

Investigators: Knox prosecutor has controversial history

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By LINDA BYRON / KING 5 News

Video: Prosecutor in Knox case faces charges

Amanda Knox will spend the summer inside an Italian prison, waiting for her trial to resume in September.

Oddly enough, at about that same time, the controversial lead prosecutor in her cases will be headed back to court himself.

As public minister of Perugia, Giuliano Mignini oversaw the investigation into the slaying of British exchange student Meredith Kercher and is leading the charge against Knox in the courtroom.

But Mignini is on trial himself for allegedly abusing his power in 2006, during the investigation into a decades-old murder case. A panel of three Florentine judges are hearing the case and earlier this month decided to call four more witnesses in the fall before issuing a decision. Court dates for Mignini were set for September and October.

Seven couples were killed while making love in the Tuscan hills between the mid 70s and 80s and the killer, dubbed the "Monster of Florence," was never caught. Mignini has been deeply involved in the continuing search for the killer.

"There are many parallels between the Monster of Florence case and the Knox case, I mean there are shocking parallels," said American crime writer Doug Preston.

Preston wrote a book about the Monster of Florence. I interviewed him via Web cam from his home in Maine. Preston says Mignini believes the monster was no lone psychopath, but part of a satanic sect. He suggested an eerily similar motive for Kercher's murder, which took place on November 1, 2007.

"Which is right before the Italian day of the dead, and that this was some kind of satanic ritualistic ceremony that they were engaged in. That they killed Meredith Kercher as part of this satanic ceremony," said Preston.

When a judge rejected that theory as lacking evidence, Mignini dropped it. He says Knox, her boyfriend and a third man killed Kercher during a sex game.

"He decides right up front with almost no evidence based on his gut feeling or intuition that you're guilty and then sets out to prove it," said Preston.

Preston says he experienced something similar when he and Italian journalist Mario Spezi were investigating the monster case between 2001 and 2006.

"And he (Mignini) was irritated that our conclusions were not agreeing with his investigation to the point where he felt that we were actually obstructing his investigation and we therefore must be involved somehow in a conspiracy with the killers, the 'Monster of Florence' murderers," said

Preston.

Much like Knox would be two years later, Preston was interrogated. He says that it was done "in Italian, with no lawyer present, in which Mignini accused me of heinous crimes, demanded that I confess and said that if I didn't he would charge me with perjury and making false statements," said Preston.

Preston fled Italy. He's just re-released "The Monster of Florence" with a new section on Amanda Knox.

"It basically lays out in the clearest terms how innocent Amanda Knox is and how this complete case is a complete travesty of justice," said Preston.

Amanda Knox's father Curt Knox has read the book and finds the parallels disturbing. He said the book frightened him.

"What the individual who is prosecuting may be willing to do to accomplish his objective, whether it creates justice or whether or not it's the truth. It's whether he may win or lose," he said.

Through a series of e-mails I was able to get prosecutor Mignini's side to the story.

Writing in Italian, which I had translated, Mignini denies ever saying that Kercher was the victim of a "sacrificial rite."

As for how Knox was questioned, Mignini explains it this way: He says police questioned her as a witness until evidence came out of her participation in the crime, at which point they stopped.

Mignini says Knox immediately offered him "spontaneous statements" which he collected and which is totally legal.

As for the charges against him Mignini denied any wrongdoing, called it a very strange trial and said that in the end he believes the truth will be confirmed.