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MSL

ACADEMIC ENDEAVORS

Clinical Catechism Bores Murder Jury

BY DORIS O'DONNELL

The Dr. Sam H. Sheppard murder trial is one of yawning jurors, a weeping defendant and mispronouncing of clinical terms instead of a rip-snorting, fast-moving case filled with sensation and sex.

Defense Attorney William J. Corrigan, in evoking clinical interpretations, mispronounced names and his prolonging questioning of Dr. Lester Adelson, deputy coroner, brought evidence of boredom to the jurors. On the other hand, Dr. Sam broke down again when graphic pictures of his murdered wife were being talked about.

Previously he sobbed convulsively when the colored slides of the victim, detailing the wounds covering her head and face, were shown.

Dr. Sam's latest faltering in composure occurred when Dr. Adelson described the autopsy in the County Morgue several hours after Mrs. Marilyn Sheppard was officially declared dead in Bay Village.

Covers His Eyes

Dr. Adelson, with an impersonal objective manner, told the jury under questioning by Defense Attorney Corrigan, that he observed to an assistant that the victim "looked pregnant."

Further examination confirmed this. It was then Dr. Sam covered his eyes with his left

hand, and clamped his teeth and lips tightly. The tears flowed quietly.

Perhaps he recalled Thursday's testimony. Dr. Adelson testified that had Marilyn lived to bear the baby, it would have been a boy. Perhaps Dr. Sam was thinking of this unborn companion for his son, Chip.

Pursues Autopsy Analysis

He remained in this position while Corrigan pried and poked with words into the intimate physical organs of the late Bay Village housewife. The jury who had undergone two rugged days of coping with legal terms and seeing the lifelike films of the dead woman seemed numb, but not Dr. Sam.

Corrigan relentlessly pursued his analysis of the autopsy, going step-by-step over Dr. Adelson's examination of the spleen, liver, pancreas, genitalia, lungs and other organs.

It seemed more than Dr. Sam could take, although during his youthful career he has witnessed and participated in numerous cases of surgery and many gory, police emergency cases.

Dr. Sam conducted several small conferences with the other defense attorney, Arthur Peterzilge, and he bent forward to catch the flow of medical lingo issuing from Corrigan. To Dr. Sam, it must have seemed like

a repeat course in introductory anatomy.

Corrigan in his measured, clearly-articulated voice lectured on the anatomical workings of the human brain, occasionally questioning Dr. Adelson on points in the autopsy report. Adelson, a match for the keen-minded criminal lawyer, looked like a precocious schoolboy, smiling condescendingly at Corrigan, because Adelson knew all the anatomical answers and correct pronunciation of legal terms.

Corrigan cracked at one point that the "reporters back there are making fun of me because I mispronounce some names, but we know what we're talking about, don't we?"

"This is rather tedious, your honor," he said, "but it's things I have to do."

Skull Under Cover

Then he proceeded with his knowledgeable probing of Dr. Adelson — questioning him on the skull, its layers, the brain coverings, the manner in which a skull is removed for autopsy, fractures, wounds, tears, abrasions, contusions, and all the rest.

He was the medicine man with the little mustached doctor on the witness stand, bubbling at times like a test tube over a Bunsen burner.

Dr. Adelson brought along a

skull used in classroom work. He kept it at his feet in a brown paper sack. He reached for it, and Corrigan stopped him.

"I brought it to explain the wound positions," Adelson said.

"We have enough skeletons around here now," Corrigan said.

Then Fred Garmone, another defense lawyer, stepped forth as the guinea pig. Dr. Adelson ran his fingers over the ridge above Garmone's right eye, indicating the location of a wound on the face of the murdered woman.

Recess, both morning and afternoons, gave Dr. Sam a respite. After Corrigan's afternoon lectures and questions, he held a courtroom press conference. Reporters clamored for answers.

"What kind of weapon was used on Marilyn?" several asked.

Dr. Sam stood off, arms akimbo, smiling.

Corrigan said: "You heard the testimony. The wounds are uniformly apart. One inch separates some, a half-inch separates another."

"You're smart boys, figure it out," Corrigan said. "I think one blow did it."