

Murder Case Held

Mistrial

By Jim Mann

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A federal judge declared a mistrial in the Scheer murder case yesterday after Rita Mae Scheer appeared in court with bandages on her neck and both arms and slash marks on both of her legs.

On Thursday, Mrs. Scheer failed to appear for the trial, touching off fear for her life. After nearly six hours, she called her attorney to say she had tried to commit suicide at a motel in Waldorf, Md.

U.S. District Court Judge George L. Hart Jr. declared a mistrial both for Mrs. Scheer and for her codefendant, Calvin Cooksey, who is accused of taking \$5,000 from Mrs. Scheer to shoot her husband, W. Morris Scheer. A new trial was ordered for both defendants Aug. 21.

After clearing the court of spectators and ordering Mrs. Scheer to stand while a series of photographs were taken of her wounds for the court record, Hart declared:

"As a matter of simple humanity, the court feels it cannot continue the trial of Mrs. Scheer."

In Cooksey's case, Hart cited the "unusual publicity" attending the case and the "many difficulties" surrounding it, which he did not specify. "There is some possibility of prejudice to Mr. Cooksey," he concluded.

Attorneys for both defendants had requested a mistrial on grounds that the jurors, who were not sequestered, might have been exposed to newspaper headlines about Mrs. Scheer's flight; and on grounds that her flight might prejudice the jurors if they took it as a sign of guilt.

See SCHEER, A11, Col. 7