

Dulos custody case filing questions grandmother's mental health

By Lisa Backus



Jennifer Farber Dulos was perhaps suffering from mental illness when she disappeared and possibly vanished to get back at her estranged husband much like the main character in the novel 'Gone Girl.'

— *Norm Pattis*



Fotis Dulos, center, is accompanied by his attorneys Norm Pattis, left, and Rich Rochlin after making an appearance at Connecticut Superior Court in Stamford, Conn. Wednesday, June 26, 2019.

An attorney representing Fotis Dulos in his divorce and custody battle is seeking a mental health evaluation for Gloria Farber who has been caring for her grandchildren since their mother disappeared.

In a motion filed in Stamford family court Thursday, attorney

Rich Rochlin contends that Farber, 85, has had mental health issues in the past and should be evaluated as she is seeking permanent custody of her daughter's five children.

Rochlin also contends that Farber is paying her attorneys exorbitant fees to "make

scurrilous remarks about Mr. Dulos in unrelated civil proceedings” in lawsuits she has filed against him.

Farber previously funded her daughter’s divorce attorney Reuben Midler “to the tune of \$69,000 a month” to fight Fotis Dulos in the proceedings and in custody matters, Rochlin claims. “This pathology should also be explored in the course of the (psychological) evaluation and its potential impact on the children,” Rochlin said.

Rochlin is also asking that the children’s guardian ad litem and a court evaluator review her current and past psychiatric records.

His motion is one more salvo in civil and family court proceedings that have become increasingly tense since Jennifer Farber Dulos disappeared on May 24. Attorney Anne Dranginis, who is representing Farber after she applied for intervener status in the divorce, filed a motion earlier this week claiming Fotis Dulos is using his children as “pawns” to make him appear more palatable to the public.

Fotis Dulos, 52, and his girlfriend, Michelle Troconis, 44, were charged on June 2 with tampering with evidence and hindering prosecution in connection with the disappearance of his estranged wife. Fotis Dulos and Jennifer Farber Dulos were embroiled in

a two-year contentious divorce when she went missing the morning of May 24.

Based on blood and blood splatter found in the New Canaan home Jennifer Dulos rented after leaving her husband in 2017, investigators concluded she was likely the victim of a “serious” physical assault, according to arrest warrants.

A New Canaan probate court granted Farber temporary custody of the five children, ages 13 to 8, while Fotis Dulos was being held on bond during the criminal proceedings.

Farber sought and obtained intervener status in the divorce so she could file for permanent custody of the children. Additionally, Farber is suing Fotis Dulos for \$2.5 million in what her attorney claims are unpaid loans made to his real estate business the Fore Group.

Farber’s attorney in the lawsuit, Richard Weinstein, filed a motion earlier this week to inspect the finances of Fotis Dulos on the grounds he was now seeking custody of the children but hasn’t paid child support in two years.

Weinstein filed the motion after Rochlin sought to have two of the children, twin boys age 13, receive their own attorney in the custody proceedings and to have all medical and school records turned over to his client.

The intense legal maneuverings are playing out against the backdrop of the search for Jennifer Farber Dulos, which has entered its fourth month, and the criminal case against Fotis Dulos.

He and Troconis were charged after New Canaan police found videos of the pair dumping at least two garbage bags that contained items stained with the blood of Jennifer Farber Dulos on the night she was reported missing, arrest warrants said.

Attorney Norm Pattis, who is representing Fotis Dulos in the criminal case, has posited that Jennifer Farber Dulos was perhaps suffering from mental illness when she disappeared and possibly vanished to get back at her estranged husband much like the main character in the novel “Gone Girl.”

Pattis has sought to have a confidential psychological evaluation done on the family as part of the divorce proceedings earlier this year entered into as evidence in the criminal case. Rochlin referred to the report in his filing Thursday saying that Jennifer Farber Dulos’ divorce attorney “fought like a lion” to prevent the evaluation from “coming into evidence.”

Rochlin contends that Farber’s mental health is playing into her daughter’s attorneys’ attempts to wage a “continued strategy of complete and total war against Mr. Dulos.”

Fotis Dulos has been denied access to the children as the criminal case proceeded on the ruling of the probate court. He previously had limited supervised visits with the children due to his behavior during the divorce, Dranginis said.

Rochlin said his client's parental rights have not been terminated and he is presumed innocent of the criminal charges. A motion submitted by Pattis to dismiss the charges is waiting to be addressed by a judge. ■