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54/07/12 Three Keys to Murder: Weapon, Motive and Shirt Hunted

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3 Keys to Murder:

Press
7-12-54

Weapon, Motive and Shirt Hunted

The investigation into the murder of Mrs. Marilyn Sheppard is now going into the second week. How close are officials to a solution?

The following questions submitted to Coroner S. R. Gerber shed some light on the problems facing police.

Dr. Gerber terms the case "one of the most puzzling" he has encountered in 19 years as Cuyahoga County coroner.

Q.: What time did the murder occur?

A.: Between 3:10 and 4 a. m.

Q.: What happened between then and about 5:50 a. m., when Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard, the victim's husband, first reported the crime?

A.: We don't know — except for Dr. Sheppard's version.

Q.: What was the murder weapon?

A.: We don't know. It was some kind of blunt object. It could be a piece of wood, a medical or surgical instrument, any one of a hundred things around the house.

Q.: What happened to the murder weapon and to the T-shirt Dr. Sheppard was wearing earlier in the evening, but which had vanished when he reported the murder?

A.: We don't know. They could be any place. Most probable location is Lake Erie, unless they were carried away by an intruder—who probably would have had to forcibly remove the T-shirt from Dr. Sheppard.

Q.: Were any fingerprints found in the house?

A.: Only a palm print on a downstairs desk.

Q.: Normally there should be an abundance of fingerprints around a home, particularly after an evening of entertaining friends. How do you account for their complete absence?

A.: We can only speculate.

Q.: The scene downstairs in the Sheppard home indicated someone had dumped over Dr. Sheppard's medical bag and ransacked its contents. Were there fingerprints found either on the bag or on the bottles and vials it contained?

A.: No, none.

Q.: What is the significance of the abandonment of some jewelry, including Dr. Sheppard's watch and fraternity ring, in a green bag on the house grounds?

A.: It seems peculiar, but we don't know the significance.

Q.: What could be the motive for such a murder?

A.: We would like to know. The killer might have been someone who held a grudge against Mrs. Sheppard, or some psychotic personality. It is unlikely that the murderer was an ordinary burglar.

Q.: Why didn't the killer use the same weapon on Dr. Sheppard that was used on his wife?

A.: That's one of the mysteries of the case . . . unless there were two people, not just one intruder, in the house.

Q.: Is there any physical evidence of anyone other than Dr. Sheppard having been in the house at the time?

A.: No.

Q.: What were Dr. Sheppard's injuries when he reported the crime?

A.: Immediate examination of Dr. Sheppard by a physician called by Bay Village Police Chief John Eaton showed no visible evidence of a neck injury—only a black eye and puffed up face.

Q.: What are the keys to possible solution of the case?

A.: Discovery of either one or all three of these—the motive, the T-shirt, and the murder weapon.