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54/07/12 Lie Test Aids Police - Out of Court

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Lie Test Aids Police—Out of Court

BY GEORGE P. BARMANN

Whenever there is talk about a lie detector—and there has been a considerable degree of it lately—someone always asks: "How does a box know if you're lying or not?"

The residents of the shadowy territory known as the other side of the law like to call it a "lie box" or a "truth box." But the ordinary citizen refers to it as a lie detector.

"Well, let's say in the first place, right off quick, that there's no such thing as a lie detector," David L. Cowles of the Cleveland Police Department said yesterday in a discussion of the device.

The subject of the detector came up after Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard of Bay Village refused a second time Saturday to take a lie detector test in the investigation of the "Strange Holiday" murder of his wife, Marilyn, July 4.

Dr. Sheppard told Assistant County Prosecutor Thomas J. Parrino that the detector would be "extremely unreliable" in his particular case because of his emotional upset. Parrino said

he felt the doctor, by this, was ruling out the test completely.

Cowles, superintendent of the bureau of scientific identification of the police department, has given the test to nearly 6,000 persons in its use in Cleveland in the last 15 years. And he has tested thousands of others, including German prisoners in World War II and workers at the Oak Ridge (Tenn.) atomic energy plant.

"We call this device a polygraph," said Cowles, who has gained national fame as a criminologist through the apparatus.

"It registers changes in blood pressure, breathing and the amount of electrical resistance in the skin," he explained. "You get three readings combined on a sheet through the workings of specially constructed pens. Hence the name 'polygraph.'"

Many Request Test

Cowles stressed the taking of a test is always voluntary.

"Lots of them ask for it, even some of the guilty ones," he remarked. "There is never anybody forced to take it."

He noted, too, that the results are not admissible as evidence in courts in Ohio, although they are in certain other states.

"A good majority of the judges on the bench ask for the results themselves," Cowles said, "even if the data can't be used as evidence in Ohio."

"People get the idea we bring a man into a cell, slam the door and slap the machine on him and start shooting a lot of questions at him," Cowles said. "That's not the way at all."

Ask Personal Questions

"We got a nice room for the test on the third floor at headquarters. It's carpeted and air-conditioned and has two-tone colors and tapestries on the walls. This is to put the person at ease."

"Now, before we put him on the machine, we ask a lot of personal questions, like how many sisters and brothers you have and what kind of job you have and where you went to school. This is to establish a norm, get him as normal as possible."

"Then, on the machine, we throw in some relevant questions among some irrelevant ones. The electrical impulses pick up the physiological changes, which might come from some of those relevant questions, and there are changes from the norm on a moving chart."

Cowles said a subject might be sitting there smiling, but his mind might be whirling with a twisted mass of emotion inside. The heartbeat, the blood pressure and the skin reflexes transmit the story to the graph.

There is a pressure cup attached to the subject's right arm. A rubber tubing is placed around the chest. A galvanometer is fitted on the left hand.

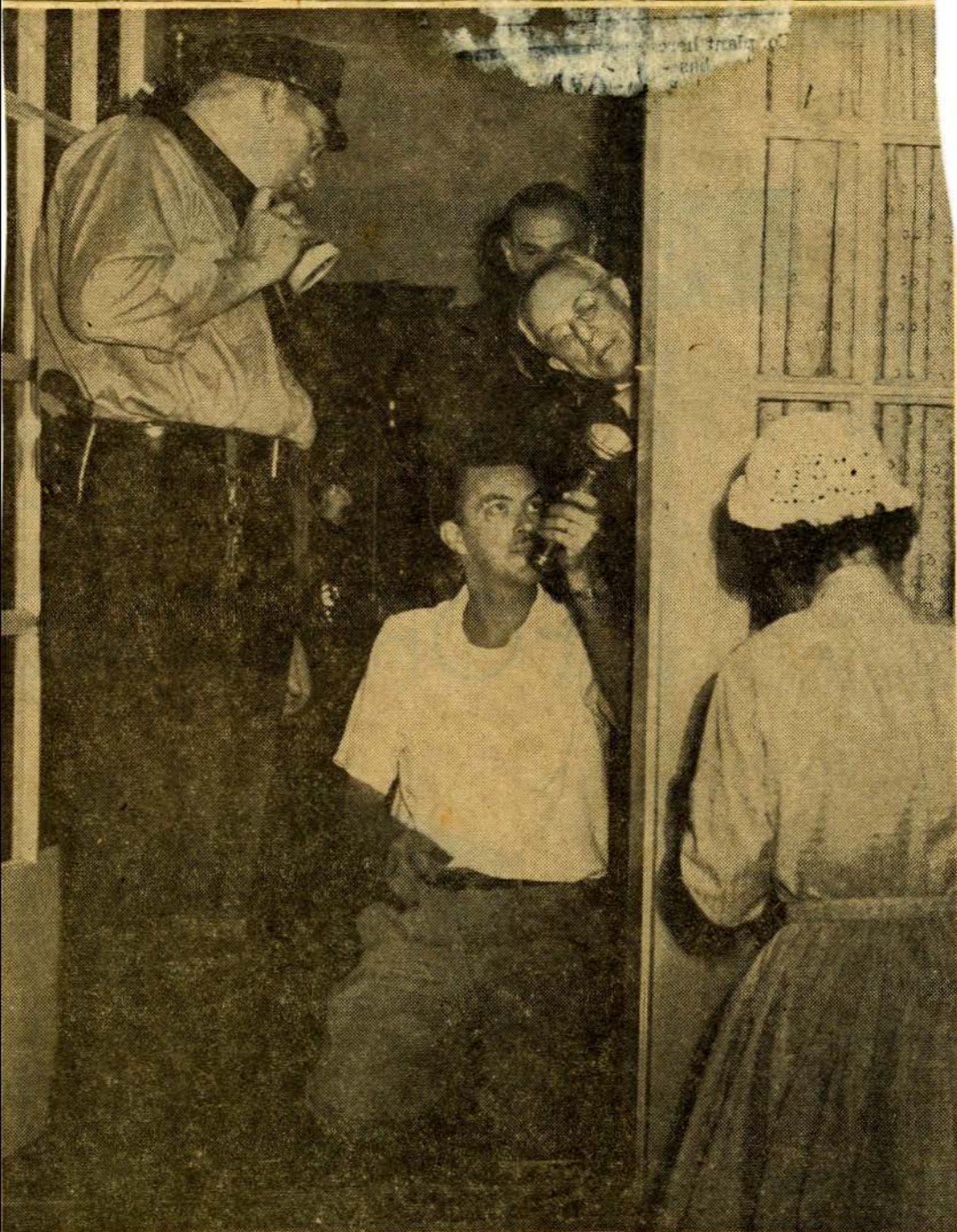
"Even emotional instability is taken into consideration after the norm has been established," Cowles explained, "and after tests have been run."

"For every person sent to jail as a result of this device, three are proved innocent."

The machine, which is about the size of an ordinary suitcase, was invented 20 years ago by Dr. Leonard E. Keeler of Chicago. There are two similar devices—a stoetling, about the same as a polygraph, and a Lee psychograph, which has no galvanometer.

Cowles, who is 56, has explained his truth-or-lie machine to visitors from England, Australia and Canada. He has trained other policemen and policewomen in the use of the device.

Shaker Heights, East Cleveland and Garfield Heights also have the machines.



Plain Dealer Photo by George Heinz

SEARCH FOR CLEWS in the week-old murder of Marilyn Sheppard continued yesterday at the Bay Village home of the slain woman. Smears around

the night latch of a door leading to a porch at the rear of the house are being examined by (left to right) Patrolman Howard Smith, Sergt. Jay Hubach (holding flashlight)

and Coroner Samuel R. Gerber (peering around door frame). Medical Technologist Mary E. Cowan is in foreground, while Deputy Sheriff Dave Yettra is in background.