

NEWS

Hamilton



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By Ken Peters, www.thespec.com, Updated: September 14, 2012 3:40 PM

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Nine years for wife's attempted murder

John Alkerton says he can't explain why he stabbed is estranged wife on a downtown Hamilton corner.

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He still loves her. And he is really sorry. He just can't explain why did what he did to her on a downtown street last year.

Which was to kill his ex-wife by stabbing her three times with a 16-centimetre knife.

Connie Clarke survived. And she spent a portion of Friday morning in Ontario Superior Court to see her former husband John Alkerton sentenced to nine years after pleading guilty to attempted murder in connection with the March 18, 2011 attack.

Alkerton, 56, who received 682 days of pre-sentence custody, has another seven years and 48 days to serve.

Court heard the couple had separated three weeks prior to the attack that occurred at the corner of King and Wellington Streets at 9 p.m.

Separated just three weeks earlier, John Alkerton texted his ex-wife of 12 years and asked her to meet him for a coffee in downtown

Hamilton.

Connie Clarke reluctantly agreed. It was a decision she would regret. A decision that would nearly claim her life.

Clarke left her nearby home at 9 p.m. for the short walk to the Tim Horton's at Main and Wellington Street.

Alkerton, 56, was waiting for Clarke at King and Wellington Streets, outside a funeral home. He had been drinking. He was smoking a marijuana cigarette and carrying a canvas shopping bag.

Alkerton grabbed his ex-wife's coat. She tried to pull away.

"I'm here tonight to gut both us of us, bitch," Alkerton said. A brief argument ensued and Clarke called in vain to a male passerby for help.

Alkerton accused his ex-wife of having an affair since October. She denied this. He replied by pulling a 20-centimetre knife with a serrated blade out of the bag. He stabbed her first in the left forearm, severing tendons in her left hand.

The second wound was to Clarke's left shoulder. The third and final blow was to Clarke's mid-chest. It penetrated her left lung.

"Alkerton dropped the knife and fled after telling Clarke that police would find him dead and he would not be going to jail for what he had done," prosecutor Kevin McKenna told Ontario Superior Court Justice Kim Carpenter-Gunn Friday.

Clarke was rushed to Hamilton General Hospital and survived the attack. Alkerton turned himself in the next day, March 19, 2011.

Alkerton pled guilty to attempted murder on Friday and received a nine-year prison sentence. Because of the time he served in the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre, Alkerton has seven years and 48 days left to serve.

Defence counsel Beth Bromberg, who negotiated the joint plea submission with the Hamilton Crown's office, said her client wanted to take responsibility for his actions.

"He wanted to apologize to Ms. Clarke and to tell her he still loved her. He is stunned and mortified over what he has done," Bromberg said, adding Alkerton's greatest joy is spending time with his five-year-old granddaughter from a previous relationship.

"His greatest regret, other than hurting Ms. Clarke, is the terrible penalty he will serve in not seeing her (his granddaughter) grow up," she said.

McKenna called the attack "extremely cruel and savage. It is beyond comprehension that a man, regardless of his feelings of love toward a woman, could commit such a brazen attack.

"The fact he would do this in front of people at 9 p.m. in downtown Hamilton made no difference to him. It was an expression of hatred and anger expressed through incredibly vicious behavior. It comes close to stark horror," McKenna said.

In her victim impact statement Clarke, 35, who was in court for the sentencing, made it clear her physical wounds have healed much faster than the emotional damage.

"Before the attack I was a strong-willed lady who was very outgoing and who loved everything about life. Today I am a lady who has had all dignity taken away and who is more scared of life than life itself.

"This attack has brought nothing but fear and pain to my life," she wrote.

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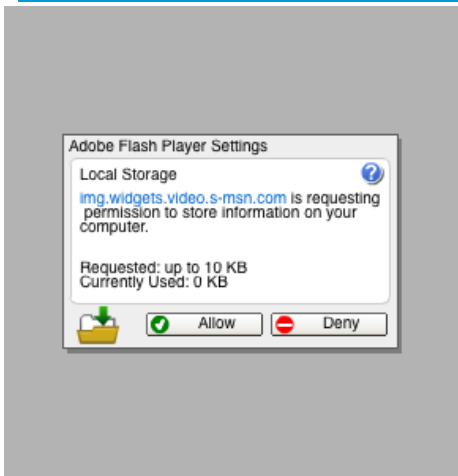
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