

# Hypnosis is aiding police in investigations

By DARLENE STINSON

A swinging watch on a long gold chain has hypnotized dozens of stars in old Hollywood movies.

But the notion that fancy contraptions are needed is pure hogwash in L. Larry Stewart's estimation. "There's nothing mystical or magical about it," said Stewart, who has hypnotized subjects for Canton police, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, the Michigan State Police and other law enforcement agencies.

"I usually don't do anything but talk to people."

Stewart has hypnotized about 30 witnesses and victims of crime since attending a course of the Law Enforcement Hypnosis Institute in Atlanta in 1978.

In all 30 cases, subjects recalled details of a crime which assisted police in their investigations.

Traditionally, forensic psychologists have undertaken that aspect of police work.

But Stewart, who serves as secretary of the Michigan Society for Investigative and Forensic Hypnosis, says police officers are entering the field more and more.

According to Stewart, about 35 police officers in Michigan are trained currently in hypnosis.

THE TECHNIQUE is used in the investigation of major crimes, such as murder, rape or armed robbery. Suspects are never hypnotized, Stewart said.

"A person can lie under hypnosis. As

a matter of fact, he can be a better liar," Stewart said. "In hypnosis, there's no body language to read."

Contrary to popular belief, people retain full control of their minds during hypnosis, according to Stewart.

They recall details of the session — unless a suggestion is made to block the memories.

"A person who's reliving an event can stop it any moment," Stewart said of cases where fear is involved.

Stewart says the courts view evidence obtained during hypnosis in the same way as other testimony.

"There is no difference in the recall you have consciously and the recall you have under hypnosis. It's simply a question for the jury to decide."

STEWART SAYS anyone can be hypnotized, although various individuals attain different levels of hypnosis.

Victims of a crime usually achieve deeper hypnosis than witnesses because of a more profound desire to solve the crime.

Older persons are normally more difficult to hypnotize, "because they seem to have more fear of the unknown," Stewart said.

"But I haven't had anyone say no (to a request for a session). Some people have just asked for further information."

Everyone hypnotized by Stewart has provided important clues to police.

In a recent case, the neighbor of a rape victim recalled the partial license plate number of a suspect's car. Stewart expects the evidence will allow police to make an arrest.

According to Stewart, the neighbor was mowing his lawn two days before the rape and noticed a man drive several times in front of the woman's house.

The man forgot about the incident until police canvassed the neighborhood in search of clues. According to Stewart, the neighbor made no conscious effort to examine the license plate, which was partially covered with mud.

But in hypnosis, the man was able to remember the plate number as well as a detailed description of the car.

THE HYPNOSIS sessions are usually conducted in Stewart's office or in the subject's home. They usually last two to 2½ hours.

Stewart begins the session by asking the subject to physically relax. Legs should be uncrossed, and comfortable clothing should be worn.

Next, Stewart takes the subject on a "walk" down a mountainside. They are told to increase the level of relaxation with each step they take.

The subject should be hypnotized by the time they reach the bottom of the mountain, Stewart said. They are asked to "numb" a hand or another section of

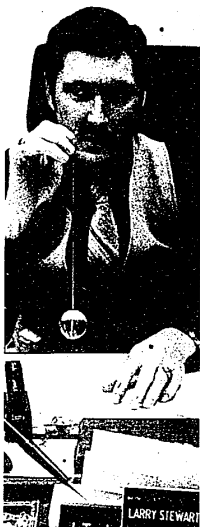
their body. Stewart conducts a minor pain test to check their level of hypnosis.

Lastly, they are taken back to the scene of a crime.

"We have them go into their memory file and pull out the tape of the day," Stewart said.

The Canton lieutenant hopes to attend an advanced course of the Los Angeles-based Law Enforcement Hypnosis Institute this summer or fall. He says the course will increase his proficiency in the technique.

Stewart was first hypnotized in 1978, while attending a course of the school. "I had only seen staged hypnosis at that point. Frankly, I was a skeptic," Stewart said. "Most cops are."



L. LARRY STEWART

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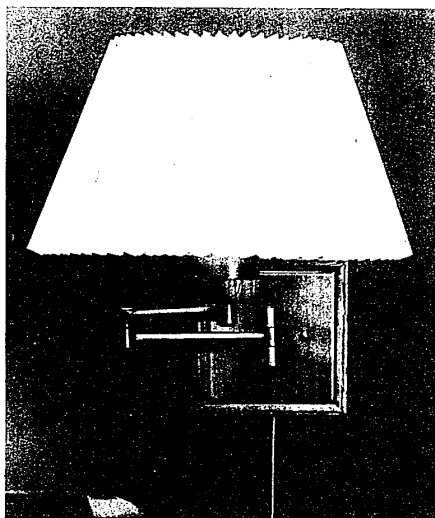
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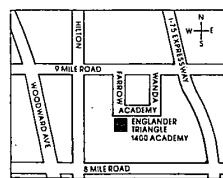
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