

**Starved Rock Murders (The O.J. Simpson Case of the 1960's)**  
**Criminology Forensic Science**  
**Ms. Barclay and Mr. Krieger**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attached is an article about a 1960 case that occurred in Illinois. At the time, the case was like to O.J. Simpson case. Newspapers in the United States covered the case from start to finish. In the end, a man was convicted of the crime. As you read the article, make a list of the evidence included in the article and indicate if it is Direct or Circumstantial. We'll discuss everyone's list in class.

#	Evidence from the Article	Direct or Circumstantial (check one)
1		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
2		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
3		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
4		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
5		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
6		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
7		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
8		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
9		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
10		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
11		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
12		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
13		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial
14		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Circumstantial

Fifty years ago, on Monday, March 14, 1960, three housewives from Riverside drove to Starved Rock for a midweek vacation of hiking and fellowship. They checked into their Lodge rooms, ate lunch in the rustic dining hall and, with binoculars and a camera hanging off their shoulders, set out on snowy trails toward St. Louis Canyon.

Lodge caretaker Emil Boehm greeted the guests as they left the Lodge's main doors. One of the women turned to him and said, "It's a beautiful day for a hike." Concentrating on his work, he barely noticed as the trio disappeared into the surrounding woods.

They were never seen alive again — except by their killer.

Two days later, their bodies were found bludgeoned to death in the cold canyon near a towering frozen waterfall.

The victims were Mildred Lindquist, Lillian Oetting, both 50; and Frances Murphy, 47 — all close friends and members of the Riverside Presbyterian Church. They were wives of prominent business executives, mothers of grown children and involved in their city's civic concerns.

Shock waves from the grisly discovery reverberated across the Illinois Valley and beyond as frightened area residents retreated behind doors that before were seldom locked. Police investigators, metropolitan media members, and local reporters frantically scoured the state park for any clues leading to the mass murder.

Roadblocks were set up throughout the park, hundreds of people were questioned, and press coverage of the probe grew into a national story (Life and Time magazines published several feature articles on the crime).

The summer of 1960 was hot for everyone in La Salle County, but it seemed hotter for one man — State's Attorney Harland Warren. Elections were looming in the fall and Warren found himself soundly criticized by many locals for the lack of a solution to the baffling murders.

And although it wasn't his job to play detective, the frustrated attorney decided it was time to start his own behind-the-scenes investigation.

Warren called for all evidence to be returned to his office and assigned two trusted county deputies, Bill Dummett and Wayne Hess, to join him in the near-secret probe.

One day, sifting among bloody clothes, broken binoculars, and the apparent murder weapon — a crumpling tree branch that apparently was frozen stiff when used to beat the women — Warren picked up the twine the killer had used to bind his victims.

He thought if they could find out where the twine originated from, they probably would catch a killer. But where to start looking?

In late summer 1960, then State's Attorney Harland Warren considered knotted twine found on the bodies of three murdered women at Starved Rock State Park to be the possible break in the case that had eluded state police investigators. To find out who brought the string into St. Louis Canyon, he surmised he needed to find the origins of the blood-soaked strands.

He thought about nearby Utica and its hardware stores, but decided to search first at the closest place to the canyon — Starved Rock Lodge.

Source: <http://www.wrex.com/Global/story.asp?S=12140476>

One night in September, the attorney-turned-detective took a strand of the twine out to then park concessionaire Nick Spiros to ask if his staff used any similar string in housekeeping. Spiros directed Warren to a ball of twine in a kitchen closet used to wrap meat for the dining room.

To the amateur sleuth, the kitchen twine seemed a twin to the murder strand and — a short time later — it was confirmed scientifically by the manufacturer to be an exact match.

Just as Warren had long suspected, whoever was involved with the murders had, at some point, access to that kitchen closet. Most likely a worker of the Lodge, he concluded.

Knowing all Lodge employees had passed state lie detector tests early in the investigations, Warren, remembering mistakes made by detectives on crime scene evidence, decided to run his own polygraph exams.

Hiring a specialist from the John Reid Institute — a nationally prominent Chicago polygraph firm — Warren recalled all Lodge employees who worked the week of the murders.

One by one, they were paraded through the lie tests. The first dozen or so quickly passed the analysis and it seemed to the worried Warren they might be wasting time and money.

County Sheriff's Deputy Bill Dummett then brought in a former Lodge dishwasher who was working as a painter in La Salle.

Completing the short interrogation, the polygraph pro's face turned pale as the slight, young dishwasher left the room. "There's your man," he whispered to Warren.

The attorney, the technician, and the deputy all stared in silence at 21-year-old Chester Otto Weger as the man walked away. Finally, after many months of dead-end leads, they had a solid suspect for the massacre. A man familiar with the state park who had been working in the Lodge among the many police officers and crime writers.

It was at this point, as county Deputy Wayne Hess and Dummett dug into Weger's past, the officers suddenly recalled a rape and robbery reported by two teenagers in 1959. A nervous boy had told county officials a tale of being robbed while the tearful girl said she was sexually violated in an attack one September night in Matthiessen State Park.

The officers also remembered not believing their story at the time and how they sent the young couple away with only a cursory investigation. Point blank, deputies told the boy and girl they thought their story was "made up."

Now, more than a year later, the investigative team thought about these kids — attacked in a park, robbed in a park, tied up in a park, molested in a park. The embarrassed policemen quickly tracked down the girl and approached her with a stack of mug shots in hand. Sorting through them slowly, she screamed at the face of Chester Weger.

With that positive identification, Warren could finally take his only Starved Rock suspect off the streets, even though it would be for an unrelated crime. However, a different problem was now at hand.

Spending all his time and energy on the evidence search, the Warren had worked very little on his own re-election campaign. If he booked Weger on rape and/or murder charges before the election, Warren was sure Weger's defense counsel would call such an arrest politically motivated. Undoubtedly, the subsequent fallout would affect the prosecution of the case.

In public, the Democratic nominee, Robert E. Richardson, continued to blast Warren for his "bungling" of the Starved Rock case, noting the silence coming out of the courthouse as the election approached.

Out of almost 60,000 votes, Warren lost by nearly 3,500. Disappointed, he realized he would never face Weger in a court of law.

But he would have the man arrested and hold him up to the world as the Starved Rock killer.

On Nov. 17, Warren, with enough evidence in hand to take his prey into custody, ordered Dummett and Hess to bring Weger in for the Matthiessen crime. Hopefully, with any luck, the attorney thought they might sweat out of the man a confession to the triple murders.

With Hess as "good cop" and Dummett as "bad cop," the two officers took turns pushing at Weger for a confession in a closed room at the sheriff's department and, for hours, the stubborn suspect denied involvement in any crime, let alone a triple homicide.

But as the night wore on, so did Weger's stamina.

Today, an elderly Weger says he was then beaten by his interrogators. Only years ago, he told reporters a different story — that one of the officers held a gun to his head.

Whatever happened in the room that evening, following a late visit by his father and mother, he broke down and confessed to killing three women at Starved Rock eight months earlier. A court reporter was called to the room and transcribed every word spoken. After it was typed, Weger signed each page and all death scene photographs.

The next morning, Nov. 18, a shackled Weger re-enacted the "robbery that got out of hand," in St. Louis Canyon for dozens of police officials and news reporters. Photographs of the seemingly relaxed prisoner at the scene of the crime appeared in newspapers across the country.

Weger went on to confess several more times in the first days of his arrest to many different people. However, following a meeting with a defense attorney, he completely recanted his admissions.

And never again, in the nearly 50 years since his capture, has he admitted any participation in the crime.

On March 4, 1961, Weger was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Lillian Oetting. The jury, unanimous in the guilty verdict, could not agree on sending the young man to death in the state's electric chair, so they settled on locking up the outdoorsman the rest of his life. It was his 22nd birthday.

Five decades later, Weger remains in prison — the second longest-serving inmate now in custody. He has been denied parole 14 times and comes up for review each year. His health is reportedly fragile, but he is strong enough to continue his denials from his cell at Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mount Sterling.