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11-6-1954

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Cleveland Press, "54/11/06 Words, Pictures Detail Corrigan's Duel With Adelson" (1954). *All Articles*. 453.
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Words, Pictures Detail Corrigan's Duel With Adelson

Verbal tussles between defense and prosecution were bitter as Defense Lawyer W. J. Corrigan pounded for a full day at the first state witness in the Dr. Sam Shepard wife-murder trial.

The witness was Dr. Lester Adelson, deputy county coroner. At times Judge Edward Blythin stepped into the arguments. Dr. Adelson will go back on the witness stand on Monday when the trial resumes.

Sketches of Corrigan in action are by Press Artist Jim Herron.

Following are highlights of the closing hours of yesterday afternoon's court session.

Bruise Not Noted

Q.: When you fixed the little finger joint, it was loose, was it not?

A.: Yes.

Q.: But there was no bruise

on the thumb, was there?

A.: There was a bruise on the thumb.

Q.: There is no such bruise mentioned in this autopsy report.

A.: There was such a bruise but it was not noted on the autopsy report.

Corrigan threw up his hands and hollered out "not noted?"

Prosecutor Danaceau jumped up and said: "I must com-

plain about Mr. Corrigan's histrionics."

The judge said "the jury will note only the answers of the witness."

Q.: After four months you depend solely on your memory?

A.: No. The pictures we showed yesterday showed this bruise.

Corrigan mentioned five abrasions on the back of the right hand, asking: "This indicates a struggle, does it not?"

There was an objection by the prosecution which was sustained.

Q.: Were the wounds on the left side of the top of the head fatal?

A.: Not of themselves.

Q.: How about the wounds on the right side that were scalp injuries?

A.: Scalp injuries alone are not fatal.

Q.: There was no fracture from wound No. 7, the farthest wound away from the forehead?

A.: I believe there was a fracture.

Q.: Your autopsy report does not show it?

A.: I say in the autopsy re-

port that the underlying bone was exposed.

Q.: But you do not say that there was a fracture?

A.: Do you mean, was there a fracture or was a fracture line visible?

Q.: You understand me clearly?

A.: Later in the autopsy report we say that there was an entire fracture of the frontal bone. I could not see the fracture line through the skin but that does not mean there was no fracture there.

Corrigan: "I'm afraid you are trying to run around me, Dr. Adelson."

The three prosecution attorneys jumped to their feet at once with protests. Judge Blythin immediately instructed the jury to disregard Corrigan's statement.

Q.: (By Corrigan) Now Dr. Adelson, your autopsy report shows that you dictated descriptions of wounds No. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 and said there were fractures. Then when you came to No. 7 you did not say anything about a fracture.

A.: May I explain that?

Corrigan said "no" and walked away from the witness and the three prosecutors again

jumped to their feet with protests. Judge Blythin permitted the witness to explain.

Adelson said that at the time of the start of the autopsy he saw no fracture line visible from this particular wound but later in the autopsy he did note a fracture.

Corrigan went into great detail in describing the brain, its coverings, and its removal. He asked for a blackboard and drew an outline of a face and head. Directing his remarks to Adelson and the jury, he pointed out the spinal cord, the spinal column and the brain.

Q.: The breaking of the skull is not the thing that causes the damage, it's the effect of cracking the brain?

A.: I can't accept that as completely accurate.

Q.: You can have a skull fracture without resulting in death, supposing the brain is not injured?

A.: In that case the effects would be less damaging.

Q.: Did you know that you can drill into the front of the head and remove part of the

brain?

A.: I am familiar with frontal lobotomy.

Q.: The frontal part of the brain is the seat of memory and understanding, is it not?

A.: You can put it that way.

Q.: The frontal part has a vital part in memory?

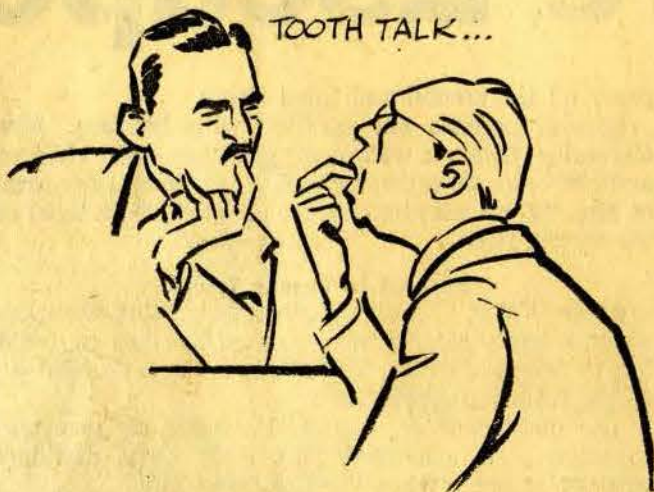
A.: Well you can live without a memory.

Q.: I wouldn't want to live without a memory?

A.: I wouldn't want to, either.



TOOTH TALK...



er, but nature is not always kind.

Q.: You said that when you cut into the head that some blood ran out, how much was there?

A.: I didn't catch it. It ran onto the table but I can estimate.

Q.: Your estimate could be wrong?

A.: That is always possible.

Q.: In your job as a pathologist you hold yourself to be very exacting?

A.: As far as possible.

Q.: If you're exacting, you don't guess?

A.: Not a guess, sir, an estimate.

Dr. Adelson admitted that he had performed 150 or more autopsies since Marilyn Sheppard's, that he had dictated the results of his autopsy on Marilyn at 3:30 in the afternoon of July 4th.

As Corrigan continued rephrasing the same questions, John Mahon objected, saying that the witness had answered already. The judge said that he felt, too, that "we should move along and there shouldn't be so much time spent on that."

Corrigan shouted: "I'm going to take all the time I need, your honor."

The judge replied: "No, you're not, Mr. Corrigan."

Dr. Sheppard covered his eyes with his hands and bit hard on his lips during the part of the testimony when Dr. Adelson told about cutting open Marilyn Sheppard's body to complete the autopsy. Dr. Adelson said that he performed the autopsy on the trunk of her body before the head.

There was a brief conference between defense counsel and Dr. Sheppard, who was holding his hands to his nose and eyes. Corrigan then resumed questioning.

Q.: In making the examina-

tion of other organs besides the head, you must have been looking for something else connected with the cause of death?

A.: An autopsy is to find all evidence of injury or disease.

Q.: Did you examine the neck?

A.: Yes.

Q.: Did you find an attachment to thyroid glands?

A.: Yes, a small goiter.

At this point Corrigan said "I can't finish tonight. I'd like to adjourn."

Judge Blythin was very reluctant to adjourn, saying he had never seen a case before where it took a whole day to determine the cause of death.

Corrigan said: "You have never had an examiner like me before you. The man is on trial for his life."

Garmone spoke up: "It certainly isn't fair to a man of Corrigan's age."

Corrigan said flatly, "I'm tired."

Judge Blythin adjourned until 9:15 a. m. Monday, saying that "We might have to start working on Saturday."