

# Jury Convicts Man In Murder Killing Was Over Gambling Debt, State Says

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A jury deliberated for less than two hours on Monday before convicting Stuart Demurjian of stabbing to death a woman whose body he later tied to the bumper of his car and dragged through his north Broward County neighborhood.

After the first-degree murder conviction, Broward Circuit Judge Russell E. Seay Jr. sentenced Demurjian, 32, to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 25 years.

Demurjian, who lived in the 1500 block of Northeast 43rd Court north of Pompano Beach, was accused of killing [Donna Lee \(Rupneck\) Stross](#) in June 1987 over a \$2,600 gambling debt.

Stross, 48, had gone to Demurjian's home to collect the money won through bets on football games, Assistant State Attorney Peter LaPorte said. Her body was found June 15 about a block from the house where Demurjian rented a room.

The Pompano Beach woman had been stabbed six times across the chest, with five of the wounds fatal, LaPorte said. Her nose was broken and she had a head injury, he said.

“She tried to collect ... and it cost her her life,” LaPorte told jurors in closing arguments.

Demurjian stabbed Stross, hid her body in a utility room for more than a day and then dragged the body away after tying it to the bumper of his car, police said. But the body came loose about a block from his house and a neighbor called police when he saw the body.

Eddie Kay, Demurjian's lawyer, told jurors his client “is no weirdo.” Kay argued that the death was justifiable because his client stabbed Stross in self-defense. Kay said

Stross was an alcoholic who had grabbed a knife and threatened his client if he failed to pay the debts.

“No one knows what you`d do when someone is coming at you with a knife,” Kay said.

Kay said his client was “like a zombie” and acted irrationally after the stabbing.

“Someone so dazed, so filled with fear ... I may react after an act is over in a very, very stupid way,” Kay said.

But LaPorte told jurors that the number of wounds belied that defense. Stross was hit in the face and over the head before being stabbed, he said.

“As she lay on the ground unconscious, unable to defend herself in any way, shape or fashion ... this knife was plunged mercilessly into her chest not once, not twice, but six times,” LaPorte said. “You don` t accidentally stab somebody six times ... When you see more than one stab wound, you know the person meant to kill.”