

The Vancouver Sun – Saturday, May 29, 1976

Murder suspect denies 'sex binge' before death

Crown Counsel John Rowan suggested in Assize Court Friday that a Skid Road pill pedlar was stabbed to death following a "sex binge" with two women.

The suggestion was denied by Connie Myrna Chartrand, 20, charged with the murder of Art Garceau in a Powell Street rooming house last May 30.

Earlier, police had charged Louise Ann Lewicki, who committed suicide in Oakalla jail while awaiting trial.

Earlier in the trial, evidence was introduced of a conversation overheard by police in which Louise Lewicki told her husband John, that she had stabbed Garceau and that she had had a sex binge with him.

Sometime later, Miss Chartrand was arrested in Saskatchewan and told police there that she had killed Garceau.

In court Thursday, she said she had made the confession because she thought she had killed Garceau and wanted to be put away.

She testified that she had been drinking and taking Tuinol pills and other pills given to her by Garceau and that she had then passed out and awoke to find him dead beside her.

"Wasn't it true that both you and Louise together stabbed Garceau" asked Rowan.

"No. That isn't true." Replied the witness.

Continuing his cross-examination, Rowan asked Miss Chartrand if she had taken part in the sex binge mentioned by Louise Lewicki in the conversation overheard by police.

"No, I didn't. It isn't true," replied Miss Chartrand.

"Do you believe a sex binge took place prior to the murder," Rowan persisted.

"I couldn't say if there was" replied the witness. "I didn't know anything about a sex binge."

In the conversation attributed to Louise Lewicki and her husband, Mrs. Lewicki said she had tied Garceau's ankles with electrical cord and stabbed him with a bread knife and that there were 107 stab wounds.

Mr. Justice H.E. Hutcheon and the jury of six men and six women were told earlier that Garceau was stabbed 186 times, one wound penetrating a throat artery and causing death.

According to Miss Chartrand, she had met Garceau in a downtown café, got some pills from him and was then invited to rest in his room because she looked tired.

She said she took more pills in the room, drank a lot of liquor and that, on two occasions, Louise Lewicki came to the room to buy pills from Garceau, who denied having any and sent her away.

Miss Chartrand told the jury that she subsequently blacked out and awoke to find Garceau's blood-stained body beside her.

Said Rowan: "It's not likely that one (sex binge) took place on your story?"

"I don't know," replied the witness.

"You were asleep through the whole happening?" asked Rowan.

"Yes I didn't wake up," replied the witness.

Rowan questioned her extensively about her confession to police when she was arrested on a drunk charge in Saskatchewan and told them about killing a man wiping off a knife after delivering what she thought was fatal blow to his head.

"That was a straight lie?" asked Rowan.

"Yes," replied the witness, "I couldn't have."

Rowan continued; "Even if you were in a frenzied state from these drugs?"

Miss Chartrand replied: "I don't think I've ever been in a frenzied state."

In a statement she allegedly made to police in Saskatchewan, she said she became very violent at times – "a different person" – because drugs eat up your brain.

Asked by Rowan why she confessed to the murder, she said she had to straighten out and pull herself together.

"I felt lost, the way I was going drinking and taking pills. I just wasn't having a happy life."

Rowan suggested there were other ways to straighten out than confessing to murder.

Dr. R.I. Whitman, a psychiatrist called by defence lawyer A.P. Serka, said Miss Chartrand was suffering from epilepsy and personality disorder with depressive features.

He said she had tried to meet her difficulties with alcohol and drugs and at times had suicidal tendencies.

Asked by Rowan if it was possible for an epileptic in seizure to stab someone 186 times, Dr. Whitman said it was possible but crimes of violence were not common among people suffering seizures.

City analyst E.J. Fennell testified that a person who had taken the quantity of pills and liquor Miss Chartrand claimed to have taken would quickly lapse into a deep sleep verging on coma.

He said it would be quite possible for such a person to sleep through violent behavior but they could also be violent themselves because the drugs and liquor would relax controls.

Crown and defence lawyers will make their final submissions Monday and Mr. Justice Hutcheon will charge the jury.