

Murder victim Helen Dansie's son and friend tell Adelaide court of ongoing grief

By court reporter Meagan Dillon

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Murder victim Helen Dansie lived two lives — one with her "socially clumsy" killer husband, and another with her loving family and friends.

The 67-year-old was murdered when her husband, Peter Rex Dansie, pushed her wheelchair into a pond at Veale Gardens, in the Adelaide Parklands, in April 2017.

Today, friends and family of Helen Dansie prepared victim impact statements for Supreme Court Justice David Lovell, who will sentence her husband for murder later this month.

The 70-year-old was found guilty in December and faces life imprisonment with a minimum non-parole period of 20 years.

Eugenia Giorgio told the court that Ms Dansie — who suffered a stroke in the 1990s — loved her son, family, friends, cats and gardening.

"Helen's family home was ordered and well cared for with a lovely garden. Helen loved being there," she said.

"She enjoyed the company of her mother, brother, cousins and extended family and friends, who always treated Helen like royalty.

"Going to visit her family home was pleasurable. It was pleasurable respite for Helen — away from the disorganised, cluttered, grubby and difficult Waterfall Gully house.

"Helen's family loved and respected her — she was smart, funny, a cat-and-garden-loving big sister."

Ms Giorgio said she had always respected her friend's loyalty to Peter Dansie, despite his shortcomings as a husband and father.

She said Ms Dansie asked her to become involved in helping raise the couple's son Grant — who was 13 years old when his mother had her stroke — because she understood her husband's social and parental "limitations".

Ms Giorgio said Dansie kept his wife and son separate from his extended family, and some of his siblings had never even met his son.

"It was like Helen had two separate lives — one with Peter and his family, and another with Grant and their family and friends," she said.



PHOTO: Helen Dansie was murdered in April 2017. (Supplied)

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Key points:

- Peter Rex Dansie will be sentenced for murder later this month
- He was found guilty of killing his wife by pushing her wheelchair into a pond
- The couple's son says his mother did all she could to protect him from his father

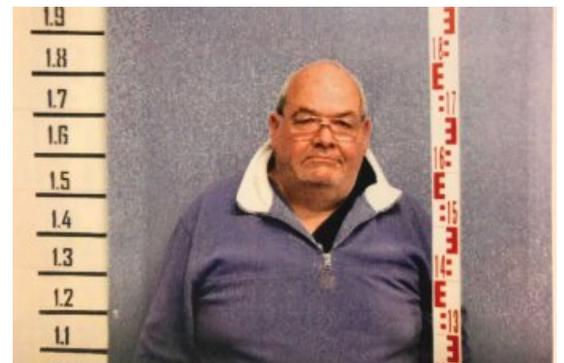


PHOTO: Peter Rex Dansie will be sentenced later this month. (Supplied: Courts SA)

"Helen was a very social person, with a lot of friends, strong family and a strong community spirit.

"Peter was socially clumsy and did not have family support. Helen wanted to help Peter."

Family sought to remove Dansie as his wife's guardian

Prosecutor Jim Pearce QC read a statement from the couple's son, who said his mother "fell through the cracks" of a system that was designed to protect her.

"My mum and I were extremely close. Peter Dansie's heinous actions have taken her away from me," Grant Dansie wrote.

"Mum was always there for me, she did whatever she could to ensure I had a good life, to protect me from Peter Dansie.

"Unfortunately, I was unable to protect her."

Ms Giorgio said there were numerous hearings before the Guardianship Board and South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) to discuss the welfare of Helen Dansie following her stroke.

She said she and Grant Dansie sought to have Peter Dansie removed as her guardian.



PHOTO: The pond where Helen Dansie was murdered. (ABC News: Loukas Fouten)

"Peter frequently attacked me, making somewhat bizarre, irrelevant and personal allegations against me," Ms Giorgio said.

"It's as though Peter saw himself being in contest with me — I could see Helen cringe and curl up more when that happened."

Ms Giorgio said Dansie did not meet his obligations as his wife's appointed guardian and administrator.

"He had total control and responsibility for her money since his appointment in 2006. Peter did not respect Helen's close relationship with her family and with me," she said.

"The system to protect Helen couldn't work — Peter always had the freedom to make decisions and choices, Helen didn't.



PHOTO: Dansie in the Adelaide parklands near the spot he drowned his wife in a pond. (ABC News: Meagan Dillon)

Ms Giorgio said her friend's husband "had a loud, roaring voice, and Helen had barely a squeak".

"Helen needed an advocate during her life, and she asked me to be that, and now I have to be her advocate in death too," she said.

"I feel compelled to explain to you the Helen we fought for. Helen the mother, grandmother, daughter, sister and friend — not just a stroke victim.

"Peter Dansie was the worst person to be given the responsibility to care for Helen's welfare — he was close to Helen by marriage but he understood her the least."

Dansie's lawyer Greg Mead SC told the court that after years of hearings, SACAT did not remove his client as Helen Dansie's guardian, except to appoint the Public Advocate as a joint guardian.