

Our Artist Attends Manslaughter Trial



MRS. CLARK "fastened her hooded eyes on the jury." She was the only eye-witness who testified.



JUDGE WILLIAM BEER was a half-hour late; everyone waited.

Rainy Farmland Outside; A Big Trial Indoors

EDITOR'S NOTE: Court rules prohibit the use of cameras in a courtroom, and Dr. Ronald E. Clark has been a particularly difficult subject to photograph outside. So the Observer Newspapers sent reporter-artist Glenna Merrill to the scene, and she produced the accompanying drawing and this word sketch of the country town.

By GLENNA MERRILL

The huge old maples and oaks that surround the Ingham County courthouse were dripping in the aftermath of one of the state's heaviest rains in recent history as we arrived in the small town of Mason, which is set down in the farmlands just southeast of Lansing. Its tiled floors and plaster

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DR. CLARK (right), the defendant, conferred with his attorney, Philip Rowston, as Mrs. Clark testified in his defense.

Clark during the earlier days of the trial.

When he appeared in the hall, carrying a briefcase, she followed him and returned minutes later saying, "He didn't say anything—not one word."

As we took our seats, the defendant's wife, dressed in a white sleeveless shift sprinkled with green polka dots, talked and laughed with two friends seated at the far side of the courtroom.

DURING HIS WIFE'S testimony, Dr. Clark wrote intently in his notebook. When she was being cross-examined, he conferred with his attorney. At one point his lips parted in what could be called a wide grin.

Mrs. Clark fastened her hooded eyes on the jury as she described the events of the night in question. The second juror rested his head against the wall and gazed into space for as long as 15 minutes at a time.

C'ville Band Is Festival-Bound

Tourists at the Traverse City Cherry Festival July 10-13 will see and hear the Clarencville High School Marching Band again.

Schoolcraft Seeks More Musicians

Schoolcraft College is making an intensive search for qualified young pianists to take part in an expanded summer music school and festival.

Piano instructor Donald Morelock has written to dozens of piano teachers asking them to bring the Schoolcraft program to the attention of their high school and early college-age students.

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The 80-piece band will be defending the grand championship it won last year.

To raise the \$2,500 necessary to pay the expenses of the organization for the trip, and stay, merchants were solicited for funds, and a newspaper collection drive was held.

Frankie Rapp, veteran Detroit comic, makes his fifth return engagement at the 24 Karat Club when he takes over the MC chores for two weeks starting July 1.

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Mrs. Clark Keeps Composure On Stand

By FRED DeLANO

MASON -- Dr. Ronald E. Clark's defense lawyer put only four witnesses on the stand compared to 13 for the prosecution in his trial for manslaughter.

Defense attorney Philip Rowston's case was highlighted Wednesday by the appearance for the first time of the only eye-witness of the Nov. 3 incident—Mrs. Violet Clark, wife of the Farmington Township physician.

Clark is accused of killing his part-time nurse and patient, Mrs. Grace Neil, of Livonia, last Nov. 3. The Oakland County prosecutor's office wound up its case Tuesday in the two-week trial.

Maintaining complete composure even under heavy cross-examination, Mrs. Clark testified that after the doctor had finished treating Mrs. Neil, she looked in on the patient shortly before 7 p.m.

"THE FIRST THING I noticed was that the solution bottle was completely empty; usually it would have been half full," said Mrs. Clark, a school teacher in Dearborn last 24 years.

"I took the needle out of her arm, noticed blue spots on her face and called, 'Mom!'"

"The doctor came immediately, shook Grace to try to get her to wake up, then gave her an injection into the heart," (Earlier testimony from Mrs. Neil's sister-in-law quoted Dr. Clark as having given Mrs. Neil two shots of adrenalin.)

Mrs. Clark said her familiarity with removing the needle and injection bottle and tubing stemmed from having performed the same chore in relation to Mrs. Neil "many times" before.

Mrs. Neil had received nine sodium pentothal treatments from Dr. Clark in October and one each of the first three days of November according to Mrs. Clark's records.

AFTER DISCOVERY of the body, both she and her husband attempted to revive Mrs. Neil through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, Mrs. Clark testified.

Meanwhile, the physician also notified Mrs. Neil's husband and an undertaker, and within an hour the entire drama had started to unfold.

The Clarks were married Nov. 24, 1962, and Mrs. Clark testified that Mrs. Neil had been one of the wedding guests.

Assistant Prosecutor John Bain, in cross-examining Mrs. Clark, concentrated on an official statement she had made to police investigators Nov. 6.

Bain attempted to establish discrepancies between that statement and the testimony she gave Wednesday.

Key issue involved what she saw when she entered the patient's room.

BAIN QUOTED Mrs. Clark as having said on Nov. 6 that when she looked into the room, the solution bottle was half full, and that she told police, "She looked all right to me. She was perfectly normal."

When asked by Bain if she remembered being asked such a question and giving that answer Nov. 6, Mrs. Clark answered, "No."

Her testimony revealed that on the evening of Mrs. Neil's death (a Friday), the Clarks had planned to go to a friend's cottage near Port Austin with two other couples for the weekend.

Both of those couples came to the Grand River clinic with Dr. Clark was administering the treatment to Mrs. Neil and had left only minutes before her death was discovered.

The Clarks also were all packed and ready to go, she said.

OTHER KEY defense witnesses were Dr. Paul Wilcox, a Traverse City psychiatrist, and Barbara Clapp, 3434 W.

14 Mile Rd., Farmington. Dr. Wilcox said he had administered sodium pentothal "several thousand" times and never had needed an assistant in the process. He said some of his patients had received as many as 200 pentothal treatments over a five-year period.

Miss Clapp, an employee of a department store, said she and talked with Mrs. Neil in the company's Farmington store a week before the latter's death.

Miss Clapp testified that Mrs. Neil spoke of the fact that her son would be coming home from Vietnam shortly and that, although she wanted to see him, "she was going to do everything in her power so he wouldn't see her."

THE SON, Tharon E. Neil, Jr., was the final witness of the trial, being called by the prosecution in rebuttal.

The youth, who flew back from Vietnam for his mother's funeral on emergency Army leave, read aloud to the jury a lengthy letter written by the mother only a few days before Mrs. Neil's alleged conversation with Miss Clapp.

The letter contained no hint that Mrs. Neil had any anticipation of not being alive when the son returned.



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