



Baptie hired by Orato!

January 10, 2007 'Citizen journalists' assigned to Pickton trial

By ELIZA BARLOW -- Edmonton Sun

It would amount to sacrilege for most news editors, but Paul Sullivan says he wants "the opposite of objectivity" from the reporters he's assigned to cover the Robert Pickton trial.

"I'm hoping to get a subjective report or series of reports from these two people that talk about their feelings and recollections, as well as the facts that are presented in court," Sullivan told the Sun yesterday.

Sullivan, a former managing editor of the Vancouver Sun, is editor-in-chief of Orato.com, a website devoted to so-called 'citizen journalism.'

The website put out a public request for citizen journalists to write first-person reports on the trial of Pickton, who is accused of killing 26 women, many of them prostitutes who worked the streets of Vancouver.

In response to the requests, two former prostitutes came forward and will be among about 300 reporters covering the murder trial of Pickton.

His trial on six of the murder charges, including the slaying of former Enoch resident Georgina Papin, is slated to begin Jan. 22.

Pauline VanKoll, 42, one of the 'citizen journalists' covering the case for Orato.com, told the Sun she worked the 'stroll' in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for more than 20 years, starting when she was 16, and she knew many of the prostitutes who ended up dead.

VanKoll said she's eager to cover the trial "as somebody that's been there."

She said she wants to let the public "know what kind of people are out there.

"All these guys, they think we don't have feelings. They think we're not human, that we're just objects to be disposed of."

Asked whether she believes Pickton is guilty of the murders, VanKoll said, "I don't think I have any doubt about it. I don't think he was the only one. But as the courts say, they're innocent until proven guilty."

Sullivan didn't have any qualms about VanKoll's freely proclaimed bias, saying he isn't looking for objective news reporting from VanKoll and her fellow citizen journalist, former prostitute Trisha Baptie, 33.

VanKoll and Baptie will not be paid for their stories, but will have expenses such as transportation and lunches covered, said Sullivan.