



Robert Chambers Jr. enters court with father, right, and lawyer, Roger Stavits.

## Attorney's Laryngitis Delays 'Preppy' Trial

By Timothy Clifford

Laryngitis claimed the voice the lead defense attorney in the murder trial of Robert E. Chambers Jr. yesterday and forced a postponement before any witnesses could be called.

Manhattan State Supreme Court Justice Howard E. Bell dismissed the jury of eight men and four women for the day after telling them that Jack T. Litman had lost his voice.

"I could detect [Monday] that he was coming down with something," said the judge. "He cannot protect the interests of his client if he can't talk."

The first prosecution witnesses, Patricia Reilley, the Upper East Side woman who found Jennifer Dawn Levin's body in Central Park, and several police detectives, are expected to begin their testimony today if Litman is able to return to court.

Chambers, 21, is being tried on two counts of second-degree murder stemming from Levin's death on Aug. 26, 1986. In their opening statements Monday, lead prosecutor Linda Fairstein said Chambers intentionally killed the 18-year-old woman, while Litman argued that Levin's death was accidental.

Although Chambers sniffed and wiped tears from his eyes at times during the opening statements, his

court-appointed supervisor said yesterday that the defendant is keeping up his spirits.

"He wasn't too far down from listening to the two opening statements," said Msgr. Thomas P. Leonard, who talked to Chambers on Monday night. "... He's obviously still apprehensive, but relieved that the trial is starting."

But Sean Pete, 19, who came to know Chambers about eight months ago, said the defendant has been largely ignored by many of his old friends and sometimes is depressed.

"I think he's tired, emotionally drained. He's a little bit depressed," Pete said yesterday, outside court. "I think he wants to put all of this behind him. He doesn't want to be here at all. His life is on the line."

Pete, a New York University student who works for his art dealer father, said Chambers spends most of his free time at home, working on his computer, watching movies and keeping up a newspaper scrapbook on his trial.

Explaining why most of Chambers' old friends have been absent from court, Pete said, "I think they can't deal with the trial and all of this."

Asked if Chambers ever talks about Levin's death, Pete said: "It's just a big mistake." That's all he keeps saying to me."

## Slaying Linked To Union Probe

This story was reported by Richard Esposito, Paul Moses and Tom Renner and was written by Esposito.

Vincent Joseph Rotundo, the first reported victim of mob violence in New York this year may have been killed because organized crime figures believed he was cooperating with federal labor racketeering agents, law enforcement sources said yesterday.

Sources said that Rotundo, a dockside labor organizer found shot to death Monday evening in front of his home in Brooklyn, was the subject of a renewed federal probe into the International Longshoremen's Association.

Rotundo, a reputed underboss in the small but muscular New Jersey-based DeCavalcante crime family, was found dead in the driver's seat of his car. He had been shot through the left eye by one of five shots fired into the car. A quart of squid was left in his lap.

In the past six years, Rotundo, 58, rose from the rank of soldier to underboss in the crime family which boasts less than two dozen members but is influential in labor unions in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, according to testimony by expert witnesses.

His death is believed by authorities to be the latest in a Brooklyn mob bloodletting that claimed 13 lives between September and January.

"It's hard for us to say exactly why at this point he met his demise, but when someone is found with a bag of fish in his lap you have to think somebody thought he was ratting on something," said Col. Clinton Pagano, head of the New Jersey State Police unit that investigated mob activities.

For 24 years, Rotundo has been an organizer for the ILA, representing the DeCavalcante family's interest on the New York and New Jersey waterfront controlled by the Gambino and Genovese crime families.

Sources said that Rotundo was among those investigated in the last set of labor probes into the ILA, which resulted in union leader Anthony Scotto being convicted of racketeering and barred from the waterfront. Rotundo was not charged in the case.

Rotundo's boss, John Riggi, reputed acting head of the DeCavalcante family, was listed in U.S. Senate testimony as the business agent for Local 394 of the

*'It's hard for us to say exactly why at this point he met his demise, but when someone is found with a bag of fish in his lap you have to think somebody thought he was ratting on something.'*

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International Association of Laborers and Hod Carriers.

Rotundo and Riggi met with reputed New York crime boss John Gotti in 1986, shortly after Gotti assumed control of the Gambino crime family following the execution of Paul Castello in Manhattan, according to testimony by federal agents.

However, investigators said that Rotundo's interests may have run counter to the new Gambino family agenda.

Rotundo allegedly was heavily involved in the distribution of pornography with Robert DiBernardo, a DeCavalcante family member who switched allegiance to the Gambino family but was tied closely to Castellano and not Gotti. Federal investigators believe Gotti may be linked to the pornographer's disappearance and presumed death. They speculated that Rotundo may have been able to provide information on DiBernardo's disappearance.

Gotti's attorney, Bruce Cutler, angrily denied the accusations, saying,

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## Jewish Leaders: Pope Has 2nd Chance

Combined News Services

Pope John Paul II will make a trip to Austria in June and meet with Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, Vatican Radio reported yesterday.

Local Jewish leaders, who reacted angrily when the Pope received Waldheim at the Vatican last summer, said they view the Pope's meeting with Waldheim as a second chance for the Pontiff to assert his worldwide moral authority by making a statement about the "evils" of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

The Pope was criticized for receiving Waldheim, who has been accused of knowing about Nazi war crimes as

a German Army officer in the Balkans during World War II. Because of those claims, Waldheim has been rebuffed diplomatically by many countries, including the United States, which will not allow him to enter the country.

The Pope's trip to Austria, from June 23-27, will include stops in Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck and commence with a meeting with "the president, the government and the diplomatic corps at the Imperial Palace," the radio said.

"Hopefully, this time he will fulfill his papal function and give the president of Austria religious instruction

in what it means to be a human being," said Rabbi Balfour Brickner of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan.

Vatican spokesmen could not be reached for comment.

Kenneth Bialkin, former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, recalled that during his audience with the Austrian president at the Vatican, the Pope disappointed many Jewish leaders by making no reference to Waldheim's service in the German Army.

A congregation of American Jewish leaders met with the Pope in

Vatican City last year and also in Miami during his visit to the United States to attempt to repair the damage caused by the Pontiff's meeting with Waldheim.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, who was part of the Vatican City delegation, said the group was made aware of the Pope's plans to visit Waldheim in Austria.

Schindler said he has heard reports that Austria, with a large Roman Catholic population, could benefit from a papal visit that included a lecture on the "evils of anti-Semitism."



# Koch Warns of Possible Police Cuts

By William Murphy  
City Hall Bureau Chief

There will be fewer police officers on city streets if the State Legislature passes a \$91-million bill to increase pensions for retired city workers, Mayor Edward I. Koch announced yesterday.

But because of other budget uncertainties, there might be fewer officers on the street even if the pension bill does not pass, Koch said.

The mayor said the class of 1,948 recruits that had been scheduled to go into the Police Academy on Jan. 20 would be cut to 600 recruits, and the number of recruits to go into the academy in early summer might also be reduced. He also said some of the approximately 28,000 police jobs may be lost through attrition. "These cops will not be simply secure if there are other problems we have to deal with," Koch said. "We're not able to assure any service from reductions, cops or otherwise."

Under questioning, Koch conceded that he had deliberately linked the onus of reductions in police hiring to the pension bill in an attempt to deter the Legislature from passing the bill.

The police issue also could have been linked to the \$266-million gap in

the city budget as a result of the uncertain status of the sale of the Coliseum site to developer Mortimer Zuckerman, or to the still undetermined revenue loss from the stock market plunge and a slowdown in economic activity.

But, Koch argued, since the Coliseum deal was being held up by the courts, and the economy is not subject to local control, it made sense to put the most dramatic emphasis on the State Legislature because there was a chance to affect the outcome.

"Because they can stop this," Koch said, his voice rising as he was pressed on the linkage of police hiring and the pension bill. "They can't do a goddamn thing about the economy. Nor can I."

A pension bill passed by the Legislature last year was vetoed by Gov. Mario Cuomo. Koch said there would be pressure by legislators to pass a bill this year because they were up for re-election, and pensioners — "They have a lot of time to write letters," Koch noted — and other retirees are considered a strong voting bloc.

Koch said he would have further details of all the cutbacks, including a delay in hiring 130 sanitation workers and a \$500-million savings program in city agencies. His budget proposal will be revealed Feb. 1.



Newsday / Richard Lee

Koch discusses budget uncertainties during a talk at City Hall yesterday.

## Slaying May Be Linked to Probe

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"Whenever anything occurs in the city or outside the city, they throw my client's name into it, and I resent it and that's my quote."

However authorities speculated that the fear that Rotundo had "turned informant" was the most likely cause of his death.

"He's sitting with a fish in his lap,

and this group doesn't look for proof beyond a reasonable doubt," Pagano said.

Because of Rotundo's ability to earn money for the mob and his power in the DeCavalcante family, Pagano said that the execution had to have been authorized by top mob leaders. "To do him in they had to have a sitdown," he said.

Three years ago, Rotundo was indicted by the U.S. Attorney in Manhat-

tan as part of a loan-sharking ring catering to white collar borrowers. The ring was charged with illegally obtaining about \$1.2 million from Teamster pension funds and included a Yonkers Teamster treasurer.

Indicted with Rotundo, who was ultimately acquitted, was movie producer Michael Franzese, 33, of Brookville, L.I. A capo in the Colombo family, Franzese was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Also

indicted, and sentenced to 30 years, was venture capitalist Melvin Cooper, of Cederhurst, L.I., who authorities said, was the brains of the operation.

Rotundo's documented connection with the Colombo family dates to May, 1981, when federal agents raiding Colombo associate Vincent Regina's home found Rotundo at a meeting with a dozen mob figures including Colombo family boss, Carmine Persico Jr.; John Matera, a Miami based Colombo associate who was strong suspected in the slaying of Bonnano family boss Carmine Galante, and Persico's son, Alphonse. The authorities had gone to the house hunting for Carmine Persico's brother, underboss Alphonse (Allie Boy) Persico, who was a fugitive until he was apprehended last month in Connecticut.

"They thought they spotted Allie Boy going into the house so they went in after him, and in the basement they found the meeting," said Michael Pizzi, the chief deputy U.S. marshal who headed the investigation into underbosses disappearance.

Instead, the marshals caught Carmine Persico, and broke up a meeting investigators said was held to settle a drug traffic dispute between New York and Florida mob elements.

## Judge Finds Justice in Mercy

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found by court appointed experts to be suffering from a severe hearing loss and poor understanding of speech, as well as heart disease and arthritis, Heller noted in her decision.

One psychiatric report said Green suffered from "delusional ideas" that her neighbors were harassing her, according to Heller.

"This case is one that requires both compassion for and understanding of the situation of the infirm elderly," said Heller. "The court and the public have been made aware of the psychological effects of loneliness on the elderly as well as the frustrations" that come with illness.

Glen Goldberg, a spokesman for Holtzman, said a misdemeanor plea to the charges wasn't legally possible based on the severity of the

crime originally charged. He added that prosecutors had ultimately offered to take a felony plea demanding only that Green obtain psychiatric care.

"No one wanted this woman to go to jail," said Goldberg. He said the office hadn't decided on whether to appeal the ruling.

Green, who doesn't appear to be a danger to the community, now has a home attendant to handle her day-to-day living problems, said Heller.

## Shulman Warns of Fiscal Woes Ahead

By Joseph W. Queen

Queens Borough President Claire Shulman called education the No. 1 issue facing the city in a generally upbeat State of the Borough address yesterday, but warned of "dark clouds" on the fiscal horizon.

Shulman also declared her feud with Mayor Edward I. Koch over and said she did not expect any repercussions from their previous tiffs over the mayor's housing policies. She said she would join Koch in supporting the new schools chancellor, Richard Green, to "help him [Green] make public education in New York the best in the land."

But, she said, if Koch ever tries to carry out last year's threat to punish the residents of Queens because of a politi-

cal disagreement, "I'll break his head."

Koch reportedly threatened to block an oceanfront housing development Shulman wants for Rockaway Peninsula and replace it with subsidized housing unless Shulman backed a subsidized housing project Koch wanted for the Bronx. Shulman voted for the project, which went before the Board of Estimate Nov. 19.

In an hour-long speech, Shulman told about 250 community leaders at Queens Borough Hall that she believed the Howard Beach attack was not indicative of race relations in the borough. "The tragic death of Michael Griffith reminded us that bigotry and hatred still exist and that the consequences can be devastating," Shulman said. "The

vast majority of our people are committed to living and working together."

The borough president tempered her review of the past year with a signal that the new year could bring tough choices. The stock-market crash and the loss of revenue from diminished development could force cutbacks in city services.

"I am prepared to bite the bullet," she said, "under one condition: No borough and no community should be forced to bear an unfair share of the burden of dealing with the realities of difficult times."

Among the topics covered in her speech were:

**Education.** She said school overcrowding remains a major problem and that the Board of Education seems in-

capable of meeting the need for more classroom space. Another agency, such as the state Dormitory Authority, should have responsibility for building and renovating schools. Design and construction of a comprehensive high school in west Queens and a clinical campus for the CUNY Medical School in Queens are the priorities.

**Homelessness.** Shulman still wants to build apartments for the homeless in Queens and still opposes the mayor's plan to move them from privately owned welfare hotels in Manhattan into subsidized housing she described as "city-owned welfare hotels" in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. The three borough presidents are fighting Koch's plan in court.