

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

CASE NO. 23-02935-CF

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

TOMASZ KOSOWSKI,

Defendant.

VIDEOCONFERENCE LOIS COZZI
DEPOSITION OF:

DATE TAKEN: August 2, 2024

TIME: 10:18 a.m. to 10:47 a.m.

PLACE: Via Zoom

STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED BY:
Tami Cline, RMR, CRR
Notary Public, State of Florida at Large

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C O N T E N T S

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E X H I B I T S

(None)

1 The deposition of LOIS COZZI was taken
2 pursuant to notice by counsel for the Defendant on
3 the 2nd day of August, 2024, commencing at
4 10:18 a.m., via Zoom videoconference. Said
5 deposition was stenographically reported by Tami
6 Cline, RMR, CRR, Notary Public, State of Florida at
7 Large.

8 - - - - -

9 LOIS COZZI,
10 a witness, having been duly sworn to tell the truth,
11 was examined and testified upon her oath as follows:

12 THE WITNESS: I do.

13 DIRECT EXAMINATION

14 BY MR. BRUNVAND:

15 Q. Mrs. Cozzi, this is Bjorn Brunvand. As you
16 know, I represent Tom Kosowski. Present via the
17 Zoom deposition and in person where you are is
18 Nathan Vonderheide. Also from my office is Willengy
19 Ramos Wicks, who's present via video as well. Could
20 you please state your full name?

21 A. Lois Ruth Cozzi.

22 Q. And you are the mother of Steven Cozzi; is
23 that correct?

24 A. That is correct.

25 Q. All right. Before we start the deposition, I

1 just want to tell you that it's not my intent to
2 cause you any more harm or grief. That's not my
3 intent, but I do have to ask you some questions.
4 And I'll ask those, and then you'll be able to be on
5 your way. Is that okay?

6 A. That's okay.

7 Q. All right. Could you tell us, when was
8 Steven Cozzi born and where was he born?

9 A. He was born May 12, 1981, in Derry, New
10 Hampshire.

11 Q. Okay. And did you raise him in New
12 Hampshire? Was that where he spent most of his
13 teenage and childhood years?

14 A. His childhood, yes. We moved when he was
15 going into eighth grade. We moved to Virginia.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Now, how did he do as a
17 child and as a teenager? Was he a good student?

18 A. He was a very good student. He was always an
19 excellent student. He had health issues that
20 sometimes kept him out of school for a while because
21 he had asthma, but he dealt with that. And he was
22 pretty much all -- all honor roll, all AP program.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Did he have any siblings?

24 A. He has one brother.

25 Q. Older or younger?

1 A. Four years older.

2 Q. Okay. And I understand that at some point he
3 moved to New York City; is that correct?

4 A. That was after college. Yes, when he
5 graduated from VCU in Richmond, he went to New York
6 City to pursue an acting career.

7 Q. Okay. And what was he doing in New York City
8 when he was pursuing the acting career? Did he do
9 acting or --

10 A. He worked actually in wardrobe on several
11 shows. He worked on Mama Mia, you know, very well
12 known shows.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. He did a lot of that. So he was involved in
15 theater but not on stage.

16 Q. Okay. What about during his high school
17 years and college years, was acting an interest
18 during that time period as well?

19 A. Very much so.

20 Q. Okay. All right. So that sort of was a
21 dream?

22 A. Yeah. That's where he -- he enjoyed it. He
23 was extremely, like, at improv and that kind of
24 thing, so...

25 Q. Okay. All right. So he sort of got his foot

1 in the door in the big theaters into New York City.

2 That's impressive.

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. Tell me about -- I understand that he had a
5 friend in New York City that he lived with?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And do you recall that person's name?

8 A. Brian Whisnant.

9 Q. How do you spell the last name?

10 A. W-h-i-s-n-a-n-t.

11 Q. Okay. And how long did the two of them live
12 together?

13 A. I'm not really sure. It was a couple of
14 years.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. You know, they -- apartments are expensive in
17 New York.

18 Q. I bet. I bet. Were they both roommates and
19 in a relationship or just roommates?

20 A. I think there was some relationship there and
21 that kind of thing, but I was in Virginia. They
22 were in New York, so I did not get to be involved.

23 Q. Okay. All right. I understand from your
24 husband that you and Steven were closer than he and
25 Steven. I mean, you both loved Steven, but that you

1 had a closer relationship with him. Is that fair?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yeah. We shared more interests.

5 Q. Okay. All right. And I understand there was
6 a time while he was living in New York City where
7 you and your husband had to travel to New York City
8 to get Steven and take him out of New York City.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Tell us about that. What led up to that?
11 And tell us about the circumstances surrounding
12 that.

13 A. I think he had come a lot to the realization
14 that there wasn't much future in what he was doing
15 in the theater, and I also -- he and Brian got into
16 a lot of arguments because Brian was having issues
17 with drugs. And it was just -- he and I were
18 talking one day, and we decided it was best that he
19 come home and reposition his life.

20 Q. Okay. Do you know what kind of drugs Brian
21 had issues with?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. But Steven would tell you that he
24 had -- that Brian had issues with drugs?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Did the problems in New York City also
2 involve domestic violence?

3 A. I think at one time Brian struck him.

4 Q. Okay. Do you know if law enforcement was
5 called at that time?

6 A. I don't believe so, but I'm not sure.

7 Q. Okay. So when you go to get Steven from New
8 York City, was it at his request?

9 A. It was a mutual agreement between him and I.
10 We talked about it.

11 Q. Okay. All right. So it sounds to me like
12 you felt like it would be in his best interest and
13 he agreed or was it the other way around?

14 A. You know, I can't recall the discussion well
15 enough to say precisely.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. We often thought along the same thought
18 stream, so it would be hard for me to say
19 specifically who did what.

20 Q. Okay. Do you know if Steven, during that
21 time period in New York City, do you know if he was
22 using any drugs?

23 A. He says he was not, and I believe him.

24 Q. Okay. All right. And do you know whether or
25 not he was using alcohol to excess during that time

1 period?

2 A. He was drinking more than he should.

3 Q. Okay. All right.

4 A. That's the mother speaking.

5 Q. Sure. Sure. I have had that discussion with
6 loved ones as well, so I understand.

7 So when you brought him back home to live
8 with you and your husband in Virginia, did it become
9 apparent to you that consumption of alcohol was a
10 problem for Steven at that time?

11 A. Yes, it did.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. We talked about it and what he should do
14 about it.

15 Q. Okay. How did it manifest itself? What did
16 you observe that made you feel that this is too
17 much?

18 A. He would -- we would buy a bottle of wine to
19 have with dinner, and he would drink the whole
20 bottle of wine before dinner.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Did he get in any troubles
22 as far as with the legal system?

23 A. Not that I know of.

24 Q. Okay. What about employment, did it affect
25 his employment?

1 A. No. He was always -- showed up for work,
2 whatever his job was at the time, and everything
3 like that.

4 Q. Okay. How would you describe if he was -- I
5 assume you witnessed him drunk from time to time?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. How would you describe him? Was he a happy
8 drunk? A mad drunk? Sad drunk? If you could put a
9 description on it.

10 A. Very cheerful drunk.

11 Q. Cheerful drunk. Okay.

12 A. Generally complimenting people.

13 Q. Okay. Repeatedly maybe sometimes?

14 A. "Awsome apple pie" 12 times, yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So did you have -- were you involved
16 in discussing with him the idea of maybe ending his
17 relationship with alcohol?

18 A. We talked about it. I didn't -- it would
19 come up. Yeah, it would come up. And I think he
20 needed an impetus to make the final decision, which
21 happened when we moved down to Florida and he
22 started law school. "Wait, I can't do this and
23 drink." He figured that out.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. And is that when he became
25 involved with AA?

1 A. That's when he became involved with AA and he
2 began -- and later he was mentoring people, and he
3 was very committed to that. And, fortunately, he
4 fell back into running, of all things, which he
5 started in junior high school. So he was big into
6 doing a lot of running too.

7 Q. Okay. He was -- running is a substitute for
8 drinking, it sounds like, and then AA was helping
9 out?

10 A. AA was helping, and he made the commitment.
11 And I was very proud of him for that.

12 Q. Okay. And he maintained that commitment, I
13 think, going --

14 A. Absolutely. He didn't fall back. Once he
15 made the decision, he didn't fall back, which is how
16 Steven made decisions anyway.

17 Q. And the period of sobriety was about ten
18 years, I believe?

19 A. About that, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. And during that time period, did you
21 ever see him drink?

22 A. Nope.

23 Q. Okay. There's been some testimony that
24 Steven also struggled with some anxiety. What can
25 you tell us about that?

1 A. I think it was -- Steven liked to be really
2 good at what he did.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. He always strove to be extremely good, and he
5 often -- he did not like to let people down. So,
6 like, he would be a little anxious if he didn't do
7 something well enough that it would make more work
8 for Jake. Or that he hadn't -- that he was doing
9 something that might be hurting somebody else. So
10 those are the kind of things that gave him anxiety
11 was not fulfilling his own expectations.

12 Q. Okay. Okay. Was his anxiety, did it ever
13 get to the point of requiring medication or do you
14 know?

15 A. Michael mentioned to me once that Steven was
16 taking some medication.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But it was not while he was living at home
19 with us.

20 Q. Okay. I see. I see. When your husband
21 first spoke with law enforcement back on March 21st
22 of 2023 when they were conducting their missing
23 person investigation, you know, he mentioned the
24 possibility of maybe having -- Steven having
25 relapsed and that maybe that was an explanation for

1 him -- his missing at the time. Were you aware of
2 that?

3 A. He mentioned that to me later, and, actually,
4 you know, it's based on the experience with his
5 mother who did relapse constantly. So that would be
6 something he would think of. And we didn't think it
7 was likely, but, you know, they're asking you can
8 you think of anything, and you're desperate at that
9 point, so...

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. That is one thing we have to say. You know,
12 it might be a 1 in 2,000 chance, but it's a
13 possibility.

14 Q. It was -- he had also mentioned the
15 possibility of maybe another relationship. Had you
16 ever seen any indication that that could be the
17 case?

18 A. Not once he met Michael, no.

19 Q. Okay. All right.

20 A. He had no interest in anybody else after
21 that. That was clear by the second date they had.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. They were meant to be together.

24 Q. Okay. Did your husband -- did you know that
25 your husband had mentioned that as maybe a

1 possibility?

2 A. Yeah. We talked about it afterwards, because
3 I -- I was at home. I hadn't -- I had sent him when
4 Michael told us something bad had happened. I
5 couldn't drive because I had eye surgery and I
6 couldn't see. And the -- and I figured that, you
7 know, if an accident happened -- let's say he had
8 fallen and hit his head or something like that. He
9 could call home once he figured out where he was or
10 something like that if -- you know, we knew very
11 little at that time other than Steven was missing.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. And, you know, it's just -- you try to think
14 of everything, you know.

15 Q. Sure. Sure. I understand.

16 A. We talked about it afterwards, too. And, you
17 know, we didn't know for several days what actually
18 occurred, so, you know, we were constantly
19 discussing what was going on.

20 Q. I understand. I understand. Did you ever
21 witness or were you ever told that Steven would have
22 panic attacks?

23 A. I wouldn't call them all-out panic attacks.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But there were times when he felt things were

1 a little overwhelming.

2 Q. Sure.

3 A. And I think it was more part of the -- again,
4 his attempt to be the best he could be, sometimes
5 that will overwhelm you and that kind of thing. He
6 would call me when something like that was going on
7 when he was upset like that. And we would talk it
8 through, and he would get settled and we come up
9 with a game plan and he would be fine.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. So were you sort of the person
11 he would go to frequently when he was having these
12 type of issues?

13 A. Yeah. I was pretty much his first call.

14 Q. Okay. And how often would you say these type
15 of calls would take place?

16 A. Pretty rare.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Pretty rare. Maybe once a year.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. You know, maybe -- you know, stressful times,
21 you know, coming up on the bar exam, stuff like
22 that, really stressful stuff.

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. You know, he would call and we'd talk. And
25 sometimes he would call because he felt he would be

1 nervous about something and he just wanted to talk
2 about it too, I mean.

3 Q. Sure. Sure. Was there ever a time when
4 Steve told you that he did not want to be a lawyer
5 anymore, that he was dissatisfied with being a
6 lawyer?

7 A. I think we talked a few times on that and it
8 would be -- it would be -- you know, he had the
9 point where he said, "Oh, man, this is hard work.
10 Maybe I made a wrong choice." And then he would be
11 back fine. I think we all go through that with any
12 career you go through that.

13 He did talk at one point that he thought he
14 would like to get into politics but -- and I think
15 the reality was, you know, he enjoyed being a lawyer
16 and he enjoyed working with Jake. And, you know, he
17 had talked about, you know, big firms versus small
18 firms and he preferred a small firm and a close
19 partnership thing, so -- which is much more suited
20 to his personality.

21 Q. Okay. I believe Michael Montgomery has
22 indicated at one point possibly that Steve could be
23 a scatterbrain at times and frequently forgetting
24 his wallet and keys. What are your thoughts on
25 that? Is that accurate?

1 A. He had 12 thoughts running around in his head
2 and had three books he was reading. And he was,
3 like, "oh, I have to run out the door" and, you
4 know, he'd forget his pants. I don't know. It was
5 just -- yeah, so he was like that. That's something
6 his mother does too.

7 Q. Something that --

8 A. Not something of normal people.

9 Q. It's something that a lot of us are guilty
10 of.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. The -- you had indicated, you know, that
13 initially -- well, it's a missing person
14 investigation, and then at some point you're advised
15 that it's changed and that someone has been arrested
16 for murder. Tell us -- tell us about how that came
17 about.

18 A. It was Sunday morning, 5:00. Michael called
19 us. I think it was a Sunday morning. And told us
20 to come over, and we did. And the police had been
21 by the house and told Michael that they had arrested
22 Kosowski for Steven's murder.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. That was incredibly painful.

25 Q. Were you at Michael's home when he told you

1 this?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Did --

4 A. Just held on to Michael and cried. George
5 was in just shock.

6 Q. All right. Must have been very difficult.

7 A. Incredible.

8 Q. Did -- was there any details about how law
9 enforcement believed he had been murdered?

10 A. Not at that point. We got more information
11 later.

12 Q. Okay. When is it that you get more
13 information from law enforcement?

14 A. I can't really remember that. It's a -- you
15 know, it's hard to remember all the sequences of
16 things and who specifically who told us different
17 things at different times. And we did get more from
18 the detectives later. Again, I don't remember the
19 specifics of who told us what when.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It was --

22 Q. Generally do you recall what they told you
23 about what they believed had happened as far as what
24 their -- what their theory is? I mean, no one
25 witnessed a murder, right?

1 A. Yeah. Their theory, what they told us is
2 they believed that Steven was killed in a bathroom
3 and dragged out to the parking lot, put in a trunk,
4 taken to Kosowski's house, transferred to Kosowski's
5 car and then driven somewhere, somewhere. I think
6 to Miami and back or maybe on the way to Miami. I
7 don't have that really clear.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And that his body was disposed of.

10 Q. Okay. Did they -- did they indicate to you
11 what they believed may have happened in the
12 bathroom? I mean, beyond just that he was killed in
13 the bathroom?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. And I'm sorry that I'm asking
16 you these questions.

17 A. I'm trying to answer. I know --

18 Q. You're doing a good job. You're doing a good
19 job. I appreciate it.

20 Michael Montgomery, on July 11 last year when
21 we had the Arthur hearing, was asked the last time
22 he had checked to see if there was any credit card
23 activity on credit cards associated with your son,
24 and he said he had checked the weekend prior to that
25 hearing and that there had been no activity that he

1 could see. Do you recall that?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. And obviously the reason for that
4 question is, you know, if there's activity, it might
5 suggest that he would still be alive, right?

6 A. Right. They had all his credit cards.

7 Q. No. I understand. I understand. During the
8 time period since March 21, 2023, up until present,
9 have you had any contact from Steven Cozzi?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. Via email, phone or otherwise?

12 A. None at all.

13 Q. Okay. Do you know if any other family
14 members or friends have had any contact with him?

15 A. As far as I know, no one has.

16 Q. Okay. There is -- there's a civil lawsuit
17 that's been filed in civil court that you are
18 associated with, correct?

19 A. That is correct.

20 Q. Okay. And Mr. Barnes, Barnes Law Group is
21 handling that?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. Okay. And are you the personal
24 representative of his estate?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And is that how you are a part of that
2 lawsuit?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. I believe there's been -- other than
5 Dr. Kosowski, there's at least two other defendants
6 in that case; is that correct?

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. Okay. And one of those have settled their
9 claim?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And then there's Dr. Kosowski and one
12 remaining defendant?

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Okay. Did you have any involvement in the
15 drafting of the complaint, the initial complaint?

16 A. Not really. I left that to the experts. And
17 then I -- I did read it. I will honestly say my
18 comprehension at the time was poor --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- and that kind of thing. But, yes, I did
21 read the initial complaint, and I have been
22 following everything fairly closely on that.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Are you retired like your
24 husband?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And what did you do prior to retiring?

2 A. I was a software quality assurance engineer
3 developing products for detecting intrusions in
4 computer networks.

5 Q. Wow, that sounds pretty fancy.

6 A. It's pretty fancy.

7 Q. It sounds way above my intellect, that's for
8 sure.

9 A. The company motto was "Find Evil, Solve
10 Crime." So, yeah, we did a lot of very high-end
11 technical work.

12 Q. Very good. Very good. There are two phases
13 to a case like this potentially. The first phase is
14 what's called -- at least I refer to it as -- the
15 guilt/innocence phase because it's where a jury
16 would determine whether or not the person accused in
17 this case, Dr. Kosowski, if he's guilty or not
18 guilty of the crime charged. If -- if he was to be
19 found guilty, then the second part of the trial is
20 called a penalty phase, and that's where a jury
21 would be asked to decide or -- depending on the
22 state of the law, recommend a sentence of either
23 life in prison or the death penalty.

24 Usually with that part of the trial, it's
25 common for family members, such as yourself, to

1 either have written a victim impact statement or
2 make a written impact statement during that hearing.
3 Is that something that you have discussed with
4 Mr. Vonderheide at all?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. So I'm going to -- I'm going to do the
7 same thing that I did with your husband, and I'm
8 going to propose that because you have not discussed
9 it and because it's -- we're still almost a year
10 away or ten months away from trial, that I want to
11 reserve the opportunity to possibly depose you
12 closer to that time period in the event that
13 Mr. Vonderheide decides that you are going to
14 testify. If you are -- if you're just reading a
15 victim impact statement, he normally would give that
16 to us for us to review in advance to make sure that,
17 you know, there are no objections. And if that's
18 the case, I may never need to depose you again. But
19 just in the event that he decides to call you as a
20 witness, I would reserve the opportunity to talk to
21 you again briefly about your victim impact
22 statement. Does that sound okay?

23 A. That sounds okay.

24 Q. All right. Generally, not specifically as to
25 this case, but generally do you know if Steven, your

1 son Steven, had any strong feelings as it relates to
2 the death penalty, for or against the death penalty?

3 A. Yeah. I know we have discussed it. I don't
4 think that he had strong feelings one way or another
5 because he was very aware of the situational nature
6 involved.

7 Q. Okay. And what about you? And, again,
8 generally. I'm not asking you specifically as to
9 this case, but generally?

10 A. No, I don't have an opinion generally.

11 Q. That's fine. That's fine. Sometimes people
12 have one opinion in life and then it changes at a
13 later point in life. Have you ever had a strong
14 opinion one way or the other on that topic?

15 A. Not a strong opinion, no. Again, it's
16 situational.

17 Q. Sure. Sure. I understand. I understand.
18 And it gets much more complicated when it's specific
19 to you as the mother, right? And I'm not going to
20 ask you specifically at this point.

21 MR. BRUNVAND: I don't believe I have any
22 other questions.

23 Ms. Willengy Ramos Wicks, do you have any
24 questions?

25 MS. RAMOS: I don't have any questions.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. BRUNVAND: Okay. And I don't know if the
3 State, anyone from the State, either
4 Mr. Vonderheide or Ms. Spadaro?

5 MR. VONDERHEIDE: No questions.

6 MS. SPADARO: No questions.

7 MR. BRUNVAND: I'm going to pause the
8 recording.

9 You can -- if we transcribe this deposition,
10 you have an opportunity to read or waive the
11 reading of the transcript. I don't know if you
12 discussed that at all with Mr. Vonderheide before
13 you came in. I believe your husband waived, but
14 you get to see the transcript regardless, but do
15 you know whether or not you want to read or waive
16 the reading of the transcript if ordered?

17 THE WITNESS: I will waive it for now.

18 (At 10:47 a.m., no further questions were
19 propounded to this witness.)
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21
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CERTIFICATE OF OATH

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF PINELLAS

I, Tami Cline, Registered Merit Reporter,
Certified Realtime Reporter, and Notary Public in
and for the State of Florida at large, hereby
certify that LOIS COZZI virtually appeared before me
on the 2nd day of August, 2024, and was duly sworn.

WITNESS my hand this December 16, 2024.





Tami Cline, RMR, CRR

Notary Public - State of Florida

My Commission No. HH285917

My Commission Expires: May 19, 2026

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER


2 STATE OF FLORIDA

3 COUNTY OF PINELLAS

4 I, Tami Cline, Registered Merit Reporter,
5 Certified Realtime Reporter, Florida Professional
6 Reporter, do hereby certify that I was authorized to
7 and did stenographically report the deposition of
8 LOIS COZZI; that a review of the transcript was not
9 requested; and that the foregoing transcript is a
10 true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

11 I further certify that I am not a relative,
12 employee, attorney or counsel for any of the
13 parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of
14 the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with the
15 action, nor am I financially interested in the
16 outcome of the action.

17 Dated this December 16, 2024.
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22 
23 Tami Cline, RMR, CRR
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