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57/07/20 Killer or Liar? / Gerber Wants Lie Tests for Sam, Brothers

Cleveland News

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Killer or Liar? ^{News}

This is the picture Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard looked at and said: "I have a vague feeling that this is the man who attacked me." Donald Wedler, 23, has told authorities he thinks the woman he killed three years ago was Mrs. Marilyn Sheppard, for which crime Dr. Sam is serving a life sentence. Cleveland law enforcement officials do not believe Wedler's story. However, Cuyahoga County Coroner Sam R. Gerber today is trying to go to Florida to prove the story true or false.



GERBER WANTS LIE TESTS FOR SAM, BROTHERS

Cuyahoga County Coroner Samuel R. Gerber today stepped into the latest developments in the Sheppard murder case.

He said the newest phases have prompted him to take three courses of action. He will:

ASK FUNDS from the County Commissioners to go to Deland, Fla., and question Donald J. Wedler, 23,

a fugitive who has "confessed" the slaying of Mrs. Marilyn Sheppard July 4, 1954.

ASK PERMISSION from Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard that representatives of the county be present Monday in Ohio Penitentiary when a lie detector test is administered to the convicted wife-slayer.

ASK PERMISSION to give lie detector tests to Dr. Sheppard's brothers, Drs. Richard N. and Stephen A., and their wives.

Henry W. Speeth, president of the County Commissioners, said the funds probably would be granted for the coroner's trip to Florida. "I don't see any reason why not," he said. "We don't want to interfere with justice or stop any information from coming forth."

"Since the crime Wedler says he committed was in Cuyahoga County, its representatives should go to Florida and question him," Dr. Gerber said. He indi-

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Gerber Asks Own Sam Test

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cated he probably would take a county detective with him.

Sheriff Joseph M. Sweeney said he would cooperate with the coroner. "If the coroner wants to take one of my men, I'll certainly let him."

Wants Own Tests

The Court of Last Resort, an unofficial crime investigation group, will administer the test to Dr. Sam.

"Different interpretation from such tests can be made by different operators," the coroner said. "I would like a man—or several men—from the state to ask additional questions and perhaps administer a separate test."

He said he sought lie detector tests for the doctor's brothers and their wives because "they have volunteered to take tests given by the Court of Last Resort."

Monday Is Date

"This indicates they think some people believe they may have had something to do with the killing. I'd like to question them, too," he said.

The coroner's announcement was the first evidence of interest in the new developments by an official here.

The lie detector test for Dr. Sam will be administered Monday in the Ohio Penitentiary, it

was announced today in Columbus.

The test will be given by Alex Gregory, a Detroit lie detector expert, John E. Reid of Chicago and C. B. Hunscom of the University of Minnesota. Permission to conduct the test was granted yesterday by Gov. C. William O'Neill.

Wedler is in the Volusia County Jail in Deland. Last night he told 50 crime experts and newsmen he was certain his victim was Mrs. Sheppard.

Mrs. Sheppard was brutally clubbed to death in her bed. Her husband was convicted of the slaying and sentenced to a life term in the Ohio Penitentiary. He has steadfastly contended his innocence, but has refused to take a lie detector test until this latest development in the celebrated case.

A Slim Youth

Wedler, a slim and sandy-haired youth, last night put specific details in his story. He had passed two lie detector tests administered by Gregory, who is a member of the Court of Last Resort, which is headed by mystery writer Erle Stanley Gardner.

In his cell, Dr. Sheppard looked at a picture of Wedler. "I have a vague feeling this is the man who attacked me," he said.

Wedler said last night that he was taking dope at the time of the Sheppard killing. He told newsmen how he stole a car and drove July 4, 1954 to a "Cleveland suburb." He said he was looking for a house to loot.

He said he saw a door slightly open at what presumably was the Sheppard home. He entered, saw a man sleeping on a couch, then went upstairs to a bedroom. He heard a sound from the bed, where a woman was sleeping. Now he is certain the woman was Mrs. Sheppard.

Pipe Was Weapon

He then took an eight-inch iron pipe he had brought with him and beat the woman "several times" to keep her quiet. He was questioned sharply on the number of times he hit her, since medical examination showed she received 35 blows.

"I was foggy with dope," he said. "I don't remember."

Dr. Gerber, who examined the woman at the time of the murder, was asked to comment on Wedler's description of the weapon. "From that description, I don't think it's possible such a weapon was used," Dr. Gerber said.

Continuing his story, Wedler said he then heard footsteps and ran into the hall. He saw a man there. He hit the man with the pipe, pushed past him and ran downstairs. There he opened and spilled a leather bag containing pills. Then he fled the house.

Ran to Lake

He ran toward the lake, going down a flight of steps from a bluff. He threw the pipe far out into the lake. Then he returned to the stolen car, which he had parked some distance away. He changed his bloody clothes and drove off.

Later he abandoned the car. He took the bloody clothes with him in a bag and began hitchhiking. Eventually he hid the clothes in a culvert. He does not remember where the culvert was. Later, he said, he read about the murder of Mrs. Sheppard and realized "I had killed this woman."

Wedler has been serving a 10-year sentence for a Florida robbery since Sept. 16, 1954. He said he never told anyone about the killing until Monday. He gave conscience as his reason for finally "confessing."

"A fellow has a lot to think about in jail," he said.

He refused to answer only one question—the distance from the house at which he flung away the weapon. "I know, but for reasons of my own I do not wish to say at this time," was his answer.

Gardner had this to say today in Deland:

"I wouldn't be surprised if Sam Sheppard is guilty. But, on the other hand, Wedler is telling a very convincing story. If Sheppard's test runs clear, we'll put up the darndest fight you ever saw to get him out of prison."

Gardner and his associates will go to New York tomorrow and fly to Columbus Monday.