

A trial for murder is poised to begin

The District Attorney decided to hold the trial at the Palo Alto Courthouse at 270 Grant Ave.

The facility had been shut down for a few years for budget cuts, but with the growing amount of crime that had been emerging in Palo Alto, the county had reopened it.

Palo Alto's role in international technology and international finance, and its resulting place in the ensuing worlds of fraud, tax evasion and intellectual property theft, had caused county managers to rethink the court shutdown.

Coming home to roost

They soon realized that it made sense to establish a courtroom facility in Palo Alto, where the new emerging world of crime could be addressed. From the 99%, there was increasing pressure to prosecute white-collar crime in Palo Alto. The pigeons were coming home to roost.

My personal strategy for the trial, the one I had decided to take, was to continue to behave as if I could not take the proceedings seriously, since it was so obvious that I had not committed a crime. It seemed that any shift in that attitude of mine would signal guilt.

If I appeared as if I wasn't worried, I told myself, it would communicate to observers that, in fact, I was not guilty.

A Deadly Secret

Homicide in Palo Alto



A fictional serial by John Angell Grant

My attorney looked at me. "You're an idiot," he said. "You need to take this seriously."

I thought, "No, Tom, you're the idiot. You will see how this turns out."

Greeting jurors

On the first day of hearings, my attorney's partner, who was a woman, instructed me to stand courteously when the jury pool and others entered the courtroom, and not to sit with my back to people entering the courtroom.

"Why is that?" I asked.

"You want to appear open," she said. "Don't point your rear end at people."

"So it's a PR stunt," I said.

"Yes," she said. "Of course it's a PR stunt. But it's an important one."

"Just do it," she said.

So I stood up and greeted the spectators and ju-

rors into the courtroom — like Carla hosting one of her luncheons by the pool. My God, I thought, what has happened to my life?

My friends were there, and I waved to them. At least I think they were my friends. Reading some faces, I wondered if I had miscalculated.

The deputy district attorney prosecuting the case, Benjamin Morgan, had a record of convicting innocent people. My defense attorney thought that information could be used to effect in my trial, if carefully placed.

Jury tampering of a sort

My attorney had also hired bloggers to write about the trial from our perspective. He told me the prosecution had done the same thing. Although jury members would be instructed not to read about the case, they were not sequestered. So of course they would be reading anything they could find on the Internet about the case. It was a high-tech method of jury tampering.

"That's where we'll write about the D.A.'s history of sending innocent people to prison," he said. "That will help you."

The trial was happening. I got scared.

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