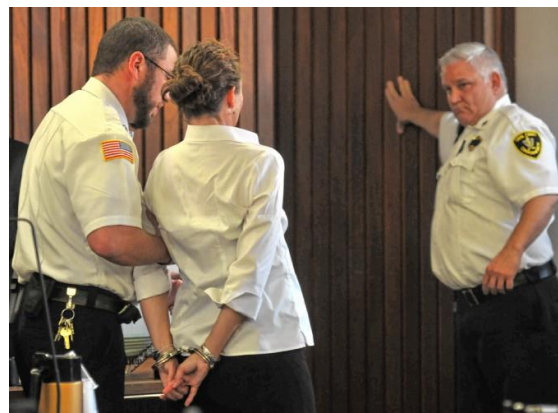


Hampshire Superior Court Judge Mary-Lou Rup addresses the Cara Rintala jury in Hampshire Superior Court on Friday, Oct. 7,



2016. GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS
Defense attorney Luke Ryan stands next to Cara Rintala just before the verdict is read in Hampshire Superior Court on Friday, Oct. 7, 2016. GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS
Cara Rintala is handcuffed and escorted out of the courtroom after being found guilty of first-degree murder in Hampshire Superior Court on Friday. GAZETTE STAFF/CAROL LOLLIS

By MICHAEL MAJCHROWICZ
@mjmajchrowicz
Published: 10/7/2016 4:26:08 PM



Related stories

- [No verdict on first day of deliberations in Rintala murder trial](#)
- [Cara Rintala jury to begin deliberations with manslaughter conviction possible](#)
- [Determining time of death remains contentious in Cara Rintala trial](#)
- [Consultant estimates time of death in Cara Rintala murder trial](#)
- [Granby woman knew her killer, defense says as 3rd Rintala murder trial starts](#)
- [Medical examiner testifies about autopsy in second day of Rintala murder trial](#)
- [Handling of potential evidence at issue in Rintala murder trial](#)

NORTHAMPTON — A cacophony of gasps and sharp exhales from both sides of the courtroom broke the silence Friday afternoon when the jury announced its guilty verdict in the third murder trial of Cara Rintala.

The Hampshire Superior Court jury of five women and seven men deliberated for 27 hours this week before convicting Rintala, 49, of first-degree murder in the March 2010 slaying of **her wife**, Annamarie Cochrane Rintala.

A hysterical Rintala, formerly of Granby, who now faces life in prison, looked to Judge Mary-Lou Rup and the jury. “My daughter, my daughter,” Rintala sobbed, referring to her 9-year-old. “I’m so sorry.”

Behind her, on opposite ends of the aisle, the mothers of both women wept.

Sandra Montagna, Cara’s mother — trembling as she struggled to rise to her feet from the court bench — called out to her daughter.

“Oh, Cara, I want to hold you,” Montagna said. “Can I come and hold her?” she pleaded as a court officer put a “quiet” finger to his lips and shook his head no.

In that moment, Lucy Cochrane, Annamarie’s mother, raised her folded hands above her head in prayer, looked to the ceiling and performed the sign of the cross.



“She can rest,” Cochrane muttered through tears.

More than six years in the making, this verdict was the protracted culmination of hundreds of hours of testimony, three trials and two deadlocked juries in 2013 and 2014.

The Supreme Judicial Court ruled in January that Rintala could be tried a third time, stating that “the evidence against Rintala was sufficient to permit the jury to conclude that she strangled the victim in the basement of their house.”

Testimony presented by the prosecution painted the picture of a turbulent marriage, highlighting instances of emotional and physical abuse. Each of the women had filed for divorce and restraining orders against the other. But in the months leading up to Cochrane Rintala’s death, the two got back together.

Prosecutors said Rintala killed her wife sometime before 3 p.m. March 29, 2010, and left with the couple’s then-2-year-old daughter, Brianna, to run a series of errands to be shown on surveillance footage at those businesses.

Telephone records shown to the jury during the trial indicate Rintala texted and called her wife all that afternoon — despite knowing she was dead, prosecutors said — in an effort to establish an alibi.

And when she arrived home around 7 p.m., Rintala dropped her daughter off at a neighbor's, asked them to call 911 and returned to her own basement where she poured paint over Cochrane Rintala's body in an effort to contaminate physical evidence, according to prosecutors.

The defense team countered by claiming that Rintala left the house around 3 p.m. to let Cochrane Rintala sleep after she worked an overnight shift as a paramedic.

David Hoose, Rintala's attorney, said throughout the trial that investigators unfairly zeroed in on Rintala after dispatchers and first-responders characterized the incident as "domestic."

Testimony concluded Monday, followed by Rup instructing the jurors.

For the first time in the three trials, Rup explained to the jury they were allowed to consider a finding of manslaughter, which would have meant less prison time than either a first- or second-degree murder conviction, which both carry mandatory life sentences.

Rintala was indicted in October 2011, and was released in spring 2014 after posting \$150,000 bail.

However, upon the delivery of the verdict, Rup ordered Rintala jailed and her bail revoked ahead of her formal sentencing at 2 p.m. Wednesday.

In court Friday, Rintala turned to her mother as she was led out of the courtroom in handcuffs. "Brianna!" she said.

"We'll take care of her," said Carl Montagna, her stepfather.

Delayed but not denied

After the verdict, First Assistant Northwestern District Attorney Steven Gagne stepped to a lectern outside the courthouse and took a deep breath before addressing reporters.

"Justice was certainly delayed in this case," he said, "but it wasn't denied."

Gagne continued, "Anne's family right now — they're not celebrating. They're hugging each other, kissing each other.

"And as Anne's mom put it so simply and eloquently, Anne can rest now. She died way too young. This verdict doesn't bring her back, but this verdict brings a measure of justice which is long overdue."

While taking questions from journalists, Gagne emphasized the prosecutors played "offense rather than defense," in developing strategy for the third trial.

This included a more in-depth jury selection process which included two weeks of prospective jurors filling out questionnaires with 100-plus items and extensive interviews that included the judge, prosecutors and defense counsel.

Gagne also cited the contributions of two expert witnesses in this trial who had not testified in the two earlier trials.

One of the experts, an independent medical examiner from New Hampshire, Thomas Andrew, testified that Cochrane Rintala likely died several hours before 3 p.m. — the time Rintala told investigators she last saw her wife alive when Rintala left to run errands.

The other was a quality engineer from a paint manufacturer, David Guilianelli, who testified about experiments he performed in which he tested drying times of the same paint found on Cochrane Rintala's body. Under ideal conditions, he testified, the paint dries in about 30 minutes.

Prosecutors argued that his experiments corroborated their assertion that the paint was poured shortly before first-responders arrived.

Guilianelli testified that dried paint rivulets appearing to stream off the body shown in crime scene photos showed that the wet paint was running off her when Rintala turned over the body to cradle it.

Hard to understand

In his law office on Main Street after court concluded, Hoose was still trying to comprehend what had unfolded less than a half hour earlier.

“You give experienced lawyers three tries, what do you expect?” Hoose said. “You (also) give witnesses three times to hone their testimony.”

Hoose continued, “We really don't understand how that evidence equates to...guilt beyond a reasonable doubt,” he said.

Michael Majchrowicz can be reached at mmajchrowicz@gazettenet.com.

<https://www.gazettenet.com/Cara-Rintala-trial-verdict-5255160>