

Woman charged with assisting suicide

by UPI

STOCKTON, Calif. - A California woman has been charged with helping end the life of her brother, a blues musician felled by a series of strokes.

June Hartley, 43, of Lodi was charged Friday with assisted suicide, The Sacramento Bee reported. She faces up to six years in prison if convicted.

Hartley and her mother Daisie cared for her brother James after he became disabled in 2006. Investigators charge that when James Hartley died in December at the age of 45, his sister used helium to suffocate him.

Dan MacHugh, who played with James Hartley in the Studebaker Blues Band, said that until the strokes his friend loved to perform and was "always the first one to a gig and the last one to leave."

"After the stroke, he was paralyzed and in constant pain," MacHugh said. "He was very, very depressed. When I heard he had died, I thought, 'Thank goodness for Jim and his family.' But it's very sad what has happened with his sister."

Mike Stewart, who also played in the band, said that in his last months James Hartley asked all his friends to help him take his life.

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