

FALSE CONFESSIONS ...

Continued From Page 1

dynamic and articulate presenter, Kassin's explanation of the standard procedures of interrogation is directly applicable to the strategy the police employed in interrogating a 17-year-old who, immediately after discovering an unspeakable crime scene, was accused of the murder of his parents. According to Kassin, the bluffs and outright lies employed during the Tankleff interrogation included:

- Telling Tankleff that his denial that he had taken a shower to clean off the blood from the attack had been disproven by a non-existent "humidity" test.
- Telling Tankleff that his denial that he had attacked his mom had been disproven by the presence of his hairs near her body.
- Telling Tankleff – after pretending to receive a phone call from the hospital – that he had good news and bad news to share with him. His dad had regained

consciousness and had named Tankleff as his attacker.

While the influence and impact of this strategy is obvious, Professor Kassin also explained that his research consistently demonstrates that those interrogated develop what he describes as an entirely irrational belief that if only they confess, they will be allowed to go home, or in Tankleff's case, to visit his dad in the hospital. This is exactly the state of mind and the thought process that the attorney in my office described. Other factors consistently present in confessions that have been proven to be false include isolation and extreme lengths of time of interrogation. Kassin's research establishes that while most police interrogations last for less than two hours, the mean amount of interrogation time in false confessions cases is 16.3 hours.² As part of his presentation, Kassin described a young man who gave a full and detailed confession to his girlfriend's murder only to have her discovered to be alive and well the next day in another state to which she fled after they had a fight.

See Facing Page
