

The Independent - October 29, 2010

# Lover convicted of supplying drugs that killed Playboy model

By Guy Adams in Los Angeles

Two of the people who helped supply Anna Nicole Smith with the prescription drugs which killed her were facing prison last night, after an LA court found them guilty of several counts of conspiracy in relation to her death.

Howard K Stern, the former Playboy model's high-profile boyfriend and lawyer was convicted on two charges of illegally helping doctors provide the painkillers which caused her to choke to death on her own vomit in a Florida hotel room almost four years ago.

Ms Smith's former psychiatrist, Khristine Eroshovich, was found guilty of four counts of obtaining medication through fraud by accepting tens of thousands of dollars to prescribe potentially-dangerous drugs to her wealthy client under a false name.

"They were found guilty of conspiracy, rather than of being directly responsible for her death, which of course is less serious. But in a high-profile case, like this, I would expect them to both get jail time," said Steve Cron, a Los Angeles defence lawyer.

A third defendant, the surgically-enhanced victim's doctor, Sandeep Kapoor, was acquitted of six charges of administering excessive quantities of drugs. The jury found Mr Stern not guilty of seven further charges, and Mrs Eroshovich not guilty of two more.

The verdicts, announced yesterday afternoon, end a soap-opera case in which the prosecution alleged that the defendants had "repeatedly and excessively" supplied their 39-year-old client with addictive medications. Adding to its tawdry nature was the fact that all three of the accused were having sexual relations with Ms Smith in the weeks leading up to her death. During testimony, the jury saw photos of them with her in a hot-tub.

After she died in February 2007, Coroners found 11 different substances in Smith's bloodstream, some from empty pill bottles and others from dirty syringes found on the floor near the bed. Several of the medications had been prescribed not to her, but to the defendants, who in one month helped her get hold of 1,500 pills.

In their defence, lawyers for Stern and Eroshovich argued that they only agreed to use fake names on prescriptions to protect Ms Smith from bad publicity. They denied responsibility for feeding her addiction and "enabling" her death.

## **Video: Anna Nicole case - duo convicted**

The guilty verdict may therefore have serious implications for soothsayers trying to predict the

direction of the forthcoming trial of Dr Conrad Murray, the physician responsible for Michael Jackson when he died.

"This verdict underlines the fact that people who work for celebrities, or are their doctors, are going to be treated the same way as people who are not" added Mr Cron. "They cannot bypass normal rules. One of the reasons the DA brought the Anna Nicole case, after what happened to Michael Jackson, was to make that point." Born Vickie Lynn Marshall, Smith shot to fame in 1994 after marrying Texan billionaire Howard Marshall. She was 26 and he was 89. When he died 14 months later, her fight for his inheritance reached the Supreme Court. That battle is still rumbling on. Last month the Supreme Court agreed to hear a fresh challenge to its original verdict, which granted Ms Smith and her descendants almost all of Marshall's \$1.6bn (£1bn) legacy.

### **The accused...**

#### **Guilty: Eroshevich**

Psychiatrist Khristine Eroshevich prescribed a "pharmaceutical suicide" of drugs to Smith. A photo also emerged of her with a naked Smith embracing in a bath.

#### **Guilty: Stern**

Smith wore a wedding dress and exchanged vows and rings with Howard K Stern - her lover, manager and lawyer - but they were never officially married.

#### **Acquitted: Kapoor**

Sandeep Kapoor's relationship with Smith also crossed the boundaries of professionalism, jurors were told. Entries in his journal which said he had been "making out" with Smith were quoted in court.