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Candid report: 'There was no reason for it'

By Don Martinez

"I killed Judith Williamson by stabbing her with a knife in 1963. There was no reason for it. I do not know what payoff I was to get for doing this," says Joe Egenberger in an 11-page probation report.

"I was wholly responsible," the 33-year-old computer programmer admits in the report filed today with Superior Court Judge Hugh Koford in Alameda County. "She bears no burden of having wronged or provoked me."

Koford today sentenced Egenberger to a state prison term of 10 years to life after denying a defense motion for probation.

Lincoln Mintz, Egenberger's lawyer, made an impassioned plea that in the case of his client "justice will be best served by placing Mr. Egenberger on 20 years' probation."

He noted that Egenberger had spent 14½ years in "self-punishment and isolation" before giving himself up last November, and during that time had been in "a productive position in society."

"He doesn't constitute a public danger," Mintz asserted.

A remarkable series of exchanges followed.

Koford: "He's just as nice a boy now as he was in 1963 when he stabbed Judy Williamson 17 times. Mr. Egenberger confessed for the purpose of punishment — of cleansing himself, that's what est is about."

(The judge referred to the behavioral modification organization known as est, which Egenberger credited with turning him around and facing up to his crime.)

After declaring that Egenberger therefore "needs punishment," he turned to him and said: "What do you think?"

Egenberger calmly replied: "I

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