



Filipina B. Narciso being taken from Kalamazoo County jail to Federal Court in Detroit, where she was arraigned.

Pleas of Not Guilty Are Entered For 2 Nurses in Hospital Deaths

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DETROIT, June 17 — Two Filipino nurses who worked together in an intensive care ward of the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Ann Arbor were arraigned today on charges of murdering five patients and poisoning 10 others at the hospital last year.

Pleas of not guilty were entered for both of the nurses, Filipina B. Narciso, 30 years old, of Ypsilanti, and Leonora M. Perez, 31, now of Evanston, Ill.

A Federal magistrate directed that the plea be entered for Miss Narciso in her arraignment here after the nurse said that "on the advice of my counsel I plead mute." She was ordered held without bail.

In Mrs. Perez's arraignment in Chicago, cash bond was set at \$500,000. She was ordered taken to Michigan to face the charge.

The indictment handed up last night by a Federal grand jury here did not rule out the possibility that other persons may have been involved in a conspiracy with Mr. Narciso and Mrs. Perez.

But Richard L. Delonis, the Assistant United States Attorney in charge of the case, said that the investigation had been suspended and that he was concentrating on preparing for the trial of the two nurses.

The two are accused of administering, over six weeks last July and August, muscle-relaxing drugs through the intravenous feeding tubes of the patients. The drugs caused the patients to stop breathing. Some of them could not be revived.

The motive for the killings and poisonings remained a mystery. There was no discussion of motive in the eight-page indictment. And today, Mr. Delonis refused at a news conference here to discuss a possible reason, saying this was part of the evidence gathered in a 10-month investigation and could not be made public until the trial.

Victims Were Elderly

There has been speculation that the killer or killers may have wanted to end the suffering of the patients. But Mr. Delonis refused to comment when asked whether the murder victims had anything in common, such as being terminally ill.

But while the patients who died were all men 60 years or older, some of them were said to have had recoverable illnesses or injuries. Among those poisoned by the drugs were men ranging in age from the early 20's to past 80. One was being treated for a smashed elbow.

Doctors and nurses at the Ann Arbor hospital became alarmed in mid-August after 56 patients mysteriously suffered sudden arrests of breathing. The number was five times the normal incidence of such arrests.

The excessive number of arrests stopped as suddenly as they had begun after agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation were called in Aug. 15.

The indictment charges the two nurses with conspiring to mingle poisonous drugs in the intravenously administered food and medicine of the Veterans Administration patients.

It does not rule out the possibility that other drugs were used in the alleged murders and poisonings, but it does, in two counts, mention the drug Pavulon, a muscle relaxant commonly given to patients about to undergo surgery.

Pavulon has the effect of immobilizing the diaphragm, which halts breathing. An antidote can be administered to counteract this effect immediately.

Mr. Delonis said it would have been possible to inject the

drugs by syringe through a plastic bubble attached to a patient's arm.

The two nurses became the objects of an intensified investigation last fall after a search of hospital records indicated that they were in the intensive care ward or on duty in the hospital during the night shifts in which all the pulmonary arrests occurred.

Mr. Delonis said today that in the investigation, in which the bodies of several victims were exhumed, the F.B.I. developed new techniques for detecting the presence of muscle relaxant drugs in the corpses.

At her arraignment this afternoon before Federal Magistrate Barbara Hackett, Miss Narciso, a short, slender woman dressed in a blue checked suit coat and maroon slacks, stood impassively and listened to the charges against her.

Denies Guilt

"I am innocent," she said when asked how she pleaded.

Mrs. Perez, who is four months pregnant, was arraigned before a Federal magistrate in Chicago. Both women were ordered held without bail.

Miss Narciso came to Ypsilanti three years ago to practice nursing in the Ann Arbor V.A. hospital.

Several of her neighbors were in the cramped courtroom today during the arraignment. When it was over, one patted her on the shoulder.

"Anyone who knows her knows there is just no way she could have done this," said the woman, Mrs. Sidney Branhan, who has known Miss Narciso for the last three years.

Miss Narciso's roommate, a young Filipino nurse who asked not to be identified, said she met Miss Narciso seven years ago while they were in nurses training at a Manila hospital.

Both of them belonged to St. John's Roman Catholic parish in Ypsilanti, the roommate said, holding that Miss Narciso had many friends in that community.

"Our children all loved being with her," said another neighbor, Barbara Woodrum. "She often baby-sat with them, and I know of no one who was kinder and or friendlier than she was."

The trial is expected to begin at the end of August or the first week in September.

LaSalle Hotel to Close

CHICAGO, June 17 (UPI)—The LaSalle Hotel, a former haven for Chicago politicians of both parties and the property and headquarters of the late Avery Brundage, will close on or about July 1, it was announced yesterday. The announcement followed an order signed by Chief Probate Court Judge Robert J. Dunne that allowed the executors of the Brundage estate to sell the hotel. Mr. Brundage, the millionaire president of the International Olympic Committee, died May 8, 1975.