Preppy' allegedly kills date in drag

and DAVID TALBOT

A "preppy" Watertown computer worker searching for sex in the Combat Zone strangled his one-night stand after discovering a man's body underneath a woman's tight jeans and lacy purple top, police said last night.

The slaying ended a fivehour romance between accused killer William C. Palmer, 34, and transsexual Ramon Pickett, 23, of Chelsea — who had been planting to have a sex change operation, officials said.

After strangling Pickett with his bare hands, Palmer

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slept in the same room as the body for several hours, police said.

Palmer, described as polite and

clean-cut by neighbors. set out alone Sunday night for company and ended up around midnight at the Playland Cafe on Essex Street where he met Pickett at the dimly lit bar.

People at the Combat Zone, who referred to Pickett as "she," said Pickett was known to hang out at the neon-lit

bar and in the area. Police said Pickett was not a prostitute.

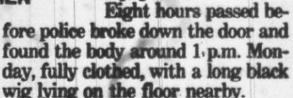
The pair left the bar for Pickett's apartment in Chelsea. Finally, they proceeded to Palmer's Watertown apartment at which he shares with three men and a woman. With the roommates

asleep elsewhere in the house, the two lovers crept upstairs Palmer's bedroom and began having sex - but at 5 a.m. Palmer made the fatal discovery, said As-

> sistant Middlesex District Attorney Martin

Murphy.

"In the bedroom, the suspect discovered that the victim was a man, not a woman. There was an argument, there was a struggle. During the struggling, he kills him by strangling him," Murphy said.



Murphy said Palmer and his roommates presented themselves to a local attorney to report the dead body and the attorney in turn notified police.

Palmer will be arraigned on murder charges today in Waltham District Court.

Palmer, who works for Unisvs in Somerville, was described as polite and clean-cut, wears khaki pants and sportcoats, drives a blue sportutility vehicle and was often seen by neighbors walking his German shepherd, Max, around the well-kept neighborhood. He and his roommates would also have barbecues.

Across-the-street neighbor David Huntley said Palmer was "a very outgoing and polite and nice, warning us if there would be parties, or inviting us for cookouts." He said-Palmer dressed "on the preppy side."

"He is the nicest guy you'd ever want to know. I just can't believe this happened. He must've gone totally berserk. It's the only way I could imagine him doing something like this," said neighbor Rita MacLeavey.



PALMER

