

Carnation killer jury to weigh mercy or death for 6 murders

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Jurors considering the fate of Joseph McEnroe are being asked to decide if he is a coldblooded killer or the victim of a manipulative woman who coerced him into murdering six people in Carnation on Christmas Eve 2007.

By [Jennifer Sullivan](#)

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Twelve jurors will gather in a small room at the King County Courthouse starting Thursday to weigh whether Joseph McEnroe is a coldblooded killer or the victim of a manipulative woman who coerced him into murdering her family.

Those two portraits of McEnroe were painted Wednesday by the prosecution and defense attorneys in their daylong closing arguments in the penalty phase of his nearly four-month trial. The same jury that convicted him of aggravated murder in March will decide if his crimes warrant life in prison without the possibility of parole or the death penalty.

As King County Senior Deputy Prosecutor Scott O'Toole urged the jury Wednesday to send McEnroe to death row for the murders of six people, the 36-year-old man shook, twitched, sweated and appeared to be crying. Members of the audience cried when O'Toole displayed photos of the six bodies.

"We know that the man sitting in this courtroom killed all these people. He murdered them," O'Toole told jurors.

Calling jurors the “conscience of the community,” O’Toole said it’s their job to condemn McEnroe to death for the murders in rural Carnation on Christmas Eve 2007. He said of a death sentence: “It’s right, it’s just.”

O’Toole said McEnroe did far more than murder six people. He also wiped out three generations of the Anderson family.

“What Joseph McEnroe has done literally changes and destroys history,” O’Toole said. “You will never know what the future might have been. This defendant, Joseph McEnroe, destroyed them for all time.”

Defense attorney William Prestia, during his two-hour closing argument, told the jury that even though his client did something “terrible,” he deserves mercy.

“Joe McEnroe is filled with regret, he is riddled with remorse. He is worthy of mercy,” Prestia said at the end of his closing argument. “We ask you to choose life.”

Prestia rattled off a list of reasons mercy should be granted, including: McEnroe’s mental illnesses; his troubled childhood filled with bullying; and the fact he has been a trouble-free inmate in the seven years he’s been living in solitary confinement at the King County Jail.

“There is good in him and there is the potential for good. He is seeking redemption,” Prestia said. “At the end of the day, I’ll say this to you: This is one of the worst of the worst crimes, I’m not going to sugarcoat it for you. Joe is not one of the worst of the worst offenders.”

As Prestia talked, McEnroe continued twitching and rocking in his seat.

Prestia blamed the murders on McEnroe’s former girlfriend and co-defendant Michele Anderson, who he said orchestrated the deaths of six of her relatives. He said Anderson “reeled in” and manipulated McEnroe, making him “into the tool she needed” to commit mass murder.

“When she wants something, she’s truly relentless,” Prestia said about Michele Anderson. “She’s got a pattern of manipulation, a pattern of wanting to be in control. What we’ve got here is a pathological relationship.”

Prestia added: “Joe’s fragile personality made him susceptible to Michele.”

The same jury in March [convicted McEnroe](#) of killing Michele Anderson’s parents, Wayne and Judy Anderson; their son Scott and his wife, Erica Anderson; and the younger couple’s children, 5-year-old Olivia and 3-year-old Nathan, during a holiday gathering.

McEnroe’s defense claims he was coerced into the murders by Michele Anderson, who he claimed was angry at her family because she believed the family owed her money and mistreated her.

Unlike the criminal trial, when jurors had to be unanimous in their verdict, in the penalty phase only a single juror has to vote for a life sentence for McEnroe to be spared the death penalty.

“You decide whether the defendant gets what he wants,” O’Toole said, referring to a life sentence. “Or what he deserves.”

Michele Anderson, 36, is scheduled to be tried this fall.

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