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Motives simple, prosecutors say of double slaying

By Carlos Santos

Times-Dispatch state staff

BEDFORD — Elizabeth Haysom and Jens Soering were once inseparable, but they now languish in different jails on different continents, awaiting the conclusion of a twisted series of events that took them from rarefied heights as Echols Scholars at the University of Virginia to suspects in a gruesome double homicide.

The couple, described by friends as introspective, intelligent and marked for success, are charged in the April 1985 knifing deaths of Ms. Haysom's parents, Nancy and Derek Haysom.

The two seem to be unlikely murder suspects. Soering is the son of a West German consul and was on a full scholarship at U.Va. at the time of the killings.

He is an accomplished fencer and a native of West Germany who has traveled around the world with his father. He had advanced so quickly academically that he went directly from high school to being a second-year student at U.Va.

Ms. Haysom, a Canadian citizen, is an accomplished cellist and pianist who attended schools in England. She is related through her mother to Lady Astor, the first woman to serve in the British House of Commons.

Prosecutors believe the motives for the killings were as uncomplicated as they are commonplace: love and money.

Ms. Haysom, who is charged with two counts of first-degree murder, is awaiting trial in the tiny Bedford County jail, not far from the simple Boonsboro cottage where her wealthy parents were killed just over two years ago.

"She's being treated like everybody else," said Bedford Sheriff Carl Wells. "She's in there with everybody else."

Wells said Ms. Haysom has had visitors, but he refused to discuss them.

A trial date may be set for the 26-year-old woman at a Bedford Circuit Court hearing Friday, when her court-appointed lawyers are expected to file several motions.

"We've only had preliminary talks," J.M. Jones III, one of her two

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— Dr. Howard Haysom

lawyers, said. "We're in the process of preparing for the hearing."

Ms. Haysom, a pale, thin woman with light brown hair, has six siblings, but she is not getting any money from her family for her defense.

"We are not going to provide her with any material assistance," her older brother, Dr. Howard Haysom of Houston, has said. "What she needs is spiritual assistance."

Soering, her 20-year-old boyfriend, is in Brixton Prison in London, where he is in solitary confinement in a special section reserved for those charged with murder.

The slightly built youth, who wears thick horn-rimmed glasses, "is doing well given his incarceration," said his British lawyer, Richard Spenser. Soering has been held in jail for slightly more than a year.

Soering, who is undergoing mental and medical evaluations, has an extradition hearing set in Bow Street Magistrate Court in London for June 16 and 17. He is expected to contest extradition to the United States, which sought the hearing.

Nevertheless, details of the brutal slayings are expected to come out at the hearing.

Even if extenuating circumstances, such as mental or medical problems, are presented at the hearing, authorities believe they will be irrelevant. "We're not here to punish him but to extradite him" Scotland Yard Detective William Cutts said.

The West German government, apparently acting on behalf of Soering's father, Klaus Soering, a West German

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consul stationed in Detroit, has twice failed in its attempts to extradite the younger Soering. Soering faces a capital murder charge in the United States.

The Haysom family has protested the West German government's intervention. Klaus Soering refused to comment on the case.

Ms. Haysom and Soering left the country about six months after the killings and shortly after university police began questioning them. Their erratic journey took them from Thailand through Europe and eventually to England. It ended with their arrest in London on unrelated charges last May.

There they were convicted of a bank fraud in which they swindled about £10,000, about \$16,000, in a check scheme, Cutts said. They served about eight months in jail on the convictions before extradition proceedings were started.

Cutts, who has handled the case for Scotland Yard and who has met with the couple numerous times, said the two have different personalities.

"Soering is a very intelligent man. He comes across with a high-brow intellect. He's very sullen, though being in jail so long could make him that way.

"She, however, has always seemed to be quite cheerful. Quite friendly."

Ms. Haysom and Soering were Echols Scholars in 1985, an honor held by a select group of students who must be in the top 5 percent academically of the entering class. The couple met at U.Va.

Friends said the two were unhappy at the university but happy in their relationship. "Their main goal is they wanted happiness and to be with each other," a former roommate said.

But apparently their happiness was threatened by Ms. Haysom's parents, who disapproved of the relationship.



Elizabeth Haysom

Shown following extradition

authorities have said. There were also arguments over the amount of allowance Ms. Haysom's parents gave her.

Prosecutors contend that the disapproval, coupled with a desire for Ms. Haysom's inheritance money to finance their independence, led to the killings.

Nancy Astor Haysom, 52, and Derek Haysom, 72, had moved to Boonsboro from Nova Scotia in 1983.

They purchased a six-room cottage in the rural area of Bedford County just outside Lynchburg as a retirement home.

Haysom, a South African native, was the president of Nova Scotia's largest steel company in the early 1970s. His wife was a native of Lynchburg.

Prosecutors at Elizabeth Haysom's extradition hearing, using statements she gave to police, contend that she and Soering checked in to a Washing-



Jens Soering

Photo from U.Va. yearbook

ton hotel on the weekend of the killings. They bought movie tickets, which the prosecutors say was an attempt to establish an alibi.

The prosecutors claim Soering then drove to Boonsboro and killed the Haysoms.

"Why don't my parents just lay down and die?" Ms. Haysom had written to Soering in a letter that was read at her extradition hearing. "Would it be possible to hypnotize my parents, to do voodoo to them, to will them to death?"

"Jens was going to confront my parents about their attitude toward our relationship," Ms. Haysom told police in a statement read at the April 15 extradition hearing. "He went down there with the knife and the possibility of killing them. I simply didn't think he would do it."

Hundreds of photographs were taken of the crime scene and showed that the deaths were bloody and violent.

Mrs. Haysom was found sprawled in the kitchen, dressed in a nightgown. The kitchen table, which was splattered with blood, had been set for three people to eat dinner, the photos showed.

Mrs. Haysom's throat had been slit and she had been stabbed numerous times. She had also been wounded on her hand, apparently as she attempted to defend herself.

Haysom, dressed in T-shirt and pants, was found in the living room, on his side near a fireplace. He had also been stabbed numerous times and had his throat cut and his face and arms slashed.

Blood was found throughout the kitchen, living room and bathroom. A screen door was also coated with blood. Puddles of blood in the kitchen and living room had been walked in and in places appeared strangely swirled, the photos showed.

Both Ms. Haysom and Soering left the country only several days before police were to have taken footprints and blood samples from Soering. Three types of blood were found at the slaying scene, authorities have said.

Ms. Haysom voluntarily allowed police to take her footprints and blood samples.

After the arrest of the couple in England, London's Fleet Street tabloids trumpeted the killings as the work of voodoo and the occult, but no evidence has surfaced to confirm it.

Sheriff Wells has described the killings as so gruesome and bizarre that he at first suspected a cult slaying.

While Ms. Haysom's lawyers work to piece together a defense for their client, Soering's relatives are still quietly working through diplomatic channels to halt the extradition, Cutts said.

But he thinks it will be to no avail. "I believe the decision has been made that the first choice goes to the United States."

File photos