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Monroeville High School Girl's Ex Found Guilty Of Her Murder

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Mistrial Denied For John Mullarkey, Who Stabbed Gateway Cheerleader Demi Cuccia

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PITTSBURGH -- A young Monroeville man who repeatedly stabbed ex-girlfriend Demi Cuccia after a desperate, daylong exchange of text messages about the status of their relationship was found guilty of first-degree murder Monday.



Demi Cuccia

"My daughter was brutally murdered and nobody deserves to die like that," Gary Cuccia said outside Judge Jeffrey Manning's courtroom, after the verdict was announced.

An Allegheny County jury took about two hours to reach its decision in the case against 20-year-old John Mullarkey, who attacked the 16-year-old Cuccia in her Elliott Road home in August 2007.

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Mullarkey chose not to speak before Manning sentenced him to life in prison with no parole.

"Everybody has to be held accountable for what we do in this life, and I believe he's still got a lot in store for him," Gary Cuccia said.

Deputy District Attorney Mark Tranquilli said the victim, a student at Gateway High School, was stabbed 16 times on the day after her birthday by the man who claimed to love her.

An autopsy showed that, while the Gateway cheerleader was stabbed many times, the wound that killed her was one that was made to her left shoulder and severed an artery.

Cuccia's grandmother, Carole Roberts, told reporters that Mullarkey is a "despicable, evil monster," and the girl's mother, Jodi, said, "I've been critically wounded -- as have my family -- from this horrific tragedy, and the painful scars run long and deep."

Last week, jurors were shown text messages -- including one that said, "You no you love me and can't



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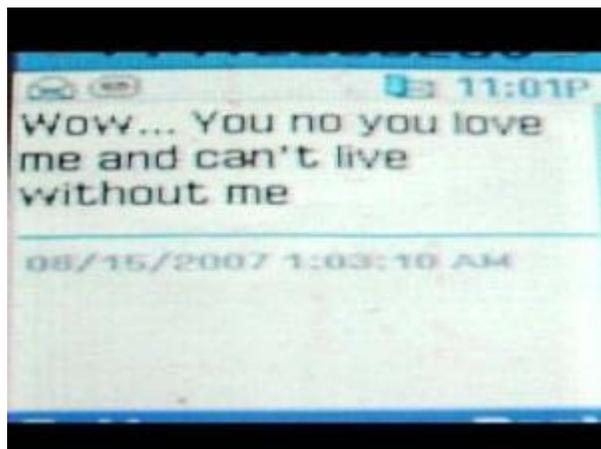
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live without me" -- from the day of Cuccia's slaying and the days leading up to it that revealed the couple's tumultuous relationship.



While defense attorney Bob Stewart acknowledged that Mullarkey stabbed Cuccia, he tried to argue that it was not a premeditated act and that Mullarkey had gone to Cuccia's house with the intention of reuniting.

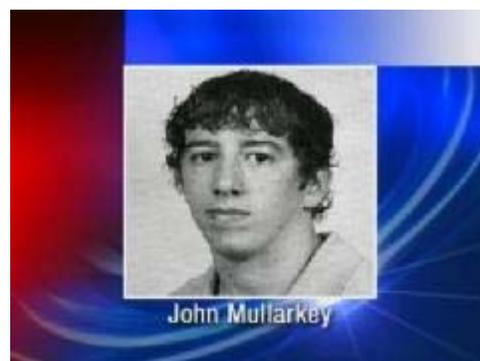
During the trial, Stewart argued that the defendant -- who was 18 at the time -- may have suffered side-effects brought on by the prescription acne drug Accutane.

Manning refused Stewart's request for a mistrial and ruled that the trial was not tainted by a drug company's recent decision to pull Accutane off the market.

"Our family has barely existed these past 22 months since Demi's horrific murder on Aug. 15, 2007," Roberts said. "No punishment, as far as I'm concerned, could ever be severe enough for the deliberate affliction of unspeakable cruelty upon an innocent child."

After the trial, family members announced the creation of the Demi Brae Cuccia Memorial Foundation, which they said will be dedicated to educating teenagers and parents about domestic violence.

"I love you Demi, and we all miss Demi, and hopefully by hearing this tragic story, many lives will be saved," Jodi Cuccia said.



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