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Murder trial to open Wednesday in Elbow Lake

By Paul Boswell

At press time, the trial of John Keep, an 18-year-old Hoffman man who has been charged in the murder of Karla Jo Nieland, also of Hoffman, was scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. Wednesday at the Grant County Courthouse. Keep stands trial in the May 17, 1981 beating death of Nieland, who was a senior at Hoffman-Kensington High School.

Earlier this year the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that Keep must stand trial as an adult for the alleged murder of Nieland. In June 1981, a juvenile court judge ruled that Keep, then 17, should stand trial as an adult and that there was probably cause to charge him with the crime.

Keep's attorneys appealed that decision to a three-judge District Court panel which affirmed the decision of the juvenile court. Keep's attorneys then

appealed the issue to the Minnesota Supreme Court which made the same ruling.

The State Supreme Court stated that the findings of the juvenile court were correct and that public safety would not be served by keeping Keep within the juvenile system.

Grant County Attorney Jon Stafsholt, who is prosecuting the case, charged Keep with second and third degree murder shortly after the death of the victim. The May 19 trial date was set by District Judge Thomas Stahlor, from Morris, at an omnibus hearing held at the Grant County Courthouse April 8.

As this week's *Herald* went to print, there was a possibility that Keep's defense attorney, Mark Peterson, may wish to request a change of venue which, if granted, would postpone the trial.