

FOLDES, Francis, M.D., New York

## Naples, Fla., Becomes a Clinic

# Odor of Medicine Permeates The Coppolino Murder Trial

By Nicholas von Hoffman  
Washington Post Staff Writer

NAPLES, Fla., April 22—  
The murder trial of Dr. Carl  
Coppolino should be held in  
the sanitarium atop the  
Magic Mountain.

For here on the leisure  
land between the swamps  
and the Gulf of Mexico per-  
haps a hundred people are  
marooned in preoccupied  
isolation with the State of  
Florida's contention that the  
doctor did away with his  
wife Carmela by injecting  
her with an overdose of a  
drug called succinyl choline.

Greed for insurance  
money, the State says, was  
the doctor's reason, but that  
emotion is too gross for the  
small group of lawyers, doc-  
tors, jurors, witnesses and  
newsmen left here alone for  
weeks amid the palms and  
beaches to study each other  
in clinical detail.

They inhabit motels with  
names like the Golfing  
Buccaneer and Cove Inn.  
When one of them briefly  
leaves, as E. Lee Bailey,  
the head of the defense,  
does in his Lear jet, the  
rest regard him as a sani-  
tarium patient with a week-  
end pass home and talk  
about him with pride and  
envy for his recovery.

A sense of necrophilia, of  
Lysol and medicine, perme-  
ates the mood. It is less of a  
trial than an untested  
course of treatment con-  
ducted by doctors who are  
by turns quarreling, intro-  
spective, egotistical and ec-  
centric in the way people  
with long and chronic ill-  
nesses become.

### Nibbled Capsules

Everything in this case  
turns on illness, drugs and  
physicians. The dead wom-  
an, the very cells of whose  
tissues are argued about  
every day, was a doctor.  
Her father, Carmelo Muset-  
to, is a New Jersey doctor  
with a bad heart condition,  
such as his former son-in-  
law says caused his daugh-  
ter's death.

Dr. Coppolino himself  
claims a cardiac disease. On  
Thursday morning, he sat in  
the paneled courtroom,  
which resembles the lobby  
of a small private hospital,  
and nibbled nitroglycerine  
capsules until he went limp  
and was helped to his car.

Angina pectoris, the doc-

tor said, but the State main-  
tains he is simulating the  
affliction to collect insur-  
ance payments in order to  
live "la dolce vita," as the  
yellow press hereabouts  
puts it.

Yet there is no dolce vita  
in Naples, no dissipation,  
although you might assume  
there would be in Florida,  
where the rich and degener-  
ate have always come to  
commit their glamorous  
crimes and have their fa-  
mous trials.

Here, however, there are  
orchids, old people in Rolls-  
Royces by the seashore  
palms, rich silence, the low  
arc of golf balls and the  
irrelevances of the chronic-  
ally ill talking about the  
dead.

### Bio-Medical Feat

The drug, which it is said  
Dr. Coppolino injected into  
his wife, is an ordinary one  
in the pharmacopoeia of the  
doctor's specialty, anesthe-  
siology. It is composed of two  
substances, succinic acid  
and choline, which can be  
found in every human body,  
so proving a person died of  
an overdose of it is a bio-  
medical feat.

The doctors for the pro-  
secution say they have per-  
formed it with newly de-  
vised tests, but those for the  
defense think not. The  
quarrel is carried on over  
cadavers, tissue slices, radio-  
active isotopes and the slic-  
ing, grinding, washing and  
electroscopy of research  
biology.

On Friday, Dr. Francis  
Foldes, chief of anesthe-  
siology at New York's Monte-  
fiore Hospital, was testifying  
for the defense, denying  
the validity of the opposi-  
tion scientists' findings. Dr.  
Foldes is a Hungarian, but  
his accent and manner are  
almost a caricature of the  
Teutonic scientist in the  
comic books.

"Parallel to this hydroly-  
sis in human alkaloid break-  
down . . . I think that Dr.  
Meyer in Vienna and others  
have all agreed . . . Let's  
assume this correspondence  
to limpids, neutral fats, now  
if a compound is soluble in  
limpids," he lectured so that  
the prosecuting attorney  
had to ask the judge to  
make him stop talking.

Listening to him in the  
small courtroom was his  
medical foe, Dr. Valentino

Mazzia, chief of anesthe-  
siology at NYU's Medical Cen-  
ter. "Foldes is better thought  
of in the research field than  
I am," he whispered, "but  
I have a higher position."

Foldes continued, taken  
up with the struggle, per-  
sonal, professional and scien-  
tific, held by the moment's  
exigency as happens in the  
isolation of a sanitarium.  
"A semi-quantitative method  
... a very, micro method . . .  
Dr. Smith injected the rats,  
he cut up the brain, he  
ground it up. No one in my  
position can do every experi-  
ment personally. It's a joint  
venture."

Dr. Mazzia smiled at his  
opposing colleague and  
whispered, "He shouldn't  
have used rats. The closest  
you can come to humans is  
apes. He should have used a  
chimpanzee."

The prosecutor began  
ridiculing Dr. Foldes, teas-  
ing him about a reprint of  
a research paper he'd writ-  
ten 30 years ago on the ben-  
efits of hydro-underwater  
massage. "It's good for  
overweight, good for hys-  
terics, and good also for  
kidney disease and liver dis-  
eases?"

"No!" the doctor replied,  
angry at not being able to  
defend himself, "I have  
changed my mind a lot of  
times since I was 26 years  
old, I'll change it a lot  
more."

"Calm down, calm down,"  
the other doctor soothed  
the Hungarian. "I'll tell you

what I'm going to do for  
you."

"Get me three fresh brains  
for \$500 if you want to do  
something for me."

"I'll get them for you for  
nothing," said Dr. Mazzia,  
trying to placate the older  
and more eminent man.

Down from the Magic  
Mountain, the world goes  
on, but here in the sanitari-  
um, Dr. Coppolino, free on  
bail, eats in the resort res-  
taurants and makes med  
school jokes about the elec-  
tric chair. "You can be  
sure," he says behind his  
sunglasses, "if it's Westing-  
house."

Wash.  
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