

The Vancouver Sun – Friday, May 28, 1976

Young woman recants confession in skid Road Slaying

A young woman who allegedly confessed to the murder of a Skid Road pill pedlar told an Assize Court on Thursday, that she did so because she thought she did kill the man.

But in the witness box in her own defence, Connie Myrna Chartrand, 20 denied slaying Art Garceau in a Powell Street rooming house last May 30.

"I wanted to be put away, I thought I had done it" the well-spoken witness told Mr. Justice H.E. Hutcheon and the jury of six men and six women.

In the witness box for the entire day, the woman described her life from the time she started using drugs and liquor in increasing quantities from the age of 14 to the time she passed out in Garceau's hotel room after taking several Tuinols (tranquilizers) and drinking a substantial quantity of rum.

She testified that when she woke up she was lying on the bed next to the wall with Garceau's body beside her and the room in a state of disorder as though it had been ransacked someone looking for something.

Asked by her lawyer A.P. Serka if she recalled stabbing Garceau she replied : "No I don't."

Serka also asked if she had bound Garceau's legs with electrical cord and she said she had not and that she had no intention that day of taking Garceau's life.

Asked if she had helped anybody stab Garceau she replied: "No I didn't."

She said she had no idea who stabbed him. She testified that she had purchased two pills from Garceau, whom, she said made his living selling the drugs. She said she recalled another woman, Louise Ann Lewicki, coming to Garceau's room and attempting to buy pills.

She said Louise asked Garceau if he had any more Tuinols or "bombers" and that Garceau told her no.

Mrs. Lewicki was charged with Garceau's murder but strangled herself to death in her Oakalla jail cell last Sept 2, two months before Miss Chartrand was arrested in Prince Albert, Sask.

"She got upset. She thought he was lying to her. She offered to buy and said she would pay double."

The witness testified that Louise Lewicki was getting angry but left the room when Garceau pushed her out the door.

The witness told the court she passed out and that when she came to Louise was back again, still wanting to buy pills. She said Garceau told her he didn't have any and also that she was too "high."

"She was mad and raised a glass to hit him. He grabbed her arm and pushed her out." She said.

"She put her foot against the door and swore at him."

The witness testified that she never saw Louise again and that Garceau propositioned her to go to bed with him.

She said she refused and that Garceau asked her again but didn't get angry when she refused again.

Asked by Serka what happened next the woman replied:

"I don't remember. I laid down and went to sleep."

She said that when she woke up she bumped Garceau with her elbow and thought he was asleep.

She said she started to panic because she had never seen a dead person before.

She told the jury she was at first too scared to touch him. Then turned him over to see if he was still alive.

"There was no movement, he just felt cold, not alive," she continued. "The door was partly open – the room was messy. It looked like somebody was looking for something, the drawers were pulled out.

She testified that there was blood on Garceau – that his shoulder was all bloody – and that she wasn't sure whether he had been shot or stabbed.

"When you woke up did you have any idea who had done this to Arthur Garceau?" Serka asked.

"Then I didn't think it could have been me because I wouldn't lie down beside a dead person," she testified.

She denied taking any money from the room although she had allegedly told police in Prince Albert that she had take \$170.

She also told the court that she wanted to help Louise and that was why she told them Louise didn't have anything to do with it.

Serka, asked her if she remembered telling police that she got the electrical cord that was tied around Garceau's legs.

She replied that she did but in response to another question by Serka she said that it wasn't true.

She testified that she staying in Vancouver for about a month and then left because her way of living had got her into so much trouble that she wanted to get away.

She said that when she told the police in Saskatchewan that she had killed a man she said she wanted them to believe it.

"I said I must have (killed him) because I wasn't sure I did."

The trial is continuing.