

# Brok Junkermeier's friends testify that he talked about killing Lila Warwick

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Carolyn Lange | 6:00 am, Apr. 1, 2014

WILLMAR -- Two high school friends of Brok Junkermeier testified Monday that he had talked about killing Lila Warwick in the past and that shortly after her death was discovered, he told them details of how he killed the 79-year-old grandmother.

Morgan Hoffer, 20, of Willmar, secretly recorded the conversation on his cell phone.

Jurors at the Kandiyohi County Courthouse in Willmar listened to the muffled recording as the murder trial began its second week.

Junkermeier, 19, of Willmar, faces one count of first-degree premeditated murder and one count of first-degree murder with intent while committing a felony.

Earlier in the day Monday, photos and a video led jurors through Lila Warwick's home on the east edge of Willmar, where she was found dead on July 29, 2013.

In a hushed courtroom, Mark Patterson, who is a forensic scientist with the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, narrated the video that showed a trail of blood through the home, garage and basement.

It also showed the body of Warwick lying on her back on the basement floor.

Barefoot and wearing black clothing, Warwick had blood and abrasions on her chin and a pool of blood by her left hand.

A lightweight handcuff that Patterson described as a "novelty" or "toy" handcuff was around her left wrist.

The tour through the home also included shots of Warwick's office nook where the computer screen was open to a bank website that showed her bank balance that day of a little more than \$1,500.

There was blood on a blank check that was lying on the floor next to the computer desk, and blood on the computer equipment and chair.

Junkermeier is accused of cutting Warwick's hand with a knife during the early morning surprise attack and then forcing her to write him a \$1,500 check.

After blood got on the first check, Junkermeier allegedly bandaged her hand so that she could write him a clean check.

A series of Kandiyohi County Sheriff's deputies and detectives testified Monday about what they saw at the house and how evidence was methodically collected and processed.

Much of the afternoon was spent hearing the testimony of Junkermeier's two friends, Hoffer and Tyler Stegeman.

They both said Junkermeier had talked many times about killing Warwick. And they both said they had not taken such talk seriously.

Stegeman, an 18-year-old senior at Willmar High School, testified that four days before the killing, he and Junkermeier were playing basketball when Junkermeier said he was going to kill Warwick.

The motive was money.

Stegeman said he did not consider it a real threat.

"I honestly didn't think he was going to do it," said Stegeman, responding to the attorney's question about why he did not notify authorities. "Who's going to kill an old lady?" said Stegeman.

Hoffer said he had heard "bits and pieces" about the murder plans for nine months but thought it was "just talk" and was "something so stupid" he did not take it seriously until he heard that Warwick had been found dead.

Hoffer told the court he called Junkermeier the day after the murder to "say farewell" because he had "put it together" that Junkermeier was involved.

Figuring that Junkermeier would be quickly caught, Hoffer said he called Junkermeier to say goodbye.

The two talked in person for nearly three hours while Hoffer was at work, with Junkermeier providing details of each step of the killing.

During that conversation, Hoffer recorded three short segments on his phone that was hidden from Junkermeier's view.

Hoffer testified that Junkermeier said he had tried to strangle Warwick and when that failed, he attempted to break her neck and then stomped on her throat and finally stabbed her before throwing her body in the basement.

Junkermeier allegedly told the same story to Stegeman, who testified that he talked to Junkermeier on the phone the day of the killing.

Junkermeier said he had “killed her, strangled her, stomped on her, stabbed her,” said Stegeman, recalling his conversation with Junkermeier.

Hoffer contacted police two days after the death was discovered and informed them that Junkermeier and Warwick’s grandson, Robert Warwick, 18, were involved.

Hoffer said Robert Warwick’s name had always been included when Junkermeier had talked about killing Lila Warwick.

Paul Follmann, a detective with the Kandiyohi County Sheriff’s Office, testified that he met on July 31 with a nervous Hoffer. Based on information from Hoffer, Follmann said the murder investigation focused on Junkermeier and Robert Warwick.

Robert Warwick, of Willmar, has been indicted on the same set of first-degree murder charges. He is alleged to have planned the killing. No trial date has been set for him.

Devon Jenkins, 16, of Willmar, has already been sentenced as a juvenile for aiding and abetting second-degree murder. He was in the car when Junkermeier was inside Lila Warwick’s house.

In an Aug. 8 statement to police, Stegeman said Junkermeier had not previously talked about killing Warwick. Then in a September interview with the Attorney General’s office, Stegeman changed his story and said Junkermeier had talked about killing Warwick days before she was killed.

When asked Monday why he did not give accurate information to police in August, Stegeman said he was scared.

“I don’t want to sit here in front of him and do this,” said Stegeman, glancing at Junkermeier.

Stegeman and Hoffer had similar answers when asked about Junkermeier’s demeanor when he told them he had killed Warwick.

“He seemed happy,” said Stegeman.

“Excited, I guess,” said Hoffer of Junkermeier. “Proud almost.”

Before recessing for the day, Judge Donald Spilseth reminded the jury they were not to talk to anyone about the case or read or listen to any news coverage.

Testimony resumes at 9 a.m. today.