

When a high-profile case involving allegations of sexual abuse of mentally ill patients went to trial after being in the news for a year, The Eagle's Sunday advance — "COUPLE'S TRIAL WILL AIR SORDID DETAILS" — was topped by this caveat:

Editor's note: This story follows the federal case against Arlan and Linda Kaufman, as set out in court records. It contains graphic descriptions of evidence expected to be presented at their trial, scheduled to begin this week in Wichita.

A simplified warning seemed sufficient on subsequent Eagle stories as shocking details were increasingly well-known.

The editors and reporter felt it was important not to shy away from detailing what had happened in Kaufman House. The couple who ran the group home — a social worker and nurse — didn't dispute most of the evidence, which had been recorded on dozens of videotapes. They disagreed with the prosecution's interpretation of it. (Especially before the trial, the couple was fiercely supported by friends and family; writing with specificity helped them come to understand why this story was on the front page.) And the details helped bolster our follow-up watchdogging stories: A variety of governmental agencies had known about problems with the Kaufmans and their group home, but it had taken 17 years for the residents to get help.

Here is an example from the second week of the trial:

Friday, October 14, 2005

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Editor's note: This story contains graphic material that may not be suitable for all readers.

DAD NEVER QUESTIONED KAUFMANS' TREATMENTS

BY RON SYLVESTER

The Wichita Eagle

The father didn't want to ask too many questions or complain too much during the 15 years his daughter lived at the Kaufman House.

There weren't many options in 1986 for people suffering from schizophrenia, and he saw the group home in Newton as his daughter's last one.

The father, now 78, said he never knew Arlan Kaufman took videos of his daughter showering and crawling around naked, barking like a dog.

Prosecutors contend that Kaufman used the knowledge he gained from his Ph.D. in social work to exert control over the mentally ill people who lived in those homes, and to keep their families from interfering.

During the seventh day of Arlan and Linda Kaufman's federal trial, jurors heard testimony about the psychological control the government says the couple used to make sexual servants of their residents.

The father said that when he signed his daughter up to live in the Kaufman House Residential Treatment Center, he'd already watched her slide through the tiers of mental health care.

The Indiana woman had been a patient in the Menninger Clinic in Topeka for nearly three years before being released when her insurance stopped paying, her father said. She then spent six years at Meadowlark, a residential care facility operated by Prairie View system in Newton. Meadowlark officials finally told the father they couldn't keep his daughter.

"There weren't many places accepting people who were mildly mentally ill, whatever that means, but none for the most severe," said the father. The Eagle is not naming him because it might identify his daughter. The newspaper has a policy of not identifying those who may be victims of sexual abuse.

But Meadowlark officials had good news: He didn't have to look any further than Newton. The Kaufman House took in many patients just like his daughter.

The Kaufmans seemed caring enough, the father said. But over the years, they didn't provide details about their care or therapy, and he admitted he didn't ask. He said he didn't want to jeopardize his daughter's living arrangements.

"When you trust a caregiver and feel comfortable where your child is living and being cared for, you don't want to make waves," the father said. "Because what do you do then when they say, 'Come and get her?' "

Each year, the family received an invoice from the Kaufman House for room, board, nursing care - Linda Kaufman was a registered nurse - and group and individual therapy. It subtracted the daughter's Social Security disability checks, which the Kaufmans were able to cash, and collections from Medicare.

By 2000, the father was writing a check for \$5,000, in addition to the \$20,000 the Kaufmans received from Medicare.

But by playing landlord and therapist, and being authorized to cash Social Security checks, Arlan Kaufman violated the ethics of his position as a licensed social worker, another witness testified.

C.W. "Chuck" Frankenfeld, assistant professor of social work at Fort Hays State University, testified that such multiple roles create conflicts for the therapist and clients.

The client could be taken advantage of by a therapist," Frankenfeld said. "The roles become mixed and problematic."

Kaufman said he and his wife cared for their residents and designed treatment to help them control dysfunctional sexual behavior.

Therapy at the Kaufman House included taking videos of the woman showering. He taped her shaving a man's genitals and having hers shaved. He made videos of her crawling naked on all fours and barking like a dog.

"Wag your tail - get a close-up of that tail," Arlan Kaufman is heard saying on a video shown Thursday.

Later, Arlan Kaufman had the woman sit on a table and spread her legs.

"I want you people all to look at (her) genitals and see if it was absolute ly perfect," Kaufman said.

Only the audio portion was heard in open court. The videos were played just for the jury under a federal law designed to protect the privacy and dignity of potential crime victims.

"Let me zoom in . . . so I can get this here," Kaufman said. "Well, it is really that perfect."

One juror clasped her hand over her mouth and looked away. She later sent a note to U.S. District Judge Monti Belot III asking if the jury would have to watch many more of the images. It's evidence, Belot told them, and necessary for the trial, which continues this morning.

The father couldn't remember all the details of his dealings with his daughter and the Kaufmans over the past decade.

But he did remember never asking whether his daughter attended therapy in the nude.

"Heavens, no. I trusted the caregivers," he said.

The man took his daughter out of the Kaufman House on Dec. 31, 2001 - four months after the behavioral sciences board issued an emergency order terminating Arlan Kaufman's license.

The father only recently learned about the videos of his daughter.

One tape shows the woman, now 49, being instructed by Arlan Kaufman to join another schizophrenic woman in massaging one of their male housemates.

"You want a turn?" one of the women asks Arlan Kaufman.

Said the therapist: "I just kind of enjoy watching."

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