Reporting a mass murder: Coverage of the Charles Starkweather case by the "Lincoln Star" and the "Omaha World Herald"

Michelle Barret Ravnikar
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REPORTING A MASS MURDER:

COVERAGE OF THE CHARLES STARKWEATHER CASE

BY THE LINCOLN STAR AND THE OMAHA WORLD HERALD

By

Michelle Barret Ravnikar

B. S., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1980

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for the degree of

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Journalism

Reporting a Mass Murder: Coverage of the Charles Starkweather Case by the Lincoln Star and the Omaha World Herald (116 pp.)

Director: Warren Brier

The Charles Starkweather mass murder case in Lincoln, Neb., was a major national news story in 1958 and 1959. Starkweather, 19, admitted nine slayings in Nebraska and one in Wyoming within three days. He also confessed to an earlier killing, and he implicated his girlfriend, Caril Fugate, 14, who accompanied him on the killing spree. Both were found guilty of first-degree murder. Starkweather was executed June 25, 1959. Fugate was sentenced to life imprisonment and paroled in 1981.

The case involved a series of sensational crimes. Reporters often worked under tight deadlines and unpleasant circumstances. Starkweather and Fugate were the subjects of intense public interest.

For much of the Midwest, the Lincoln Star and the Omaha World Herald are major sources of information. This study examines the accuracy and thoroughness of their coverage. And it determines if inaccuracies, sensationalism, bias, or gaps in information occurred in either newspaper.

It includes interviews with the lead reporter from each newspaper. They recall the problems in covering the case and their personal feelings about it. They also give their perspectives on how journalism has changed since the late 1950s.

The Star's coverage was more extensive than the World Herald's coverage, which lacked depth and had some significant gaps in information. The World Herald printed few background stories, features or analyses about the case. About 45 percent of its stories were from wire services. Both newspapers condemned Starkweather and Fugate before their trials. Although the Star's coverage had some shortcomings, it better informed readers about this fifth worst mass murder in recent U.S. history.
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The Charles Starkweather mass murder case created a national sensation in 1958. Starkweather, 19, admitted nine killings in Nebraska and one in Wyoming within three days. He also confessed to an earlier murder. Caril Fugate, 14, accompanied him on the killing spree and, although she still maintains her innocence, was implicated by him. Both were found guilty of first-degree murder. Fugate was sentenced to life imprisonment and was paroled in 1981. Starkweather was executed in the electric chair June 25, 1959.

The Lincoln Star and Omaha World Herald were major sources of information for much of the Midwest. The Star, founded in 1902, had a circulation of 24,966 in 1958. The Omaha World Herald, founded in 1885, had a circulation of 248,100.

The case involved a series of sensational crimes and created intense public interest. Reporters and editors often worked under tight deadlines. This thesis examines and compares the accuracy and thoroughness of each newspaper's coverage. It determines if inaccuracies, sensationalism, bias, or gaps in information occurred in either newspaper.

I would like to thank the Nebraska Historical Society in Lincoln, Neb., for its help in obtaining copies of pertinent newspaper articles. I would also like to thank Warren Brier, journalism graduate advisor; Charile Hood, School of Journalism Dean; and Harry Fritz, history professor for their help and time as
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CHAPTER 1
The Crimes and Trials

Suspicious relatives were sure something was awry at the Marion and Velda Bartlett home in the placid college town of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Barbara Von Busch, Velda's daughter and Marion's stepdaughter, had not seen her parents for days. She went with her husband, Robert, to Belmont, a run-down part of Lincoln where the Bartletts lived, to check on the family. It was January 25, 1958.

They were met at the door by Barbara's 14-year-old sister, Caril Ann Fugate. She refused to let the couple in the house, saying her mother and stepfather had the flu and were under a doctor's orders to see no one.¹

The Von Busches, finding Caril's explanation strange, asked police to investigate. The police were told the same story by Fugate and left without entering the home, satisfied that all was in order.

But on Monday, January 27, Velda Bartlett's mother, Pansy Street, also was turned away by Caril. Again police were called. Again they went to the home. This time, after receiving no answer to their knocks, police entered through a window. The house was

¹ Omaha World Herald, 23 February 1958.
deserted. A note on the front door said, "Stay a way. Every Body is sick with the flue." It was signed, "Miss Bartlett." The police left again. Robert Von Busch was still troubled. Later that day, he decided to inspect the house himself. He called Rodney Starkweather, a friend of his and the brother of Fugate's boyfriend, Charles Starkweather. Rodney agreed to accompany him to the Bartlett home.

There, while looking in the back yard where police had not checked, they found the body of 57-year-old Marion Bartlett in an old, unused chicken coop, wrapped in rags. Nearby, in an outdoor toilet, lay the quilt-wrapped body of 35-year-old Velda. Police arrived within minutes. As the ambulance carrying Velda's body drove away, a probing flashlight revealed the remains of Marion and Velda's 2-year-old daughter, Betty Jean. She, too, was in the outdoor toilet, placed inside a cardboard grocery box.3

Marion and Velda had died of small-caliber bullet wounds to the head. Cuts were also found on the bodies. Betty Jean had a skull fracture.4

Police ordered the arrest of 19-year-old Charles Starkweather and the Fugate girl. They were believed to be driving

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3Omaha World Herald, 23 February 1958.
Starkweather's 1949 black Ford. Robert Von Busch went home that afternoon and locked his door.\footnote{Omaha World Herald, 23 February 1958.}

Teenagers fitting the wanted pair's description were reportedly seen in several areas in Nebraska and as far away as Kansas.\footnote{Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, p. 29.} But by the next morning, residents of the small town of Bennet, about 20 miles east of Lincoln, feared that Starkweather may have headed for their community. The concerns stemmed from the spreading news that a widely known local teenage couple had failed to return home from a Monday night date. Their fears were confirmed a few hours later.

A Bennet farmer told police that he had seen Starkweather and the Fugate girl late Monday afternoon. Their car was stuck in the mud near a recently razed school. The farmer had helped them get out, not realizing the pair was being sought. He had recognized the short, red-haired, bow-legged young man because Starkweather often hunted in the area.\footnote{Omaha World Herald, 29 1958.}

About noon Tuesday, police converged on the farm of August Meyer after Starkweather's abandoned car was found by another Bennet-area farmer on the lane leading to the house.

More than 20 uniformed officers and several detectives
surrounded the house. A number of newspeople were also there and a group of farmers stood nearby. The farmers had been out looking for the missing Bennet teenagers and had come to the Meyer place to see if help was needed. Many were carrying shotguns and hunting rifles. It seemed as if Starkweather's capture was imminent.\textsuperscript{8}

A voice boomed over a police loudspeaker: "We know you're in there. We'll give you five minutes to come out with your hands up." After receiving no answer, police moved in, lobbing nine tear-gas canisters into the house.\textsuperscript{9}

When the tear gas had dissipated, officers went in. The house had been ransacked, but no one was there. A state trooper approached an adjacent shed and kicked open the door. August Meyer's body lay inside, shot in the head. A trail of dried blood led from the back door of the house to the shed. One of the farmers at the scene was Louis Meyer, brother of 70-year-old August. Louis knew that August let Starkweather hunt on his land and had gone to the farm, too late, to warn him.\textsuperscript{10}

Apprehension about the fate of the missing Bennet teenagers, 17-year-old Robert Jensen and 16-year-old Carol King, grew. Law-enforcement officers and townspeople combed the area. The search

\textsuperscript{8} Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{9} Omaha World Herald, 29 January 1958.
\textsuperscript{10} Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, p. 34.
ended a few hours later with the discovery of the bodies nearly a mile from the Meyer farm. About 4 p.m., a farmer searching the grounds of the razed school found torn books and papers near a storm cellar. Inside were the bodies.

Lincoln Sheriff Merle Karnopp said it appeared as if the pair had been slain in front of the cellar door and thrown down the steps. Jensen had been shot six times in the head. King had been shot once. She also had been the victim of what Lancaster County Attorney Elmer Scheele called "an unnatural sex attack." This led to his speculation that perhaps Caril Fugate was no longer traveling with Starkweather.\(^\text{11}\)

As the search spread to several surrounding states early Tuesday evening, the head of the Nebraska Safety Patrol summoned 100 troopers to Bennet from Omaha, Fremont, Columbus and Grand Island. A posse of locals also had been formed to help in the manhunt.\(^\text{12}\) Police now believed Starkweather was driving Bobby Jensen's missing 1950 dark blue Ford sedan. Scheele filed first-degree-murder charges against Charles Starkweather late Tuesday, and despite his belief that Caril Fugate may have no longer been with Starkweather, he said similar charges would soon be filed against her.

In an interview with a newsman, Rodney Starkweather said that

\(^\text{11}\)Lincoln Star, 29 January 1958.
\(^\text{12}\)Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, pp. 37-38.
Charlie was an excellent marksman and "always shot his game in the head."\(^{13}\) Neither Starkweather nor Fugate had been in police trouble before.

On Wednesday morning, January 29, Lincoln Mayor Bennett Martin posted a $500 personal check for information leading to Starkweather's capture. The head of the United Garbage Association added $100. Starkweather had worked as a garbage collector in Lincoln. Schools were open, but children were not allowed out for recess. Downtown store managers reported that they had sold nearly all guns and rifles available.\(^{14}\)

Although many Lincolnites and law enforcers felt sure that Starkweather had fled the area, posses still combed the Bennet area. People barred themselves in their homes and check points were set up on highways leading out of Lincoln.\(^{15}\) But while searchers concentrated on the Bennet area, Starkweather had doubled back to Lincoln and killed again in one of the swankiest sections of town. About noon Wednesday, police were called to the home of prominent businessman C. Lauer Ward by his cousin Fred. Lauer Ward had failed to show up at the office that morning and calls to the house had gone unanswered. Bobby Jensen's car was in the garage. Inside were three more victims.\(^{16}\)

\(^{13}\) Omaha World Herald, 29 January 1958.

\(^{14}\) Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, p. 43.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{16}\) Lincoln Star, 30 January 1958.
Mr. Ward's body lay inside the front door. He had been shot in the left temple and the back on the right side and stabbed in the neck. Mrs. Ward's body was in an upstairs bedroom on the floor, stabbed in the chest, back and neck. The Wards' long-time maid, Lillian Fencl, was found in another bedroom, stabbed in the chest and stomach. There were cuts on her arms and legs. Both women were bound and gagged.17

Neighbors told reporters that Starkweather was familiar with the neighborhood and the Ward home. The area was on the garbage route that Starkweather had worked.

Nebraska Governor Victor Anderson mobilized the National Guard. Anderson, a friend of the Wards, had just visited with Mr. Ward at the governor's office in the capitol late Tuesday afternoon.18

The newest discoveries led Scheele to change his mind about the fate of Caril Fugate. He told reporters a girl's jacket with the letters "Bennet" on it was found in the house. Scheele also said there were other indications that the Fugate girl was still with Starkweather. Those indications, disclosed later, included the fact that Mrs. Ward's dressing room had been ransacked. Her clothes were strewn in the room and the entire upstairs reeked of perfume that someone had poured all over the floor.19 It was determined that

17 Ibid.
18 Beaver, Ripley, and Trese, p. 47.
19 Ibid., p. 46.
the latest victims had been killed during the late afternoon or previous evening.

Preparations were made to bring 14-year-old Michael, the Wards' only child, home from a Connecticut boarding school.\textsuperscript{20} Calls went out to be on the lookout for the Wards' missing late-model, black Packard sedan, license 2-17415. As most parents picked up their children from schools, armed guards stood watch. Residents were asked to remain off the streets and to leave their garage doors open so any efforts to ditch the Ward car could be spotted. Plans were made to seal off the city and start a block-by-block search of Lincoln.\textsuperscript{21} In just three days, the death toll was nine, and Starkweather was still loose.

But about the time police and reporters were finishing at the Wards' house, Starkweather was about 600 miles away. Shortly after noon Wednesday, the black Packard was heading west on U.S. highway 20-26 toward Douglas, Wyom.\textsuperscript{22}

Starkweather and Fugate were heading for Washington State where Starkweather had a brother, according to later testimony. Around 1:30 p.m., the pair heard the description of the Packard on the radio. Starkweather figured it was time to change cars. About 14 miles from Douglas, they saw a car parked on a side road. Inside was

\textsuperscript{20}Lincoln Star, 30 January 1958.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{22}Omaha World Herald, 30 January 1958.
37-year-old Merle Collison, a shoe salesman from Great Falls, Mont. He was sleeping. Although later statements given by Starkweather were sometimes contradictory, he initially told officers that he pulled up next to Collison's car and yelled at him to get out. When Collison did not, Starkweather shot through one of the car windows. Collison pushed open the door and Starkweather shot him five or six times. 23

About that time, Joseph Sprinkle, a land agent for an oil company in Casper, Wyo., drove by the two cars. Thinking he had come upon stranded motorists, he turned and went back to see if he could help. As he approached the cars, he saw a girl crying in the back seat of Collison's car. Then he saw Collison's body under the dashboard. 24

Starkweather, standing by the front door of the car, aimed at Sprinkle with the rifle he had hid behind his back and yelled, "You better help me get the emergency brake off this car or I'll kill you." 25 Sprinkle lunged for the rifle and the two started wrestling. Casper Deputy Sheriff Bill Romer, on his way to take care of routine business, drove by and saw the pair fighting. As he pulled up, Caril Fugate jumped from the car and ran, screaming to Romer, "He's going to kill me. He's crazy. He just killed a man."

23 Lincoln Star, 4 February 1958.
When Romer asked who was going to kill her, she said, "Starkweather." \(^\text{26}\)

By this time, Sprinkle had wrested the gun away and Starkweather ran to the Packard and fled. The gun was empty. \(^\text{27}\)

Romer radioed ahead to Douglas for a roadblock. Among those responding to the call were Converse County Sheriff Earl Heflin and Douglas Police Chief Robert Ainslie. The two, driving in the police chief's car, spotted the speeding black Packard about five miles from Douglas. They turned and followed Starkweather at speeds up to 120 miles an hour. The cars roared into Douglas, where Starkweather was forced to slow down due to traffic. Ainslie's car locked bumpers with Starkweather's, but the youth managed to pull away. Heflin, who had a .30-30 rifle and a .45-caliber revolver with him, fired several shots at the tires of the car as they sped through town.

As the cars left the city limits, Heflin fired a shot through the back window. About three miles east of Douglas, Starkweather suddenly stopped. \(^\text{28}\)

The lawmen ordered Starkweather to raise his hands. When he didn't, they shot at his feet. Starkweather started reaching for his shirt and they shot again. This time, Starkweather lay face down on the highway. They handcuffed the teenager and as they led

\(^\text{26}\)\textit{Lincoln Star}, 4 February 1958.

\(^\text{27}\)\textit{ibid.}, 30 January 1958.

him to the patrol car, Starkweather told the men, "If I'd had a gun, I'd have shot you."

There was an empty .38-caliber revolver and a knife in the backseat of the Packard. It was later learned that Starkweather stopped because a piece of flying glass nicked his ear and he was bleeding. He thought he had been shot.

"He thought he was bleeding to death. That's the kind of yellow S.O.B. he is," Heflin later said.29

It was January 29, just two days after the Bartlett family was found slain. Starkweather was taken to the Douglas jail for the night. Caril Fugate, under sedation, waited in the women's ward of the jail while Wyoming and Nebraska authorities decided what to do. Wyoming officials originally wanted to prosecute Starkweather for the murder of Merle Collison, but Wyoming Governor Milward Simpson, himself an opponent of the death penalty, agreed to extradite Fugate and Starkweather to Nebraska.30

By Thursday night, Fugate and Starkweather, traveling in separate cars, were on their way back to Lincoln. They drove because Starkweather didn't like to fly. On that trip, the group stopped overnight in Gering, Nebraska. Lancaster County Attorney Merle Karnopp said Starkweather confessed, saying he killed because

30 ibid.
of what he called "a hatred that built up in me." Starkweather also confessed to the murder of a service station attendant during a Dec. 1 robbery. The attendant was Robert Colvert, 21, recently married and about to become a father. His body had been found, shot in the head, dumped alongside a country road close to Lincoln.

Meanwhile, Fugate was returning to Lincoln to face murder charges also, although she maintained that she was an unwilling hostage throughout the ordeal and suspected that Starkweather had planned to kill her once they got to Washington. Starkweather also told authorities that she was a hostage, but while in the Wyoming jail, he had penned a poorly spelled letter to his parents, which said, in part, "But dad I'm not real sorry for what I did cause for the first time me and caril had more fun. she help me a lot, but if she comes back don't hate her she had not a thing to with the killing. all we wanted to do is get out of town."

When the pair got back to Lincoln late Friday, Starkweather was whisked off to a maximum-security cell in the state penitentiary. Fugate, because she was only 14, was taken to the state mental hospital. Nebraska law forbade placing a juvenile under 16 in jail with adults. As her car passed through the gates of the hospital,
she responded to reporters' shouts by smiling and waving. She tried
to roll down a car window but was restrained.\textsuperscript{34}

Church bells had just recently finished tolling at several
churches in Lancaster County at the funerals of seven of the murder
victims. A minister at the funeral of Marion, Velda and Betty Jean
Bartlett told the group of about 50, "There can be no soft words. .
. . All of us in Lincoln must have been shirking our
responsibility."\textsuperscript{35}

Caril's story, already doubted by authorities, came under
further scrutiny when it was revealed the next day that Starkweather
recanted his earlier admission that he had held her hostage.
Instead, he told authorities that she had been a willing companion
who had even held a gun on Lillian Fencl while they were in the Ward
home.\textsuperscript{36}

Fugate had originally told authorities that a gang of boys was
staying at the Bartlett house while plotting a bank robbery. She
said they "chickened out" after a while and left. Police found out
later that the gang Caril referred to was a hot-rod club
Starkweather belonged to for a short time. Police learned that the
club had disbanded in 1955 because members could not decide

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Omaha World Herald}, 1 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Lincoln Star}, 1 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{ibid.}, 3 February 1958.
what they were supposed to do.\textsuperscript{37}

Fugate also implicated Starkweather in the Colvert murder, but she said that several youths were involved and gave officials the name of the boy who she said pulled the trigger. Police also discounted this story when they learned that the youth she had named had not been in Lincoln the past year. Starkweather, they determined, had acted alone.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite being confronted with these discrepancies, Caril maintained her innocence, saying she wanted to take a lie-detector test. She was not given the test.\textsuperscript{39}

She also told her father when he visited her at the hospital that she did not know the Bartletts had been killed until her capture in Wyoming. She said they must have been murdered when she was in school and that Starkweather told her that they were being held hostage in another house and if she didn't do as she was told, they would be killed. Caril also said she was held at gunpoint when anyone came to the Bartletts' door. The elder Fugate told reporters she "broke down" when the talk turned to her mother and baby sister.\textsuperscript{40}

Starkweather and Fugate appeared in the Lancaster County Court.

\textsuperscript{37} Omaha World Herald, 31 January 1958.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Lincoln Star, 1 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 3 February 1958.
February 3. Starkweather, wearing prison clothes, pleaded not guilty to two charges of first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of Robert Jensen. The counts: premeditated murder and murder while in the commission of a robbery. County Attorney Scheele based the charges on Starkweather's written statement that said, in part, that Robert Jensen's wallet was taken before he was shot.41

Caril, appearing later in the day, wore a dark blue shirt, white sweater and beige suede jacket. She was accompanied by her father, stepmother and older sister. She was charged on identical counts. Caril also pleaded not guilty. Later, it was discovered that the jacket Caril wore at the court appearance belonged to Mrs. Ward.

Fugate and Starkweather were ordered held without bond and if convicted could face the electric chair.42

Neither the Fugate nor Starkweather families could afford attorneys for their children. The judge, Harry Spencer, appointed two defenders for Starkweather because of the amount of work anticipated. Charlie's trial was expected to take place in early May.43

Before the trial, Starkweather's attorneys told reporters that another confession had been scrawled on the wall of the Scottsbluff

41 ibid., 4 February 1958.
42 ibid.
43 ibid., 3 March 1958.
jail by Starkweather when he spent the night there while being transported from Wyoming. It read, "Caril is the one who said to go to Washington State. By the time anybody will read this I will be dead for all the killings, then they cannot give Caril the chair to. From Lincoln, Nebraska they got us Jan. 29, 1958. 1958, kill 11 persons. Charles kill 9, all men. Caril Kill 2 all girls. They have so many cops and people watching us leave I can't add all of them up." Underneath this writing was an arrow-pierced heart with Charles Starkweather and Caril Fugate written in it. 44

Starkweather's attorneys entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity at the beginning of the trial. The plea was made against Charles' and his family's wishes. Starkweather sat quietly as the plea was entered. 45

His attorneys also made public part of another confession in which Starkweather said that at one point in the killing spree he wanted to give himself up, but Caril, sitting in the car with a .410-shotgun on her lap, convinced him not to surrender. Fugate's attorney dismissed those claims as an attempt by Starkweather to shift the blame for the murders. 46 Meanwhile, Fugate waited for a State Supreme Court decision on whether she should be tried as a

44ibid., 5 May 1958.
45Omaha World Herald, 6 May 1958.
46Lincoln Star, 8 May 1958.
juvenile or an adult.  

By the second week of the trial, a grab bag of conflicting confessions had been made public. Starkweather contended in those confessions, in addition to what he had already said, that Caril clubbed 2-year-old Betty Jean and shot Mrs. Bartlett to death. He also said Caril shot and slashed Carol King, because Fugate mistakenly thought he had sexually attacked King in the cellar. Starkweather denied killing Mrs. Ward or Lillian Fencl, implying that Caril Fugate was responsible. While battling with Merle Collison along the Wyoming highway, Starkweather said his rifle jammed, but Fugate came to the rescue, pumping Collison with about 10 bullets. Starkweather said, "Caril was the most trigger happy person I ever seen." Again, Fugate and her attorney denied the accusations.

During closing arguments May 22, Starkweather's attorney wept as he told jurors that his own life paralleled Starkweather's and that "this boy is a product of our society. . . . I am asking you for the life of Charles Starkweather." But prosecutor Elmer Scheele called the defense case a "hoax" and a "deliberate attempt to place the smokescreen of emotion over the facts." He called the death penalty a "duty to society." The jury deliberated for nearly 22 hours. The jurors,

47 ibid., 9 May 1958.
48 ibid., 17 May 1958.
49 ibid., 23 May 1958.
grim-faced and some near tears, filed in and sat quietly as the jury foreman told Judge Spencer the verdict: "Guilty. . . . We, the jury, do fix the penalty at death." 50

Starkweather listened to the verdict, resting his head in his hands. He murmured something to one of his attorneys and walked out of the courtroom, escorted by two guards. 51

The judge thanked the jury and set a June court date to hear a motion for a new trial, which was the first step in an appeal to the State Supreme Court and mandatory under Nebraska law in all death-penalty cases. Fugate's attorney told reporters that Caril wasn't interested in how Charlie's trial turned out. 52

As expected, the judge turned down the request for a new trial. Charlie's execution was set for December 17. Early in July, another ruling came down. Caril Fugate would be tried as an adult. Her trial was set for Oct. 27. 53

Caril began her trial convinced she would be acquitted, but once she took the stand, she was described as a "hard-faced, angry young woman." 54 She maintained she was a hostage and went along

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51 ibid.
53 Beaver Ripley, and Trese, p. 23.
54 ibid., p. 128.
with Starkweather only because she feared for her mother and baby sister.

But about a week into the trial, the prosecution called Starkweather to the stand. His testimony was damning. He repeated portions of his earlier accusations. The allegation that Caril could have gotten away, had she wanted, was substantiated by a waitress who told jurors that Caril was alone for about 10 minutes in the cafe where she worked while waiting for some hamburgers. The waitress said Caril seemed calm and Starkweather was nowhere in sight.  

Exactly 10 months after Caril's mother, stepfather and baby sister were murdered, Caril Fugate was found guilty. The punishment was life imprisonment. Caril, upon hearing the verdict, broke down and sobbed. Caril would be sent to the Women's Reformatory in York, Nebr.  

Meanwhile, Starkweather announced he was writing his autobiography while in the penitentiary. He was awaiting the outcome of an appeal to the State Supreme Court, which had postponed his scheduled execution. But in December, his murder conviction was upheld. A new execution date was set for March.  

In March, Starkweather was again granted a stay of execution,

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55 Lincoln Star, 6 November 1958.
56 ibid., 22 November 1958.
57 ibid., 20 December 1958.
allowing time to plead for his life before the State Board of Pardons and Parole. After a 45-minute hearing in April, the board refused the appeal and set an execution date in May.\textsuperscript{58}

Then Fugate appealed to the governor to stay Starkweather's execution. She wrote the governor two letters, asking him to spare Starkweather's life, so she could see him. She said if she could see him, he might tell the truth and show that she was innocent. Governor Brooks denied the request the day before the scheduled execution.\textsuperscript{59}

The next day, another request by Starkweather to spare him the death penalty was denied by Federal Judge Robert Van Pelt. Only a last-minute stay by a U.S. Circuit Court or U.S. Supreme Court judge or a delay ordered by the governor could halt the execution. Starkweather visited with his family and drank black coffee most of the evening. The prison chaplain went to Starkweather's cell at midnight. The execution was set for 6 a.m. the following day.\textsuperscript{60}

But 98 minutes before he was scheduled to die, an attempt by Starkweather's father, Guy, succeeded. The elder Starkweather telephoned and sent a telegram to Federal District Judge Richard Robinson of Omaha, who gave Starkweather until June 4 to appeal his case to the Federal Circuit Court. Starkweather smiled when he

\textsuperscript{58}ibid., 22 April 1958
\textsuperscript{59}ibid., 21 May 1959.
\textsuperscript{60}ibid., 22 May 1959.
heard the news, shook the chaplain's hand and joined him in a prayer of thanksgiving.

Bobby Jensen's father, Robert Sr., who had made a point of being at his son's grave at the time of Starkweather's scheduled execution, heard the news of the stay as he stood in the rain at the cemetery. 61

Starkweather's appeal was rejected June 4. June 12 was set as the new date for his execution, but U.S. Supreme Court Judge Charles Whitaker stayed the execution once more to allow Starkweather to appeal the Circuit Court denial to the high court. A new attorney from Washington, D.C., was called by Guy Starkweather and agreed to take the case for nothing. After the most recent stay was granted, the attorney predicted that court action would last at least another two years. 62

But the high court refused to hear the appeal, and June 25 was set for Starkweather's death. This time, despite further attempts at last-minute reprieves, Starkweather was led to the execution chamber at 12:01 a.m., June 25. Three minutes later, Charlie Starkweather was pronounced dead. 63

61 Ibid., 23 May 1959.
62 Ibid., 11 June 1959.
CHAPTER 2

The Lincoln Star's Coverage

The Lincoln Star, a morning paper with a circulation of about 25,000 in 1958, began its coverage of the Starkweather case Jan. 28, 1958, with a 15-inch story on the Bartlett slayings. According to the story, Caril Ann Fugate and Charles Starkweather were being sought for questioning.

During the next 17 months, more than 300 stories were written on the subject for a total of about 4,300 inches. Coverage escalated quickly with the discovery of more bodies, mounting evidence against Starkweather as the killer and increased speculation about Fugate's role in the murders. Table 1 shows the Star's coverage from the discovery of the Bartletts' bodies to Starkweather's capture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>245.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>339.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22
The first story on the Bartletts' deaths was written by the Star's crime reporter, Del Harding. When the bodies of August Meyer, Carol King and Bobby Jensen were found in Bennet, the Star editors assigned an additional staff writer to cover feature stories. Of the five stories printed Jan. 29, one 3.5-inch story was from the Associated Press. Two were written by Harding, two by a staff writer.

Coverage on Jan. 30 was dominated by the deaths of the Wards and their maid and Starkweather's capture. Three of the 20 stories printed that day were wire stories. One of those wire stories was partially rewritten by Star staff. Besides the two reporters already covering the story, two more staff writers were assigned to cover various angles and were given bylines. Seven stories were written by four staff writers and 10 stories had no byline.

The first three days were especially intense for writers and editors covering the story. Bodies were being found every few hours and reporters from other papers, magazines, radio and television stations were converging on the city. According to a story Jan. 30, plans were being made to seal off the city, and people were asked to stay off the streets. When the victims were found at the Ward home, it was reported that the "city-wide manhunt had whipped into new frenzy."\

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1 Interview with Del Harding, April 17, 1986.
As pressure increased, the Star assigned more reporters to the story. Despite the pressure, and with fewer than 10 full-time news reporters, the Star had a reporter at every murder scene and in Wyoming after Starkweather's capture. The paper did not rely heavily on wire services, using four wire-service stories out of a total of 26 stories during those crucial three days.

In the aftermath of the murders, and until the beginning of Starkweather's trial in early May, coverage was steady, although there was naturally much less of it than during the first few days. Stories were published at least weekly and many times daily.

Major topics included new details about the murders, Starkweather's conflicting confessions, questions about police competency in handling the case and the subsequent hiring of an outside investigator to evaluate police actions, the victims' funerals, and the appointments of Starkweather's and Fugate's attorneys and their initial court appearances.

When not much was happening on the case, the Star published feature stories that included interviews with psychologists, educators, Starkweather's and Fugate's relatives, juvenile court authorities and social workers.

A five-part analysis examined why Starkweather may have killed, the roles school, church and family played in his life and the consequences of the murders to Lincoln.

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3 Interview with Del Harding, April 17, 1986.
In Table 2, the coverage is broken down by weeks, starting with Jan. 31, the day Starkweather and Fugate returned to Lincoln, to May 4, the day before coverage began on Starkweather's trial. The last 11 days are combined in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31 - February 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 7 - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 14 - 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 21 - 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28 - March 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7 - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14 - 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21 - 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28 - April 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4 - 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11 - 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18 - 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25 - May 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 99 stories printed during the time, 63 had no byline. Seven reporters wrote 33 stories with a byline. Three were wire-service stories.
When Starkweather's trial began, 40 desk chairs were set up in the courtroom for reporters. Although no cameras or recording devices were allowed in the courtroom, elaborate broadcasting facilities were set up across the hall.4

Thanks, in part, to the court's willingness to accommodate reporters, coverage of Starkweather's trial was thorough. The Star typically had two reporters working on stories. Del Harding wrote the daily hard news stories about the trial, while another reporter, usually Nancy Benjamin, wrote daily feature stories about peripheral events.

An example of Benjamin's stories is a May 6 article headlined "Starkweather Attitude: Interested Bystander," an article about Starkweather and his mother's actions and responses to the proceedings throughout the day. Another Benjamin feature was "Starkweather Cuffs Photographer--Apologizes With New Threat," a story about an altercation Charlie had with a photographer during a recess and his apology that ended with "next time I'll kick you in the head."5

Other feature articles included interviews with Guy and Helen Starkweather, jurors' reactions and attitudes during the trial and general courtroom atmosphere.

5ibid., 10 May 1958.
Stories were printed daily throughout the trial, except on Sundays. Lincoln's Sunday paper was the *Sunday Journal and Star*, which combined Lincoln's evening paper, the *Journal*, and the morning *Star*. Although the Sunday paper occasionally used *Star* staff stories, typically *Journal* employees' articles and *Journal* format were used for the Sunday paper.⁶

Table 3 shows daily coverage of the trial beginning May 6, the day after the trial, and ending May 24 with the guilty verdict. Coverage increased sharply May 16 and 17, the days Starkweather appeared on the witness stand. Caril Fugate did not testify at Starkweather's trial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>81.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>163.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶Interview with Harding, April 17, 1986.
(Table 3 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>139.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55.458</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1,114.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 63 stories printed during the trial, one was a wire story. Four staff members wrote 36 stories with bylines and 26 stories had no byline. Of the articles printed without a byline, one was the text of a 12-inch letter that Charlie had written to his younger brother advising him to read the Bible.\(^7\) Another was dictated to a reporter by Starkweather's mother, Helen. Termed an "open letter to the people of Lincoln," Helen Starkweather explained how she tried to rear her seven children and admitted that "what happened to Charlie in that week was a catastrophe."\(^8\)

Six articles without bylines were unedited texts of letters written by Starkweather or statements he gave to authorities that were made public during the trial.

\(^7\)Lincoln Star, 22 May 1958.
\(^8\)ibid., 17 May 1958.
Those texts included a confession to authorities in Wyoming a letter he wrote describing the murders, found on him when he was captured; a letter to his parents from the Wyoming jail; a letter to Elmer Scheele describing the Carol King slaying; and two statements he gave about the time he and Fugate were in the Wards' home. These articles totaled 130.75 inches.

The monthly coverage from the end of Starkweather's trial to the beginning of Fugate's trial is shown in Table 4. Stories listed in May are those printed after Starkweather's trial ended, and those listed in October were published before Fugate's trial began.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1958</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1958</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1958</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1958</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1958</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1958</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10ibid., 13 May 1958.
12ibid., 16 May 1958.
13ibid., 16 and 17 May 1958.
Of the 18 stories between May and October, six were written by three Star reporters with bylines. Eleven articles had no byline and one was a wire-service story.

Fugate's trial began Oct. 26, 1958. The amount of coverage of her trial, while extensive, was less than Starkweather's trial, despite the fact it lasted longer. The coverage increased Nov. 7 and 8, the days Starkweather testified.

The Star handled Fugate's trial in much the same way as it did Starkweather's trial. One reporter covered the hard news and another was usually assigned to write feature stories. An example of such a feature was a Nov. 13 article titled "Caril Reserved, Emotionless," a 13-inch story on Caril's "striking paleness" and her "emotionless testimony."¹⁴

Table 5 is broken down by weeks during Fugate's trial starting Oct. 27 and ending Nov. 22, the day Caril was found guilty. Again, Sundays are excluded.

| Table 5 |
| Stories | Inches |
|--------------------------------|
| October 27 - November 2 | 10 | 193.80 |
| November 3 - 9 | 11 | 216.00 |
| November 10 - 16 | 9 | 227.70 |
| November 17 - 22 | 14 | 248.770 |
| TOTAL | 44 | 886.270 |

Thirty stories were written by three Star reporters with bylines. Twelve stories had no byline and two were wire stories.

After the Fugate verdict was announced, until Starkweather's execution in June 1959, stories were published every month. Coverage increased markedly in May and June 1959. Most of the articles dealt with Starkweather and his legal attempts to evade execution. Some stories also covered Caril's legal plight and her life at the Women's Reformatory in York, Neb.

More than 100 inches of news was printed on Starkweather's execution June 25. The coverage on June 25, 1959, was second only to the Jan. 30, 1958, coverage of Starkweather and Fugate's capture and the discovery of the Wards' bodies.

With Starkweather's death came the end of the story. Occasional articles on Fugate's continuing legal battles were printed for years after Charlie's execution but, for all practical purposes, the Starkweather story was finally over.

Table 6 shows the coverage following Fugate's trial until the week following Starkweather's execution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1958</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1959</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1959</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1959</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Table 6 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1959</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>128.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1959</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>205.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1959</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>344.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>846.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 88 stories, 46 were published without a byline. Two were wire stories.

From the murders to the trials to Fugate's imprisonment and Starkweather's execution, the Star covered all aspects of the case extensively.

Besides reporting the hard-news stories, the Star reporters made continuing efforts to find feature stories. Nearly one out of four stories printed was a feature, covering topics such as courtroom atmosphere, articles about Starkweather in German papers, and how the Wards' dogs were faring after the Wards' deaths.

The Star had the home-town advantage and, appropriately, used only 12 wire stories out of a total of 32, despite having a small news staff. The Starkweather case was the biggest story in the history of Lincoln, and the Star gave it the coverage it deserved.

The Starkweather case was a series of sensational crimes by today's standards. It was even more so in the late 1950s when such mass murders were rarer than in 1986. It challenged the reporters' and editors' objectivity and judgment under tight deadline pressures.
During the days before Starkweather was caught, Nebraskans were understandably frightened by the rapidly unfolding chain of events. The ensuing trials and sentencing of Starkweather and Fugate generated a great amount of interest. The Star was a major source of news for these events. How well did the Star inform the public? Was the paper's reporting unnecessarily sensational? How much of the reporting was biased? To determine how well the Star covered the Starkweather case, those questions must be examined.

The first story about the Bartlett murders was a straight hard-news story. There were no unattributed statements or facts. The headline was succinct and factual. When the three victims in Bennet were discovered, the lead story was handled the same way as the previous story. However, that same day a feature story seemed sensational. It was headlined, "Jittery Bennet Armed Fortress." The story reported that the "400 town residents and surrounding farm families 'all have guns and won't mind using them.'" The article said "Most of the Bennet community remained indoors with guns handy."15

Though part of the first quote was attributed to a Bennet store owner, the statements were unverified and may have contributed to the ensuing fear. How did the reporter know that residents had guns handy or that all 400 wouldn't mind using them? The answers weren't in the article. A story the next day reported that hardware

store managers were running out of guns and ammunition since the previous day. Perhaps the front-page feature on "Jittery Bennet" contributed to the gun sales.

That same day, another feature said "Youth's Ex-Landlady Sure Girl Wasn't His Willing Accomplice." Starkweather had lived in an apartment for two months, and the landlady there was quoted as saying she was sure "that boy has forced Caril into this." She also said that Caril "was an awfully good girl who never could have done anything like this." The landlady had chatted with Caril when she had been there visiting Charlie.

Two months of occasional chats with someone hardly makes a person a judge of someone's character. The result was a background story sympathetic to Caril before any facts were known. However, at the end of the story, the landlady also said that Charlie "seemed all right." A story on Fugate's character could have included interviews with teachers, neighbors or friends who could have provided more information. Instead, the story lacked depth.

Another article, headlined "Father Insists Caril Traveled Under Force," was a 15-inch story in which Caril's father told the reporter what a wonderful child Caril was and how he "knew she was held by guns." The comments by Mr. Fugate were understandable; he was, after all, the girl's father.

17 ibid., 29 January 1958.
However, at this point, Caril was under arrest for suspicion of murder. Police were already telling reporters they doubted her hostage story. Regardless, the article led with, "A 14-year-old eighth grader . . . who had her heart set on becoming a nurse may never see her dreams come true." The article doesn't mention that Caril was arrested with Charlie. The article could have included Mr. Fugate's comments without sympathizing with Caril when her claims of victimization were dubious.

With the death of the Wards, the fear of Nebraskans became as much a part of the story as the murders and the capture of Starkweather and Fugate. A Jan. 30 headline stated, "Death of 3 More Here Set Shock Wave Of Fear," and with the capture of the pair, "CAPTURE IN WYOMING ENDS THREE-DAY REIGN OF TERROR." On the same day, the story of Lincolmites buying firearms at hardware stores was headlined "Lincoln Bought Guns, Ammo in Fear, Anger."

Two days later, after Starkweather and Fugate had returned to Lincoln, an article about the funerals of some of the victims was titled "Services Honor Slain in Aftermath of Terror."

Indeed, it was a frightening time for residents in Lincoln and surrounding communities. But how much of the fear was exacerbated by those types of headlines? Only in the article about people buying guns was there evidence or quotes from people who were

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18 ibid., 30 January 1958.
19 ibid., 1 February 1958.
frightened. It included comments such as "Somebody's got to stop that maniac," and "It's about time we got that crazy guy." One hardware store owner, talking about gun sales, told reporters "We had to make four or five trips to the warehouse in order to keep up with the demand."

Other articles said there was hysteria in Lincoln but gave no evidence of hysterical actions by residents. Were stores closing? Were people running through the streets with guns? Was anyone accidentally hurt during the terror? With the one exception mentioned, no such examples were given in the articles.

If the Star wanted to make panic a major part of the stories, examples or quotes could have lent more credence to the articles.

In crime reporting, it is important to avoid any suggestion that someone is being judged before a trial. For the most part, during the first few days, the Star reporters and editors were conscientious in doing so with Starkweather and Fugate. For example, in the article about the Bennet murders, Starkweather is said to be "sought in connection with the crimes." Although another article was headlined "Killer's Dad: 'Thank God He's Safe,'" the text in the story says Charlie was "wanted in connection with 10 brutal slayings." Again, in another article printed on the same day headlined "Word Of Capture Relief To Bennet," the

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21 Ibid.
"Lincoln teenagers were wanted for questioning in connection with the tragic triple slayings."  

After Starkweather signed a statement confessing to the murders, the Star reported that the 19-year-old "admittedly shot, knifed and clubbed 10 victims to death. . . ." The article on his return to Lincoln was titled, "Admitted Slayer Returns To City."  

One exception was in a story headlined "Services Friday, Saturday For Nine Victims of Murders." The story began with "Funeral Services for Mr. and Mrs. C. Lauer Ward . . . murder victims of Charles Starkweather. . . ." 

Another exception occurred when Starkweather and Fugate made their initial court appearances and entered not-guilty pleas. By this time, Starkweather had changed his confession and now implicated Fugate in the murders. At this point, with Charlie changing his confessions every few days, it was especially important to use care in choosing words to describe him. The Feb. 4 article led with "Mass killer Charles Starkweather. . . ." 

With the exception of one headline and two articles, the Star reporters and editors acted with prudence during these first crucial days in not appearing to judge the pair before the trial. 

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22ibid.  
24ibid., 1 February 1958.  
26ibid., 4 February 1958.
The first days of the murders and the week following Starkweather and Fugate's capture was an extremely tense and high-pressure time for reporters. Of 60 stories printed during this time, three were sensational. There were three instances of judging Starkweather before the trial. With the exception of the headline "Killer's Dad: 'Thank God He's Safe,'" the headlines were clear, succinct and contained no sensational language. Despite the glut of information, there were no apparent factual errors, although in the first story Caril's name was misspelled "Carrol."^27

The Star dug for in-depth features to accompany the hard-news stories. With the exceptions noted, the Star seemed to do an admirable job of handling the intense early days of this story.

From the second week in February to the beginning of Starkweather's trial, the Star printed stories regularly about Starkweather and Fugate. During this time, there was one instance of sensationalism in a feature story. The article was headlined "Canine Members Of Ward Home Begin Recovery From Tragedy." The article gave an update on the Wards' two dogs, Suzy and Queenie, who were injured when Starkweather and Fugate were in the home. The article stated, "Although recovering from her injuries, Suzy seems aware that friends have passed on." In describing Queenie, the

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article reported that "The Chesapeake, who followed the Ward housekeeper around and looked on her as a special friend, has had several visitors. . . ."^28

The feature gave no examples of how Suzy seemed aware that friends had died nor how the Chesapeake treated the maid as a special friend other than following the maid around. While the article could have been a touching feature story about the dogs, attributing human emotions to them without giving examples of such behavior made the article seem maudlin.

During this time, the Star's reporters and editors were more lax in avoiding the appearance of judging a person before the trial. For example, an article about Caril refusing to sign a statement she gave police referred to "Caril Fugate, 14-year-old companion of Charles Starkweather on his recent murder spree. . . ."^29 While discussing the charges against Fugate in an article titled "Caril Fugate Still Has No Attorney," it was said that "The charges were filed as the result of the recent murder binge of 19-year-old Charles Starkweather. . . ."^30

When Starkweather pleaded not guilty to two murder charges, the article about the plea said, "The 5-foot-5 flame-haired killer will be brought to trial . . . .," although later the article said,

^28 ibid., 5 February 1958.
^29 ibid., 6 February 1958.
^30 ibid., 7 February 1958.
"Starkweather reportedly has signed a statement involving himself in 10 murders. . . ."\textsuperscript{31}

Starkweather was described as a "19-year-old mass killer" in a story about Charlie being examined by psychiatrists.\textsuperscript{32} Again, in an article printed shortly before Starkweather's trial, he was called "the 19-year-old mass killer."\textsuperscript{33} Regarding speculation that Starkweather's attorneys would enter a plea of innocent-by-reason-of-insanity, Charlie again was called a "mass killer."\textsuperscript{34}

In a feature headlined, "If He'd Been A Juvenile Delinquent Starkweather Might Have Had Help," the question is asked: "Would one of these officials come up with the right answers to stop Charles Starkweather from becoming a 'mad-dog' killer?"\textsuperscript{35} A story about Caril's preliminary hearing described her as "Starkweather's companion on his recent murder rampage."\textsuperscript{36} A story about Starkweather's arraignment described him as "the flame-haired bantam killer."\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{31}ibid., 27 March 1958.
\textsuperscript{32}ibid., 15 April 1958.
\textsuperscript{33}ibid., 30 April 1958.
\textsuperscript{34}ibid., 2 May 1958.
\textsuperscript{35}ibid., 17 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{36}ibid., 8 March 1958.
\textsuperscript{37}ibid., 20 March 1958.
In many other articles, he is still referred to as a "confessed killer," or as "being charged with two counts of murder," or with a qualifier such as "accused of the killings" or "allegedly killed." Despite using such qualifiers for most of the stories printed between February and May, the Star continued to judge Starkweather before the trial.

During the months before Starkweather's trial, the headlines were again clear, with no ambiguous or sensational language. Of 99 stories printed, there was one instance of sensationalism and nine examples of suggesting Starkweather's guilt before the trial.

When Starkweather's trial began, at least one feature or background story was printed each day. Topics such as what Starkweather and his mother wore at the trial and what Charlie had to eat the day before were reported. The willingness of Charlie's family and attorneys to talk to reporters gave readers an insightful look at the case and Starkweather's family.

During the trial, the Star again appeared to judge Starkweather before the jury found him guilty. While potential jurors were being questioned, many were dismissed because they thought Charlie was a mass killer. A feature story on the questioning of prospective jurors said "many who felt themselves impartial under first questioning faltered and admitted their judgment would probably be
colored by their conviction that Charles Starkweather was a mass killer.\(^{38}\)

Many potential jurors could not presume him innocent. Yet, potential jurors who had read the Star regularly saw him described as a mass killer. An article on the first day of the trial called it "the murder trial of mass killer Charles Starkweather."\(^{39}\) On the same day another article also referred to him as a "mass killer."\(^{40}\)

At various times in the trial, Charlie claimed he had killed in self-defense and that he had not killed half of the victims. In those articles, he is referred to as an "accused slayer" or "accused killer." But an article headlined "Defense Attorneys Release Portion Of Youth's Post-Arrest Story" begins, "Killer Charles Starkweather. . . ."\(^{41}\) In an article on psychiatrists who were expected to testify, the reporter wrote, "It is expected that the case of the 19-year-old mass killer will reach the jury about Wednesday."\(^{42}\)

An editorial by Helen Starkweather on the difficulties of rearing children and her hopes that she taught hers right from wrong

\(^{38}\)ibid., 7 May 1958.  
\(^{39}\)ibid., 6 May 1958.  
\(^{40}\)ibid.  
\(^{41}\)ibid., 7 May 1958.  
\(^{42}\)ibid., 19 May 1958.
was headlined, "Killer's Mother Speaks." An article in which Guy Starkweather spoke with reporters included a reference to his son's "murder spree activities." In an article on testimony presented at the trial, Starkweather was called a "killer." A headline of another article about defense witnesses' testimony read, "Killer Can't Act or Feel Like Normal Person." However, in the text Starkweather is referred to as a "murder defendant." After the jury had begun deliberations, a story led with, "The 12 jurors deliberating the fate of mass killer Charles Starkweather . . . ." The Star seemed casual in calling Charlie a mass killer during his trial.

The Star also reported on the difficulties attorneys had finding jurors who were not convinced Starkweather was a mass killer. Granted the evidence against Charlie was overwhelming and the attorneys talked freely to reporters about the details, the Star had a responsibility not to appear to judge him before his trial. Charlie's attorneys never asked for a change of venue despite the coverage and the fact that he was called a "mass killer" on numerous occasions in the local paper.

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43 ibid., 17 May 1958.
44 ibid.
45 ibid.
46 ibid., 20 May 1958.
47 ibid., 23 May 1958.
Other than the two headlines that referred to Starkweather as a "killer," the headlines during the trial were clear, concise and did not contain inflammatory or sensational language. The coverage of the proceedings was extensive and evenhanded and the feature and background stories provided new angles to the sometimes dull court proceedings. Starkweather was called a "killer" or "mass killer" in 10 of 63 stories. Other than those instances, none was sensational.

However, during the trial a trend became more apparent. Nearly half the stories referred to Starkweather's red hair. Many times he was called "flame-haired," often coupled with "pint-sized" or "bow-legged." In most instances, he was described as "red-haired." Caril Fugate's hair color was mentioned twice during the entire case. The only other person whose hair color was described was Charlie's mother, who was also a redhead. The Star reporters seemed to place some significance on his hair color. No other words or phrases were used to describe Starkweather nearly as often as this one. Perhaps the cliche that people with red hair have fiery tempers affected the reporters' descriptions.

Often key testimony was included in the stories verbatim. If the reporters and editors had been more careful in not judging Starkweather in the articles, the coverage of the trial would have been better.

After Starkweather's trial, coverage subsided. Most of the stories dealt with briefs filed and hearings before the Nebraska
Supreme Court on behalf of Starkweather. Several other articles covered the fees requested by Charlie's attorneys and costs of the trial to the county.

Feature stories included a history of men executed in Nebraska's electric chair; a biography of attorney William Matschullat, who helped defend Charlie; a short article on Charlie's bet with a defense psychiatrist of a pack of cigarettes that Charlie would get the electric chair; and a story about a "happy, healthy" Caril's trip to the dentist. There were no instances of sensationalism or bias during this time. Headlines accurately reflected story content and were clearly written.

One of Starkweather's most publicized quotes was reported in late May. Shortly after his trial, attorneys told reporters that Charlie had said he "would go to the electric chair tomorrow if he could have Caril sit on his lap." 48

Guy Starkweather gave reporters a similar quote from Charlie. His statement was later used in the early-1970s movie "Badlands," loosely based on Fugate and Starkweather. Bruce Springsteen also used it in his record album "Nebraska" in a song about the pair.

The central issue at her trial was whether she was, as she claimed, a hostage, or, as Starkweather claimed, a willing companion and perhaps even a participant in the murders. Those questions dominated the coverage. Caril's trial lasted longer than Charlie's, but not as much was written about it.

48 Ibid., 27 May 1958.
Starkweather's testimony was the most sensational and received the most coverage. The proceedings were extensively covered in news stories and analyzed.

During Fugate's trial, the Star avoided judging her before the jury found her guilty. At no time did reporters state or imply that Caril helped Charlie or participated willingly, although on several occasions she was described as Starkweather's "companion" on the crime spree. Also, one feature implied that Caril's case was lost when Starkweather testified against her. The article, which took a flippant approach to the murder trial, led with, "Chivalry is dead. For over 2 1/2 hours Wednesday, a pintsized teenager turned 'stool-pigeon' to relate the details of last January's murder spree and nail shut the last cracks in the prosecution's contention that young Caril Fugate aided Charles Starkweather during the week of terror." Nothing was "nailed shut" and the Star should not have implied so.

Caril was described unflatteringly during her trial. While prospective jurors were being questioned, it was said that Caril watched the proceedings "with a look of forced attention on her perpetually pouty face." In another story she was described as "showing marked petulance against both Sheriff Merle Karnopp and Mrs. Karnopp who is assigned to escort Caril during the trial. . . ."

49 Lincoln Star, 6 November 1958.
50 Ibid., 28 October 1958.
51 Ibid., 13 November 1958.
Again, the Star printed stories that covered peripheral events such as Starkweather joking with a deputy who drove him to the trial ("Where'd you get your driver's license? Sears and Roebuck?") and the jury being unable to decide whether to take Veterans Day off. One story reported that a free-lance newsman from Iowa was reprimanded by the judge for offering odds on the outcome of the trial. Another included interviews with Caril's father, the father of murder victim Bobby Jensen and the mother of victim Carol King after the verdict was announced. Star reporters seemed to make a special effort to find background stories.

The tendency to refer to Starkweather as a redhead continued. In one article he was called Caril's "fiery-haired, fiery-tempered ex-boyfriend." In others, he was called red-haired or a redhead.

There was a discrepancy between two stories. In an article on the day's testimony, which included details about the Bartletts' deaths given by assistant police chief Eugene Masters, it was said that, "while listening to this part of his testimony, a tear slipped down Caril's cheek. She also chewed her lips nervously." A story printed the same day was headlined "Smiling Caril Breaks Down As Bartletts' Death Related." The article said that Caril "broke down" when Eugene Masters testified about the Bartletts.

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52 ibid., 13 November 1958.
53 ibid., 11 November 1958.
54 ibid., 20 November 1958.
There is a big difference between breaking down and a tear slipping down someone's cheek. The references were on the same page.

In a 27-inch story analyzing the closing arguments, the Star presented the defense's summation in nearly 17 inches. The prosecution's final argument, which lasted 2 1/2 hours, was reported in four inches. Two-and-a-half of the four inches described an instance when County Attorney Elmer Scheele misspoke, using McArthur's name in place of Starkweather's.\(^{55}\) The reporter described both attorneys as "skilled" and called their presentations "masterly," but despite the reporter's praise for both closing arguments, the amount of coverage was lopsided.

The Star's coverage of Caril's trial included a wide variety of subjects. In 44 stories there was one discrepancy. One story inappropriately implied that Caril's case was lost.

After Caril's trial, most of the coverage dealt with Starkweather's stays of execution and Fugate's appeals, the money Caril's attorney received for defending her and details of some of the victims' estates. One story in January 1959 recapped the

\(^{55}\)ibid., 20 November 1958.
murders with the headline "Year Ago City Cringed In Starkweather's Bloody Wake." Others dealt with Starkweather's impending execution, Charlie's visits with his family, interviews with Bobby Jensen's family about the execution, and interviews with members of Starkweather's family and how they were fighting for Charlie's life with appeals.

Shortly before Starkweather was executed, much of the coverage dealt with Caril and her attorney's attempts to get a stay for Charlie in hopes he would clear Caril of any wrongdoing. One article included a letter Caril had written to President Eisenhower asking for help in staying Charlie's execution. During this time it was reported that Starkweather was writing a book about the crime spree and hoped for a stay so he could finish it.

More than 100 inches were printed on Charlie's execution June 25, 1959. Star reporters described what Starkweather wore, what he had to eat, where his family was during the execution, and the death of the penitentiary doctor minutes before the execution.

The Star covered the events after Fugate's trial through Starkweather's execution extensively and without bias or sensationalism. There was one minor factual error. In late May 1959, Charlie received a stay 98 minutes before his scheduled 6 a.m.

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56 ibid., 26 January 1959.
57 ibid., 23 May 1959.
58 ibid., 9 January 1959.
execution. On the day the stay was granted, the Star, under the headline "Visit With Parents, Steak As End Near," reported that Starkweather had a good appetite and ate most of a sirloin steak dinner as his last meal.59

The next day it was reported that Charlie had nothing the night before except black coffee and ate the steak for lunch the next afternoon.

Again, nearly half of the articles printed between December and June referred to Starkweather's hair color. In one 14-inch article titled "New Starkweather Writ To Be Asked Here Today," he is called a "redhead" three times.60

Headlines were clear, with no sensational language. The Star included background stories to go along with the hard-news stories.

The Star's coverage of the Starkweather story seemed thorough and went beyond cursory reporting of major events. The crimes, the trials and Charlie's execution were sensational events but, with a few exceptions, the Star's articles and headlines seemed evenhanded. However, reporters and editors repeatedly labeled Starkweather a "killer on a murder spree which claimed 11 lives" before his trial. Although there appeared to be little doubt that

59 ibid., 22 May 1959.
60 ibid., 24 June 1959.
Charlie had killed, the Star had a responsibility not to judge him before the trial. The Star's reporting may have led to difficulties in finding jurors because many potential jurors could not presume him innocent.

The Star included in-depth background stories. By the time Charlie was executed, readers had been given an in-depth, detailed description of him and Caril, their families, the victims and their families, and the attorneys involved.
Del Harding, 25-year-old crime and courthouse reporter for the Lincoln Star, was at his desk Monday evening January 27, 1958, when the report of the Bartlett murders came over the police radio.

"There were occasional murders in Lincoln and it wasn't that unusual," Harding said.

He drove to 924 Belmont, observed and talked to people. By the time he left, he knew that three people were dead.

"It was obviously a big story, but I don't think anybody had any idea on Monday evening what it was going to develop into within the next few days, months and years," Harding said in an interview in 1986. "It sort of mushroomed from day to day. It was a darn good story, a triple murder. But that sort of paled by comparison as to what it eventually turned out to be."

The next day when the bodies of August Meyer, Carol King and Bobby Jensen were found, the Star editors and reporters knew it was turning into a major story.

"When those three additional bodies were found, it was pretty obvious that it was going to be one of the biggest stories in Nebraska history and certainly one with major national interest," he said.

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61 Interview with Del Harding, 6-6-86, Billings, Mont.

Subsequent quotes are from this interview.
Harding was assigned to cover the hard news. Beyond that, no instructions came from his editors.

"I was smart enough to know it was a major story and I just went out and covered it," he said. "I gave them reports on what I was doing. Really, I didn't get much direction. They knew I was on top of the story and they were apparently satisfied with what I was doing."

The first week after the Bartletts' bodies were discovered, Harding worked more than 70 hours on the story. He was at every murder scene and flew to Douglas when Starkweather and Fugate were captured. Reporters from as far away as England were in Lincoln covering the story. Still, Harding didn't yet realize he was covering the biggest story of his career.

"I was so busy running around gathering information that I didn't really sit back and philosophize about it," he said. "I didn't realize that it was going to be the biggest story I would ever cover for a couple of years after that. Years later, when I was covering a routine murder and somebody killed his spouse, I was frankly rather bored with it. It carried the significance to me of a shoplifting case. Nothing I covered after that [the Starkweather case] had the drama or the significance. At the time, I didn't sit down and ponder it. I was too busy."

Harding said that although he personally wasn't frightened while covering the first few days of the story, he was concerned for his family. His wife had prepared a hiding place for their baby in the attic of their home.
"I think that was pretty typical," he said. "Everybody was concerned. I wasn't worried that any place I was going to go that Charlie was going to be there. I was always following up where he'd been. I was probably more concerned about my wife and the baby, because who knows where he was going to be next?"

Harding said that it was obvious to him that Starkweather was the killer and Fugate an accomplice, but that thought didn't affect his reporting.

"I didn't attempt to overcome my feelings," he said. "It was certainly my feeling from the second or third day of the case that Caril was a willing accomplice, if not an actual participant. I guess it's always been my feeling that any reporter who says he can put aside or ignore his personal feelings is kidding himself. Sure, I had personal feelings, but I've always had personal feelings about every story I've probably ever written. That's why you go to journalism school. You learn to set those aside when you're writing the stories. I was writing basically factual articles. I might have had more of a problem if I was writing feature stories."

He also said that, if anything, he tried to play down the sensationalism: "As with any story I wrote, I tried not to sensationalize it. It was so basically sensational on the face of it, I didn't think it needed any jazzing up. But I certainly didn't in my own mind try to act as a juror and say 'now he's innocent until he's proven guilty.' Hell, I thought he was guilty from the first day and never had any doubts about his guilt. I didn't think
then, and I don't think in retrospect looking back on my stories, that it adversely affected my factual reporting."

Harding said that the major problems covering the story were physical during the first few days: "I was constantly on the run. I got very little sleep. It was a physically trying time. I was running on pure adrenalin, it was so exciting. I had never covered a story of that scope before. I loved it."

Because Harding covered both the police and courthouse beats, he said he had an advantage over other reporters: "I had good contacts. I had a personal relationship with people in both places. I was used to covering both places. I wouldn't say it was easy, but it certainly helped me cover the story. I got a hell of a lot of good information from my police sources, because I had those personal relationships with them."

Covering murders was not new to Harding. He had seen murder victims before and viewing the bodies left by Starkweather and taking pictures didn't bother him but did leave him with strong feelings about Starkweather.

"I'd seen a number of murder and accident victims before, so dead bodies didn't particularly bother me. You get kind of like a doctor or policeman or ambulance attendant. You sort of depersonalize it. It didn't upset me so much that I felt nauseated or was unable to continue. It probably reinforced my conviction that he was a mean son of a bitch and I hoped they'd kill him when they caught him."
"At the time and at the age I was, I tended to see things in black and white, guilty or not guilty. There weren't very many shades of gray. Part of it was my basic nature and part of it was being around policemen who tend to be that way. An awful lot of reporters I've known since see things in black and white with not too many grays. I didn't try to keep my feelings impartial. I tried to keep my stories impartial."

Harding never doubted that Starkweather was sane: "He was just a mean kid. The legal definition of insanity at that time was not knowing the nature and quality of his acts. Did he know what he was doing at the time he did it? Sure, he knew what he was doing. There wasn't any doubt in my mind. There was at least some doubt about Caril's guilt. In all honesty, the general prevailing opinion among some reporters, including me, and a great majority of the public was he should have been shot on sight."

If such a case happened today, Harding says he thinks it would get as much or more interest now than it did in 1958: "You don't find very many murder cases where you got a 14-year-old girl going along with a 19-year-old guy. Her age puts this one in a class by itself. Certainly the Manson killings and Atlanta murders were very dramatic and major national stories, but they primarily focused around one adult. I'd hate to think what a zoo it'd be today. It was enough of a zoo then."

Harding said the police, by today's standards, gave out more information than they perhaps should have.
"I got a lot of information about lie-detector-test results and personal conversations and personal opinions that under some circumstances today might have been covered by a judge's restraining order."

Harding said the defense attorneys' willingness to talk to the press was a trial strategy, and Charlie's attorneys tried to focus some of the blame on Caril.

"That was a deliberate strategy on their part and probably a pretty good one."

On the other hand, he said the police talked about the details openly because they "thought he was guilty and should be executed and wanted to do anything they could to see that happen."

Harding got little useful information from County Attorney Elmer Scheele: "He wouldn't even tell us the caliber of guns that were used. I had to learn all that from contacts in the police station. It set the stage for years of bad feelings between Elmer and me."

He particularly remembers Judge Spencer's handling of Charlie's trial: "He was really using common sense. He knew he was going to be faced with 40 or 50 reporters from all over the country and maybe from foreign countries."

The judge met with Harding and a Lincoln Journal reporter and worked out seating arrangements for reporters: "The three of us really worked together on this. We told him what to expect, we gave him an estimate on how many chairs he should reserve, we discussed where they should be placed in the courtroom. There was a real free
give and take between Judge Spencer and the two of us. We didn't want to see it turn into chaos anymore than he did. This judge was fully in control and did a beautiful job in a potentially very difficult situation."

Harding described Charlie's appearance at the trial as a "cliche from the stories written about him."

"He was short, had bright red hair. Charlie looked something between sullen and quizzical. He was certainly not flippant. He didn't smile much. He obviously wasn't very bright. My impression of him, correctly or incorrectly, was that he was a mean, dumb kid. I think he enjoyed the attention."

He described Charlie's family as "whatever the cliches are about poor white trash." Harding was on friendly terms with Guy Starkweather: "I was his buddy. He would frequently call me up at 1 or 2 in the morning when I'd be sound asleep. I assume he was either drunk or had been drinking and rambled on and on about the case. He spent a lot of time talking about Caril. Guy never apologized for what Charlie did. He did feel very strongly that Caril was equally to blame. I got the distinct impression that he thought that Charlie would not have gotten into that mess if Caril had not encouraged him. The Starkweathers were not pillars of the society in Lincoln. But they weren't ever in trouble either."

Harding said Caril didn't look like a 14-year-old girl and appeared sullen at her trial.
"There was nothing girlish about her. I've never seen a person whose eyes appeared to radiate hate as much as Caril Fugate's. I remember when Charlie was testifying at her trial the way she looked at Charlie. The expression 'if looks could kill' was very apt. Charlie had a mean look in his eyes, but nothing like Caril."

He never felt sorry for Caril: "It was a case of two misfits who found each other."

After Bobby Jensen's and Carol King's bodies were found, Harding thought Caril was going along with Charlie willingly.

"I had a very difficult time making any sense of how he could be going around shooting all these people and that she wouldn't have had some time to escape. Even at that early stage, it just did not ring true."

Harding did not have much contact with Caril's father, sister or grandmother. He said they, too, were lower middle class but never were in any trouble.

"They were not among the usual Saturday-night drunks who were picked up."

Despite his strong feelings about Caril's and Charlie's guilt, Harding said there was never any discussion or criticism from his editors that those feelings influenced the stories he wrote. But he thought several reporters' stories did reflect personal biases.

"There was a reporter in her 50s for United Press who came in to cover Caril's trial who from day one was very pro-Caril. She felt Caril had been persecuted, prosecuted unjustly and her
stories reflected that all the time. The T.V. reporter from Omaha, Ninette Beaver, also felt the same way."

Harding thought the evidence against Caril was overwhelming and she would be convicted: "I didn't seriously ever think she would receive the death penalty, although I felt personally she should have. Based on some things that didn't come out in court, but in conversations I had with two persons who administered lie-detector-tests to Charlie who were very competent lie-detector-test operators, there was no doubt in my mind and still is no doubt in my mind that she personally killed at least two or three of the people."

The night Starkweather was executed, Harding was nervous for the first time during the case. He had never seen an execution and Lincoln Police Chief Joe Carroll, whom Harding described as a great story teller, had told him and other reporters how gruesome executions were, complete with moans and smoke rising from the bodies.

"I was nervous and I just didn't want to sit around home all evening and think about it. I went down to the Varsity Theatre and saw Gregory Peck in 'Pork Chop Hill.' I wanted to take my mind off of it."

After the show, Harding went to the penitentiary where everyone went through a security check.

"They were scared to death that some of us were going to try to sneak a camera in, and I was known for doing that type of thing. I was afraid that if I had tried they would've kicked me out and I'd
be in trouble with my boss. It wasn't worth it. They didn't ask me
to try it."

Harding had wanted to go in earlier and take pictures of the
electric chair, but the request was refused so he saw the death
chamber for the first time that night.

"As usual, I was the brash, eager, young reporter and pushed my
way to the front of the line. My first impression was 'my god, this
is a pretty small room.' I was in the front row sitting in a metal
chair. The metal chairs were on a rubber pad. The electric chair
was probably 12 feet from the front row, a hell of a lot closer than
I thought it would be. I thought 'Jesus, I don't know if I want to
be this close or not.' So I stepped back and went to the second row
for whatever psychological or physical protection that gave me. But
I was a little apprehensive."

After everyone was seated, Charlie was escorted in. His head
was shaved.

"I'll never forget Charlie walking in, and he kind of looked out
at us, and he got this quizzical little half-smile on his face. I
was amazed at how relaxed he was. I think I was more nervous than
Charlie was. They strapped him in and asked him if he had anything
to say and he shook his head no. Then they put a strap and mask
combination over his face.

"I was busy writing down all these details and I was looking
down at my note pad and I heard this electricity come on. Never
having been to an electrocution before, I didn't know what was going
on. I thought they were just juicing up the power to give it to him. I looked up and there was Charlie going up in the chair like a puppet. The current had already hit him and it was just raising him up against the straps. It would raise him up, and then they'd turn off the power and he'd drop down, limp. And they'd raise him up and he'd drop down.

"I'd been taking notes when the power first hit and I didn't know how many jolts he'd gotten. I had to ask another reporter because I hadn't been paying attention as I should have. I thought later that Charlie didn't act any more concerned to me than if he was going to sit down and get a haircut. My feeling, in keeping with his personality, was that he thought, 'hey man, this is the way to go.'"

The guards unstrapped Charlie and the doctor examined him. The executioner asked the doctor if Charlie was dead. He was. The curtain was pulled and it was over.

"It was very quick. It was very clean and in my opinion, virtually painless. My feeling afterward was that it was too damn good for him. I kept thinking of Carol King upside down on stone steps of the storm cellar with her crotch upended, bloody. You knew darn well that not only had she been raped—something else happened to her. Bobby Jensen, lying down there in a pool of blood. August Meyer, lying out in a shed next to his house, blood all over him from a shotgun wound, flies all over him. By the time Charlie was executed, I knew the details of all these things and I thought it
was too good for him. It was too quick and too clean. There ought to be a more painful way of executing people and making them suffer in murder cases like this. I thought he got off pretty easily, really."

Despite the long hours and intensity of the murders, the trials and Charlie's execution, Harding said that the year and a half spent on the case wasn't difficult.

"It was fun, it was challenging, it was exciting," he said. "It was a fantastic experience. I loved every minute of it. Even during the first week or two, when it was physically taxing, it was so damn much fun I never thought of it as difficult. I think I did a good job. I covered it very aggressively and thoroughly. My overall impression was that at the time everybody did a pretty good job."

Del Harding left the Lincoln Star in 1960 and took a job with the Rocky Mountain News in Denver. In 1986, he was public-affairs chief for the Bureau of Land Management in Billings, Montana.
The Omaha World Herald has been a major news source for eastern Nebraska and western Iowa since 1885. In 1958, the morning paper had a circulation of about 240,000. The World Herald also had a Lincoln bureau 50 miles away.

The Bartlett slayings were reported Jan. 28, 1958, with a 17.8-inch story. By Jan. 29, four reporters were assigned to cover them.¹

The World Herald published nearly 200 stories totaling more than 2,000 inches on the Starkweather case. Table 7 shows the coverage during the first three days.

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¹Omaha World Herald, 29 January 1958.
The Jan. 28 story on the Bartlett slayings was written by staff reporter Tom Allan. The five stories printed Jan. 29 about the bodies found in Bennet were written by staff members with no byline. A full-page photo layout of the death scenes in Bennet and of August Meyer's body also appeared Jan. 29.

Details about Starkweather and Fugate's capture filled the front page of the World Herald Jan. 30. Background stories and details about the Ward deaths dominated inside pages.

Six of the nine stories Jan. 30 were written by staff with no bylines. Three stories included bylines.

Despite the intensity of the first three days, the World Herald relied on its reporters rather than the wire services. The 15 stories printed from Jan. 28 through 30 were written by World Herald reporters.

After Starkweather's capture, coverage dropped significantly until the beginning of his trial in early May. With the exception of April 11 through 17, stories were printed at least weekly.

Major stories written between February and May dealt with the search for attorneys for Fugate and Starkweather, the funerals and dispositions of the estates of the victims, the unsuccessful attempts by Fugate's attorney to have her case transferred to Juvenile Court, preparations for Charlie's trial, and the findings of a special investigator hired by city and county officials to evaluate law-enforcement actions on the case.
With the exception of one 56.4-inch feature story Feb. 23 titled "Lincoln's 48 Hours of Terror Will Take Long Time to Forget," no substantial background, analysis or other features were printed during those months.

Table 8 shows the coverage from Jan. 31, the day Starkweather and Fugate returned to Lincoln, through May 5, the day Starkweather's trial began. The last 11 days are combined.

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</table>
Of the 58 stories, eight were written by World Herald staff with no byline. Five articles were written by four reporters with a byline. Forty-five were wire-service stories. One 16.4-inch editorial was printed Jan. 31.

Despite an article stating that the World Herald had four "veteran staff members" to cover the case "to give the Midwest complete coverage," more than 75 percent of the articles between Jan. 31 and May 5 were from wire services.

Several major developments in the case were not reported in the World Herald or were buried in articles, often several days after they occurred.

For example, although Charlie initially claimed Caril was his hostage, he later implicated her in the crimes while being returned to Lincoln Jan. 31. The repercussions of this reversal were critical for Caril. The World Herald summed up Charlie's new story in one sentence at the end of a 10.5-inch article headlined "Death Row Cell Given Teen-Ager."^3

T. Clement Gaughan and William Matschullat were named as Starkweather's attorneys March 10. Up to that time, another attorney had been temporarily handling Charlie's preliminary hearings. Although the World Herald printed a 4.9-inch story titled

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^2ibid.
^3ibid., 1 February 1958.
"Starkweather Gets Lawyer,"\(^4\) about the temporary appointment of the first lawyer, no story was later printed on the appointment of his permanent attorneys. The first time Gaughan and Matschullat were mentioned was in a March 21 article about their difficulties finding medical experts to examine Charlie.\(^5\)

The same 3.5-inch story also reported that Judge Spencer had named four doctors to conduct tests on Charlie for the defense. Although three of the doctors refused to do so, the World Herald did not cover that development. A 2-inch article on April 19 listed the doctors who did examine Charlie but did not explain why the doctors originally appointed did not.

Between Jan. 31 and May 5, the World Herald failed to report several key developments, making some events seem disjointed and confusing.

During the first three days of the case, the World Herald supplemented hard-news stories with background and feature stories. Only one feature was printed between Jan. 31 and May 5. No background stories or analyses were written. The World Herald missed the opportunity to give readers a more complete picture of the case.

The coverage from the time Starkweather and Fugate were captured to Starkweather's trial was not as thorough as it should have been.

\(^{4}\)ibid., 1 March 1958.
\(^{5}\)ibid., 21 March 1958.
considering the intensity and magnitude of the story and public interest in it.

During Charlie's trial, coverage was steady. One story was printed daily except on May 8, when no story was printed, and May 24, when six stories were printed. One reporter covered the daily trial proceedings. No feature or background stories were written during the trial, although four of the six stories May 24, when the verdict was announced, were background stories. Some background material was sometimes included in the daily articles.

Table 9 shows daily coverage from May 6, the day after Charlie's trial started, to May 24, when the guilty verdict was reported.

TABLE 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
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<td>18.4</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
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</table>
(TABLE 9 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 23 stories, 16 were printed with a byline and seven with no byline. No wire stories were used during the trial.

The four background articles on Charlie's conviction added an in-depth view of the trial's outcome. In an article titled "Guilty Verdict Came Early," several jurors were interviewed, giving a glimpse of what went on during deliberations. 6

Another article headlined "Charles: 'If I Want to Be Executed It's My Business,'" included interviews with Guy and Helen Starkweather, Caril's stepmother and Bobby Jensen's mother. It also included reporters' show of emotions when the verdict was announced, although it did not say what those emotions were. 7

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6 Ibid., 24 May 1958.
7 Ibid.
The background and feature stories added color and detail to the story. The *World Herald* could have improved its coverage of the trial by including more of them.

Coverage slowed after Starkweather's trial. Much of the coverage consisted of Charlie's activities at the prison, his appeals, and preparations for Fugate's trial.

Table 10 includes monthly coverage, beginning in late May 1958, after Charlie's trial, and ending in late October 1958, when Fugate's trial started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1958</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1958</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1958</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1958</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1958</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1958</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 22 stories printed from May to October, five were written by staff with no byline. Seventeen were wire stories. No articles were given bylines. In addition, one 8.4-inch editorial was printed in May.
Caril Fugate's trial started Oct. 26 and ended Nov. 21, lasting six days longer than did Charlie's trial. The *World Herald* devoted 35.70 more inches to Caril's trial than to Starkweather's. Articles appeared daily and occasional background stories were included throughout the trial.

Coverage increased from Nov. 10 through 16, when Caril testified.

Weekly coverage of the trial in Table 11 began Oct. 27 and ended Nov. 22.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 27 - November 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>99.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3-9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>118.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10-16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>133.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 17-22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>443.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-five articles were written by one reporter with a byline. Nine stories were written by staff without a byline. No wire stories were used during the trial.

When the *World Herald* published background or feature stories, readers got a broader view of the entire case. The paper included a few more such stories during Fugate's trial than it did during Starkweather's.
From December 1958 to June 1959, when Starkweather was executed, coverage dropped to an occasional story about Charlie's and Caril's appeals. Coverage increased during May and June when Charlie's legal efforts increased before his execution.

During those months significant gaps in some stories left questions unanswered.

Federal District Judge Richard E. Robinson stayed Charlie's execution Friday, May 22, 98 minutes before the scheduled time, because of Guy Starkweather's night phone call and telegram. Charlie's head had been shaved and he was waiting in his cell with a minister when word of the stay came through.

The World Herald's story on the stay, headlined "How Long Killer Has Left Is 'Iffy,'" led with "How long will Charles Starkweather live? The answer is wrapped in legal 'ifs.' Federal District Judge Richard E. Robinson's stay of execution issued early Friday is good until June 4."

The article gave no reason for the stay, details about how the federal judge became involved or the close timing. The article left the reader asking "Why and how?"

Although news of the story had been on the radio and television before Saturday morning's paper, the story in the World Herald was incomplete.

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8 ibid., 23 May 1958.
The World Herald also missed the opportunity for good background stories. What were reactions to the last-minute reprieve? What did Charlie and his family think? Articles that included interviews with the Starkweathers, Charlie's attorney, or Caril's attorney would have given readers a more in-depth view to the dramatic development.

In March 1959, Starkweather fired his attorneys. The World Herald made no mention of it until late May when it reported that he was looking for an attorney to handle his appeal to the United States Circuit Court. The article said, "Starkweather indicated to United Press International he would not consider rehiring his court-appointed attorneys. . . ."\(^9\) The story did not explain why the attorneys would need rehiring, nor did it report that Charlie had not been represented by a lawyer since March.

The World Herald's coverage between December 1958 and June 1959 was marred by the failure to report important events.

Fewer than 50 inches were printed on Starkweather's execution June 25, 1959. One 26.5-inch article, titled "Execution Set 5 Times Before Penalty Is Paid," recapped Starkweather's appeals and stays. It included interviews with two witnesses to the execution, one a criminologist writing a book about Charlie; details about teenagers who had gathered outside the prison gates waiting for the

\(^9\) Ibid., 25 May 1959.
execution; a summary of others who had died in Nebraska's electric chair; and a rundown of Charlie's last hours.\(^\text{10}\)

Two other articles dealt with the execution and last-minute attempts by Guy Starkweather to get another stay.

Table 12 lists the monthly coverage from December 1958 to June 1959.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Inches</th>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>January</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>162.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td><strong>353.40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 43 stories, nine were written by three reporters with a byline and eight were written by staff without bylines. Twenty-six were wire stories. One 2.6-inch editorial was printed in April.

\(^{10}\text{ibid.}, 25\text{ June 1959.}\)
After Starkweather's death, occasional articles appeared about Fugate's life in York and her continuing appeals.

The *World Herald* covered the slayings, Charlie's and Caril's trials and Charlie's execution without relying on wire services. No major gaps existed in the coverage, although few background and feature stories were printed.

During other times, the *World Herald* relied almost exclusively on wire services. Omissions were sometimes made that affected the reader's understanding of the overall story.

About 45 percent of all articles were from wire services. The flip-flop between using all staff stories at times and almost all wire stories at other times made it appear as if editors weren't sure what priority to give the Starkweather case.

The background and feature stories provided insight to the case, but too few were written. The paper was not as thorough in that respect as it should have been.

The Starkweather case affected the entire state and created an exceptional amount of public interest. The *World Herald* had a Lincoln bureau and should have covered the case more extensively.

The same questions that helped determine the quality of the Lincoln Star's coverage must also be examined in the *World Herald*. Was the paper's reporting sensational or biased? How accurate were the stories? How objective were reporters and editors?
The front-page story about the Bartlett slayings, titled "3 Lincoln Bodies Discovered in Two Outbuildings,"\textsuperscript{11} was a straight-forward account of the killings.

The next day, after the bodies of August Meyer, Carol King and Bobby Jensen were found, several dramatic, non-sensational articles were written. Two dealt with the atmosphere in Bennet.

One, titled "Fear Rouses Countryside With Multiple Killer Abroad," included interviews with Lincoln Police Chief Joe Carroll and his assistant; Warren King, brother of Carol King; a hardware-store operator; a gas-station owner; and friends of August Meyer.\textsuperscript{12} The story provided a powerful look at a small town's anguish without being sensational or maudlin.

However, on that same day, the \textit{World Herald} printed a full-page photo layout that was sensational. It included photos of the murder scenes, Starkweather's abandoned car, police removing Carol King's body from the cellar, and August Meyer's body lying on his washroom floor.\textsuperscript{13}

The layout was headlined, "Six Persons Are Slain as Pair of Crazed Teen-Age Killers Terrorize Southeastern Nebraska." The photos of the bodies, particularly August Meyer's, were graphic and

\textsuperscript{11}ibid., 28 January 1958.

\textsuperscript{12}ibid., 29 January 1958.

\textsuperscript{13}ibid.
of dubious taste. Although the Lincoln police chief was quoted as saying "Starkweather is our man," Charlie was still referred to as a suspect in articles; murder charges had not yet been filed against Caril Fugate.

The paper continued to sensationalize the events and appeared to condemn Starkweather the next day when he and Fugate were captured and the Wards and their maid were found. The front-page 74-point headline read, "Punk's Blood-Stained String Ends at 10 Dead With Wyoming Capture." The article led with "The crazy-killing career of Charles Starkweather, 19, ended Wednesday. . . ." It later called him a "mad-dog youth."\(^{15}\)

Another front-page story the same day, titled "How Couple Beat Dragnet," said, "Despite the biggest manhunt in the city's history, the killer and his girl friend were always several hours--and murders--ahead of authorities."\(^{16}\)

Another article described Starkweather as a "slayer" and a "killer," but later said he would be "arraigned on a charge of murder."\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\)ibid.
\(^{15}\)ibid., 30 January 1958.
\(^{16}\)ibid.
\(^{17}\)ibid.
Again, a story titled "Lincoln Slaying Jag Tops in Terror in Recent Years" referred to the "Starkweather killings," and another front-page article said, "The cold-blooded killer, who apparently murdered. . . ."\(^{18}\)

A story that included an interview with Helen Starkweather began, "The mother of a murderer spoke: 'He (my son) is no better now than any one else who was killed.'" The story's inaccurate and misleading headline read, "Mother: 'Son Like Any Other Killer.'"\(^{19}\)

The *World Herald* did not use good judgment in printing sensational pictures and headlines and in appearing to judge Starkweather before his trial.

The paper continued to condemn Starkweather the next day. An editorial said, "If Charles Starkweather were a case apart, a biological accident, a monstrous freak of nature, then today all Americans could take a deep breath of relief and give thanks that his mad career of murder had been brought to an end."\(^{20}\)

However, the lead story that day, headlined "Accused Slayer, Girl Return to Nebraska," said that he and Caril were charged with first-degree murder.\(^{21}\) Other articles called Starkweather "a confessed slayer."

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\(^{18}\) ibid.

\(^{19}\) ibid.

\(^{20}\) ibid., 31 January 1958.

\(^{21}\) ibid.
Of the 20 stories printed the first four days Caril's name was misspelled throughout stories Jan. 28 and 29. The World Herald did a good job of reporting the fear and anger people in Bennet felt after King, Jensen and Meyer were killed.

Two headlines were sensational and appeared to judge Starkweather. One was inaccurate and misleading. Other headlines were factual and to the point. There were eight other examples of suggesting Starkweather's guilt and the one instance of poor judgment in printing the picture of August Meyer's body.

From the time Caril and Charlie returned to Lincoln to the start of Charlie's trial, coverage subsided but was steady. Briefs were published about peripheral events in addition to hard-news stories.

For example, a 1.7-inch story reported that Charlie's brother, Rodney, had been injured in an auto accident.\(^{22}\) Another article reported the death of Loren Bartlett, brother of slaying victim Marion.\(^{23}\)

A 16-year-old Lincoln boy reportedly denied saying in Municipal Court that Starkweather was his "ideal." He was fined for destroying city property.\(^{24}\) Although such news briefs did not

\(^{22}\) ibid., 6 February 1958.

\(^{23}\) ibid., 11 March 1958.

\(^{24}\) ibid., 25 February 1958.
report major events in the case, they were appropriate because of intense public interest in Starkweather.

Although most of the World Herald articles printed between February and May referred to Starkweather as "a confessed killer" or a "murder defendant," the paper still appeared to judge Starkweather before his trial.

An article titled "Starkweather, Caril Held Without Bond" led with, "Charles Starkweather, 19-year-old trigger-happy kid. . . ."

Later the story also seemed to judge Caril. County Attorney Elmer Scheele told reporters that Bobby Jensen and Carol King were ordered out of Jensen's car at gunpoint by both Starkweather and Fugate. The World Herald said, "The announcement was the first showing that Caril had aided in the spree. She had first claimed after their Wednesday capture at Douglas, Wyo., that she had been held at gunpoint by Starkweather and was his helpless hostage."25

Caril was still claiming she was held hostage and that she had not willingly helped Starkweather. She said she held the gun when Jensen and King were present only because she was ordered to. The World Herald should not have implied that Scheele's statement was proof that Caril aided Starkweather.

In another story about the disposition of reward money posted for Starkweather's capture and attempts to find an attorney for Caril, it said, "The bureau is attempting to get an attorney for

Caril who was with Starkweather during his murder rampage."\textsuperscript{26}

Charlie is called a "mass killer" in another article about attempts to find an attorney for Caril.\textsuperscript{27} A story about a motion on whether to try Caril in Juvenile Court described her as "the companion of Charles Starkweather, 19, during his killing spree. . . ."\textsuperscript{28} An article about Charlie's preliminary hearing led with "Bantam killer Charles Starkweather. . . ."\textsuperscript{29}

The World Herald had a responsibility to keep from condemning Starkweather before he was tried and should not have referred to him as a murderer or killer.

One headline printed between February and May was sensational. The advance story on the beginning of Starkweather's jury selection was titled, "Mad Dog's Jury to Be Impaneled."\textsuperscript{30} However, the article describes Charlie as a "confessed killer." He is not called a "mad dog" in the story.

There were no other instances of sensationalism in the months before Charlie's trial and other headlines were clear.

\textsuperscript{26}ibid., 12 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{27}ibid., 14 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{28}ibid., 18 April 1958.
\textsuperscript{29}ibid., 28 February 1958.
\textsuperscript{30}ibid., 5 May 1958.
The *World Herald* printed a 56.4-inch feature story between February and May titled "Lincoln's 48 Hours of Terror Will Take Long Time to Forget." The Associated Press story included detailed interviews with Fugate's brother-in-law, Robert Von Busch, who discovered the Bartlett bodies; Carl Songer, a friend of Bobby Jensen's father; and Ray Osborn, a friend of the Wards. The story provided an insightful and retrospective look at three people's reactions and the tension in Lincoln during the first three days of the case. The *World Herald*’s coverage would have been stronger had it published more such stories.

Of 53 stories printed between February and May, there was one instance of sensationalism, six suggestions of Charlie's guilt before the trial and no factual errors.

During Charlie's trial, the *World Herald* continued to judge Starkweather before the verdict. The paper reported that 11 potential jurors had been dismissed because they "had already formed an opinion of the guilt of Starkweather." The same article said that Charlie "had not shown any apparent remorse in killing 11 persons." The paper repeatedly called Starkweather a "killer," a "slayer," and a "murderer."

\[31\text{ibid.}, 23\text{February 1958.}
\]

\[32\text{ibid.}, 6\text{May 1958.}
\]
One article described Starkweather as "the 19-year-old killer of 11."\(^{33}\) A story about Charlie's reactions to descriptions read at the trial about the killing of 2-year-old Betty Jean Bartlett was headlined "Killer Moved First Time." The story called him "the 19-year-old murderer."\(^{34}\)

Again, later in the trial he was called "the 19-year-old slayer of 11."\(^{35}\) A sub-head about what would happen if Starkweather was committed to a mental hospital said, "Slayer Would Leave, Free, 'If Recovered.'"\(^{36}\) A story about closing arguments at the trial was titled, "Defense Sobs Request for Killer's Life." A sub-head for the article read, "Killer's Father Hopes for Best."\(^{37}\) Another article refers to him as a "slayer."\(^{38}\)

An article about Charlie's confessions being read at the trial seemed to judge Caril also. The story, titled "State Rests; Jury Hears Confessions," said, "And as the confessions continued to add to the courtroom testimony, any hope of portraying 14-year-old Caril Fugate as the hostage of a desperate killer continued to dim."\(^{39}\)

\(^{33}\)ibid., 7 May 1958.

\(^{34}\)ibid., 17 May 1958.

\(^{35}\)ibid., 18 May 1958.

\(^{36}\)ibid., 21 May 1958.

\(^{37}\)ibid., 23 May 1958.

\(^{38}\)ibid., 16 May 1958.

\(^{39}\)ibid., 14 May 1958.
Starkweather's confessions were sometimes contradictory and the World Herald should not have implied that Caril's hostage story was untrue or that her case was lost.

A story about the start of deliberations contained an error. Describing Charlie's behavior during the trial, the article said, "He has heard his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Starkweather, testify that he is sane, knowing that if they are believed by the jury, he will go to the electric chair."\footnote{ibid., 22 May 1958.}

The reporter had no way of knowing what penalty the jurors would recommend. The story later said the jury had a "dozen choices," and if Charlie was found guilty, the jury could have recommended a life sentence.

A headline printed during Charlie's trial was confusing. The article about the defense attorneys' fight to submit evidence about the other slayings was headlined, "Starkweather Defense May Ask Evidence."\footnote{ibid., 12 May 1958.} The headline doesn't give the reader any idea what the story is about. It appears as if something was left out of this headline.

Of 23 stories printed during Charlie's trial, seven appeared to judge him before the verdict was announced. One implied that Caril's case was already lost. There was one factual error and one unclear headline.
The World Herald, like other papers, had a responsibility to avoid any appearance of judging Starkweather before his trial and should not have repeatedly called him a "killer," a "murderer" or a "slayer."

A World Herald reporter attended each day of the trial. The paper's coverage of the trial would have been better had more feature or background stories been written.

Coverage decreased drastically after Charlie's trial, with all but five of the 22 articles coming from wire services. Most stories were about Starkweather's life at the penitentiary and his appeals, and preparations for Caril's trial.

No factual errors or examples of sensationalism occurred between May and October 1958. Headlines were clear and concise. The articles avoided the appearance of judging Caril before her trial.

Coverage of Fugate's trial, which began in late October 1958, was detailed. Several articles included background information and anecdotes about the trial.

For example, a story described how Starkweather, after testifying, was taken from the courtroom to a car that wouldn't start. Another car took him back to the prison.  

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42 ibid., 7 November 1958.
A story about testimony at the trial ended with an anecdote about an eager Lincoln photographer who fell on his back while trying to hurdle a fence to take Fugate's picture outside the courthouse. The article said, "Caril laughed heartily at the time it happened and was still laughing as she climbed into an automobile. . . ."\(^{43}\)

Such incidents added color to articles. The *World Herald* could have improved its coverage with more background or feature stories.

A factual error occurred in the first article to appear on Caril's trial. A story recapping events that led to the trial said, "Caril accompanied Starkweather in a three-day flight after the discovery of six slaying victims in Lincoln and three at Bennet."\(^{44}\)

The slayings took place during the three days Fugate and Starkweather were fleeing authorities. The pair was captured on the third day, soon after the Wards and their maid were discovered dead. The error did not have an impact on the case but did make the killing spree and hunt for Caril and Charlie appear to last longer than they had.

Two articles appeared to condemn Caril before her jury returned a verdict. One, headlined "Caril Knew Family Dead, Pictures Show,"

\(^{43}\) *ibid.*, 4 November 1958.

\(^{44}\) *ibid.*, 27 October 1958.

\(^{45}\) *ibid.*, 1 November 1958.
was about an envelope of newspaper photos of the Bartletts found in Caril's pocket when she was in Douglas. Fugate contended that Starkweather had not let her see accompanying stories--only that he let her keep the pictures. The headline implied that the pictures were irrefutable proof that Caril knew her family was dead.

A story on Fugate's testimony led with "One damaging admission after another was made by Caril Fugate Monday afternoon under cross-examination by Lancaster County Attorney Elmer Scheele." During the testimony, Caril did not deny that she had taken money from Bobby Jensen's billfold and put it in Starkweather's. She also did not deny other actions the prosecution said showed she had participated in Jensen's slaying willingly. But Caril's contention from the beginning was that she was terrified of Starkweather and acted only at his command for fear of her and her family's lives.

The reporter may have viewed the testimony as damaging, but it was no surprise. It had been reported earlier that her defense would be based on such justifications. In view of Caril's explanations for her actions, the testimony should not have been labeled "damaging."

The World Herald included several unsubstantiated statements in articles during Caril's trial. Although they did not affect the accuracy of stories, they left the reader with questions.

45 ibid., 1 November 1958.
46 ibid., 18 November 1958.
One story included a paragraph that said, "Spectator interest in the trial has been far greater than that displayed when Starkweather was tried by the same judge in the same courtroom last May."^47

The article does not say how spectator interest was greater. The World Herald reported during Starkweather's trial that the courtroom was full nearly every day. Were more people turned away at Fugate's trial? Did spectators appear to pay more attention?

Another article on Starkweather's testimony at Caril's trial included the statement, "Court observers thought he showed better control under sharp questioning."^48

Who were the court observers? On what did they base their opinions? Again, the story leaves questions unanswered.

When Starkweather appeared at Caril's trial, a story reported that "Caril showed extreme nervousness when she realized she was to face Starkweather."^49

The article doesn't define "extreme nervousness." Was Caril sobbing or hiding her face? Was she shaking? The World Herald could have been more precise in its descriptions and answered those questions.

^47 ibid., 9 November 1958.
^48 ibid., 7 November 1958.
^49 ibid., 6 November 1958.
Of 34 stories printed during Fugate's trial, there was one factual error and two stories that appeared to judge Caril before the jury's verdict was announced. Three articles included statements that left questions. There were no instances of bias or sensationalism during the trial. Other headlines were clear and contained no ambiguous language.

Most of the coverage after Fugate's trial dealt with her failed appeals for a new trial, Starkweather's stays and his execution. The World Herald also reported Caril's attempts to have Charlie's execution stayed so she could talk with him and clear her of the crimes.

The paper printed a few background stories between late November and June. One recapped all murder cases in Nebraska during the year. Another reported that Charlie refused to donate his eyes to the Lions Club despite repeated attempts to persuade him to do so. "No one ever did anything for me," Charlie said. "Why should I do anything for any one else?"^51

An article reported that Starkweather's Washington attorneys told the United States Supreme Court that Charlie wasn't adequately

50 ibid., 4 January 1959.
51 ibid., 26 June 1958
defended. They claimed that "inflammatory newspaper stories had made it impossible for the confessed slayer of 11 to get a fair trial at Lincoln."\(^{52}\)

Starkweather's execution was reported in three stories that totaled 48.6 inches. The execution was thoroughly covered, though more background stories and interviews would have improved the coverage.

The World Herald's coverage was not as thorough as it should have been. Throughout the case, opportunities for feature or background stories were missed. The paper relied heavily on wire service stories, which accounted for about 45 percent of its total coverage. Most wire stories were short, rewritten stories with no byline. Significant omissions disrupted the continuity and understanding of the overall story.

Early in the story, several sensational headlines were printed. However, coverage after that was not sensational. With a few exceptions, the World Herald's coverage appeared accurate. There were no examples of bias, although the paper appeared to judge Starkweather and, to a lesser extent, Fugate, before their trials and throughout the case.

The Starkweather case created a tremendous amount of public interest in Nebraska. The World Herald was a major news source for eastern Nebraska. The paper's coverage would have been better had it been more thorough.

\(^{52}\)ibid., 18 June 1958.
Tom Allan had been a reporter for 12 years in 1958. Since 1950, he had covered the police beat for the *Omaha World Herald*. On Monday evening, Jan. 27, 1958, he was on the evening police run in Omaha when word came that three bodies had been found in a poor section of Lincoln, about an hour's drive away.

Allan was immediately sent to the Bartlett home, where he found police and sheriff's cars. He learned that three people, including a 2-year-old girl, had been killed and their bodies stuffed in small buildings in the backyard.

"That began the series of events . . . whenever tension began to ease a little, another murder was discovered," Allan said in an interview in 1986. "The apprehension of the entire state began, not knowing where Starkweather was going to strike next."

Allan said the three murders were already a major story, and the fact that police had been fooled by 14-year-old Caril Fugate when visiting the Bartlett home on previous days made it even more amazing.

"I've talked to veteran detectives who were on the case and the one thing that always amazed them was the utter calmness with which she met them at the door. Neighbors had said they thought something

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53 Phone Interview with Tom Allan., 7-15-86. Subsequent quotes are from this interview.
was up there because they hadn't seen any of the family. Caril just calmly met them at the door and said 'no, they were ill with the flu.' They bought her story because there was no inkling of what was to come. It was later that they discovered the murders. By then, she and Starkweather had taken off on this big spree."

Allan said that a hunt started for the pair immediately and by the next day law-enforcement authorities had surrounded the August Meyer farm near Bennet, thinking they were about to capture Starkweather.

"They approached the house with caution and fired tear-gas canisters into the house. I got a snoot full of tear gas.

"But, then while they were in the midst of that investigation--I was a good friend of Captain Harold Smith who was head of the criminal division of State Patrol and had worked on several other murder cases throughout the state with him. He came up to me, I remember his words, 'Oh my god! We got two more bodies of a couple of kids.'"

The group left the farm and headed for an abandoned cellar where Bobby Jensen and Carol King were found.

"Here you understand you got three murders, and all of sudden here's this old farmer murdered. You just barely catch your breath and here's the two kids brutally murdered. The tension ... it was like 'my god, when in the hell is this going to stop?'

By that time, Allan said most of the *World Herald* staff was working on some part of the story. Another reporter joined Allan in Lincoln.
"We were working together trying to stay one jump ahead of this and in the meantime file our stories. I took pictures of the raid on the farmhouse. One of them was played up in Life magazine of the troopers storming the house.

"I'd driven my car across this plowed field to get up close to the farm. In addition to those pictures, I had obtained a couple of pictures from the families of the two kids (Bobby Jensen and Carol King). When a [World Herald] photographer came, I handed him my film and the pictures and I said 'get your fanny to Omaha as fast as your can.' He didn't even get a chance to take any pictures of his own because things were happening so fast. I was practically living out of my car.

"The following day the Wards were found. This was in one of the most fashionable areas of Lincoln. I was the first reporter on the scene. I wasn't sure which house it was, but as I pulled up I saw detectives coming out of a house and one said, 'Oh god, we've got some more.' I dashed across the street and asked the people in the house if I could use the phone to give the paper a bulletin. Those people were aghast.

"By this time, Lincoln was just gripped by fear and apprehension. I vividly remember parents carrying rifles and shotguns going to schools to bring their children home."

Despite the tension, Allan said he was too busy to be frightened: "With taking pictures and filing stories on the run, you don't think of that. There was an aura of 'My god, he's just a rampant killer for no reason.'"
There was never any doubt in Allan's mind that Caril was still traveling with Charlie at that point and that they both were involved in the murders.

"I still think they were both involved. She was old for 14. There were too many circumstances, like these old detectives going to the door when her family's all dead. She calmly, kidding with them, told them they had the flu, they were sick.

"I know that later she said Charlie was behind the door holding her with a gun. Well, I mean, a kid would have been scared to death. The detectives were utterly amazed at her calmness and moxie on this.

"During their flight after the Ward killings, they stopped at Ellsworth, Neb., at the headquarters store of the old Spade Ranch. She went in to get food and other supplies for them. She was kidding with the cowboys and ranchers who were in there. And all she had to say was, 'Hey, guess who's out in that car.' Here you got a store with rifles and ammunition. These ranchers carried rifles in the back of their pickups. No, not a word.

"She never showed any remorse when I saw her. Caril was a gal old beyond her age. She and Charlie, from what I've been told, committed every sex act in the book. She was a well-versed young lady."

Despite his convictions that Caril was guilty, Allan is not upset that she was released in 1977, a born-again Christian.
"I think she served her time. I'll give her credit, if she became a born-again Christian and became involved in church work and all that. I would feel better about her release if she would've just admitted she was a part of it. To this day, she claims she was a hostage.

"She almost got hero status in later years after she became a born-again Christian and a model prisoner and all this. Hell, why not? But there were so many times in that spree that if she really wanted to get away, she could have gotten away."

Allan attended parts of Starkweather's trial and described him as "cocky and swaggering."

"Charlie was a misfit kid. He was a garbage collector. This was his big moment and he was making the best of it. He had a temper and, I think, because of his small stature and his lack of status he had an inferiority complex. When he was captured, it was like a release valve had gone off in Lincoln. All the tension and fear were over."

After the capture in Wyoming, Allan, who stayed in Lincoln, went to lunch with Police Chief Joe Carroll.

"There was a break there when nothing could be done. Other officers were on their way to bring them back. It was a big relief.

'We walked out of the Cornhusker [restaurant] afterwards, and walking toward us was exhibit A of Charlie Starkweather. I mean, I don't know how this kid lived through all that with people running around with shotguns. He was wearing a leather jacket, he was
bow-legged, red-haired, just like Charlie. I remember old Joe Carroll just gasped and said, 'My god!' It added a little humorous trauma to the whole thing."

Beyond his conviction that Starkweather and Fugate were guilty, Allan said that he had no personal feelings toward the pair: "It was a story--Charlie was the subject of a story. You can't let your passions get in the way. You have to be objective. It's what journalism is all about. . . . This was a guy who just flipped his top and was a mass killer."

Allan said that despite his belief that anyone who kills is crazy, he didn't think Charlie should have been found innocent by reason of insanity.

"I would imagine that in this day and age Charlie Starkweather would be alive because of the insanity deal. Since then, that has become a major defense. That was almost unheard of them."

Allan was satisfied with both Charlie's and Caril's sentences: "I thought her sentence was justified. From a point of law, it was never proven she actually killed. I think justice was served.

"That's why I feel so sorry that she claimed she was so maligned and that she was so innocent. There's no doubt in my mind that she was part of it."

The Starkweather case was the biggest crime story Allan has covered, although he has covered other killings.
Allan said the hardest part of the Starkweather case was its unpredictability: "Not knowing what would happen next and trying to guess what would happen next.

"The hardest part of any breaking story like that is the waiting. Like the old Army game, you hurry up to wait. You hope you're playing your cards right and are in the right place."

Although he liked covering the Starkweather case, Allan said he would rather cover others: "There's a lot of stories I'd prefer covering than finding bodies every time you turn around."

He doesn't think coverage of the slayings was sensational: "This was before the days of what I call wolfpack journalism which has been enhanced by television crews. Now, in a story like this, you'd have all the national media with trucks, photographers, producers, everybody descending on a scene. You didn't have that then.

"You had one TV reporter operating his own hand-held black-and-white camera. Actually, I don't remember mob scenes of reporters all shouting questions as they do today. Maybe it was because I was so busy doing my own thing. I don't want to take anything away from radio, but it was basically through the print media that people got the news. It was before the prime days of television."

Allan thought Charlie's and Caril's trials were fair.
"This whole deal of insanity pleas and changes of venue came later. There was no cry for it, and it sure didn't happen. Here's an example: You got another national case like the Manson case, hell, they're all still alive. I don't think he would've been alive back in 1958, even in California.

Allan said that the reporter-source relationship, has changed since 1958.

"As an old-timer looking back, there's one big change I see. Back in those days, there was a kind of doctor-patient, lawyer-client relationship between reporters and their sources. A good example is the relationship I had with old Smitty, Harold Smith, the head of the criminal division for the Highway Patrol. I trusted him and he trusted me. They let me in on things.

"Today we have what I term blast-journalism. Ever since Watergate too many young reporters want that Pulitzer Prize, so they blast their sources forgetting that 'hey, wait a minute. Let's look at the other side. Let's check with other sources.' Back in those days, you went to your source and said, 'I got this. What about it?'

Allan said that if the source said information couldn't be printed, a reporter didn't print it and those type of sources were invaluable to him during the Starkweather case.

"They may have said not to print the information right away, but they guaranteed you'd be the first to get the story. You trusted him and he trusted you. A lot of old-timers tell me now they won't
talk to a reporter unless they have a tape recorder on. And I'm sorry to see that. It's kind of sad."

In 1986, Tom Allan, 67, was beginning his 40th year as a reporter for the World Herald.
Murders were rarer in the 1950s than they are today. Only one other mass murderer had claimed more lives than did Charles Starkweather in 1958 in the United States. Howard Unruh, 28, went into neighborhood streets and shops in Camden, N.J., in 1949 with a Luger pistol and killed 12 people within minutes. He was later sent to a state hospital for the criminally insane.¹

Journalism was different in the 1950s. Television reporting was in its infancy. Newspapers were the main source of information for most of the public. It seems as if the relationship between reporters and their sources was less adversarial than in 1986.

The Lincoln Star and Omaha World Herald were major sources of information for the Starkweather case for Nebraskans and others in the Midwest. The intensity involved, deadline pressures and competition from other media inevitably affected the judgment, writing and editing of stories. The case lasted 17 months--years longer if one considers the continuing story of Caril Fugate. She was paroled Sept. 28, 1981. She changed her name and moved to Michigan.

Both newspapers covered the case extensively. The Lincoln Star published more than 4,300 inches on the Starkweather case in 332

stories. The *Omaha World Herald* printed about 2,000 inches in 195 stories. Table 13 compares each paper's stories and inches.

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<th>Lincoln Star</th>
<th>Omaha World Herald</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>May 6-24</td>
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<td>May 25-Oct. 26</td>
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<td>Oct. 27-Nov. 22</td>
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<td>846</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4,338.73</strong></td>
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The *Star* printed more than twice the amount in inches than did the World Herald. Type size and column widths were similar in both papers. The *Star* printed 137 more stories than did the *World Herald*.

Not surprisingly, the *Star*'s coverage of the entire story was more thorough than the coverage in the *World Herald*. The *Star* consistently published more background stories and analyses. The *World Herald* frequently missed opportunities for features, background stories and analyses, while the *Star* seemed to make a concerted effort to look for more to report than the hard news.

The *Star* used 12 wire stories throughout the case, for a total of about 3.6 percent. The *World Herald* used 88 wire-service
stories, totaling about 45 percent.

Almost all of the events took place in and around Lincoln which helped in the Star's first-hand coverage. However, Omaha is only about 60 miles from Lincoln and the World Herald had a bureau in Lincoln. The Star did a much better job of gathering the news. The World Herald relied too heavily on wire stories.

The way the World Herald used wire-service stories caused problems with its coverage. During major events such as the killings, trials and execution of Charlie, the paper used few or no wire stories. During other times, the World Herald relied almost exclusively on wire stories and those were usually short, rewritten articles from other papers, printed with no byline.

When mostly wire stories were used, significant gaps occurred in the coverage. Those gaps disrupted continuity of the story and left the reader with an incomplete picture of events. The Star's coverage contained no such gaps. It seemed as if World Herald editors placed varying degrees of importance on the story and decided that during times when less sensational events were taking place, wire stories were adequate.

Public interest in the Starkweather and Fugate case was exceptional and the story warranted more complete coverage than what the World Herald gave it at times.

During the first three days of the case, one of the Star's stories was sensational. One lacked depth and one sympathized with Caril after she had been arrested. Three stories reported on the
terror in Lincoln without giving examples and may have exacerbated the fear people felt. Three stories appeared to condemn Starkweather before his trial.

The *World Herald* printed two clearly sensational headlines the first three days. A picture of August Meyer's body, lying in a pool of blood, was of dubious taste, especially for 1958. The paper called Starkweather a "killer," "slayer" or "murderer" eight times. One headline was inaccurate and misleading.

The *World Herald* also printed several feature and background stories that gave readers a compelling glimpse of the fear and anguish in Bennet.

In my opinion, both newspapers did a good job of reporting during these intense three days, especially considering the unpredictability of events and tight deadline pressures. However, the *Star* printed about 60 more inches in nine more stories, most of which were background or feature stories. Although the *Star* used poor judgment on a few of the articles, the extra background stories made the coverage more revealing and thorough. Neither paper lived up to its responsibility to keep from condemning Starkweather, but the *World Herald* judged him almost three times as often as the *Star* did and in nine fewer articles.

Although the *World Herald* had just two instances of sensationalism, those instances were blatant. The sensational headlines and tendency to judge Starkweather marred the *World Herald*'s otherwise good reporting. In my opinion, overall, the
Star's coverage of the first three days was thorough and informative.

Until Charlie's trial, coverage naturally decreased in both papers. The Star printed stories almost daily and when events slowed, features and analyses that included interviews with psychologists, educators, social workers, juvenile court authorities and others were printed. Star reporters and editors seemed to make a special effort to present the reader with an in-depth, complex view of Starkweather and Fugate.

Conversely, the World Herald published few background stories and no analyses. Only 13 stories out of 58 were written by staff members. In my opinion, the heavy use of wire stories created several key omissions in coverage. Although major events were reported in the World Herald, the coverage seemed shallow and incomplete.

Coverage in both newspapers continued to condemn Charlie before his trial between Jan. 31 and May 5. The Star did so 10 times in 99 articles. The World Herald had six instances of judging him out of 58 stories. That problem continued to plague the otherwise good coverage of the Lincoln Star and further hurt the World Herald's.

Both newspapers had one instance of sensationalism during the months before Charlie's trial. The Star's short story about the Wards' dogs was maudlin. The World Herald printed a sensational headline about Charlie's trial.
The Star printed more than twice the inches the World Herald did in 43 more articles. While quantity does not necessarily mean quality, the extra stories the Star published ensured complete, informative coverage.

The World Herald used no wire stories during Charlie's trial. The proceedings were well detailed and several background stories were written. The paper still condemned Starkweather before the jury found him guilty in seven instances out of 23 stories. One headline was confusing and one story contained an error.

The Star judged Starkweather in 10 instances out of 63 stories. The Star's coverage of Charlie's trial was extensive, averaging nearly four stories a day. Many were background stories on peripheral events. Although some of the background stories seemed to report trivial information or repeat what had already been covered elsewhere, most gave readers an in-depth view of Starkweather, his family and the attorneys.

Neither newspaper contained sensational articles during the trial. However, the Star persisted in referring to Starkweather by his hair color. He was often called "red-haired" or "flame-haired." No other person was referred to by any one characteristic as much as Charlie was. It seemed as if Star reporters and editors were affected by the cliche that redheads have bad tempers. The World Herald also referred to Charlie by his red hair, but not nearly as often as the Star did.
Both the World Herald and Star continued their condemnation of Starkweather before he was found guilty. The Star's coverage was more than double that of the World Herald in inches and nearly triple in stories. It appeared as if the World Herald ignored opportunities to write features or background stories. In my opinion, the Star's coverage of Charlie's trial was more thorough than the World Herald's.

Coverage in both newspapers subsided after Charlie's trial. No instances of sensationalism appeared in either paper. The Star printed 18 stories for 142.7 inches between May 25 and Oct. 26, the day before Caril's trial started. The World Herald published 22 stories totaling 99.4 inches during the same time. Similar topics were covered in each paper. With Starkweather's trial over, there was much less to report. The Star continued to print feature and background stories. No gaps in coverage occurred in either newspaper.

When Caril's trial started Oct. 26, coverage increased dramatically in both newspapers. The World Herald published 34 stories for 443.5 inches. Occasional background stories were included throughout the trial. Those articles added color to the coverage and gave readers a broader view of Caril and others involved in the case. However, few such articles were included. No wire stories were used.
One unimportant factual error occurred in the World Herald during Caril's trial. Two articles appeared to condemn Caril before the jury found her guilty. The World Herald printed three unsubstantiated statements. Although they did not affect the accuracy of stories, they were irritating, leaving the reader with questions. There were no instances of sensationalism.

The Star covered Caril's trial extensively, printing 44 stories totaling 886.72 inches. There was one discrepancy. The Star did not appear to judge Caril before she was found guilty. However, one story inappropriately implied that her case was lost before it went to the jury. Another article that gave a lopsided amount of coverage to the defense's closing argument showed poor judgment, in my opinion.

The Star continued to publish features and background stories. At least one such article was printed each day of testimony.

Coverage of Caril's trial in both newspapers was detailed. The World Herald's included more background and feature stories than it had earlier in the case. The Star's coverage was more extensive than the World Herald's, mostly due to the abundance of background stories and features. In my opinion, despite a few problems, both newspapers provided good coverage of Caril's trial.

After Caril's trial, coverage centered on Charlie's and Caril's continuing appeals, Charlie's stays and his execution. The Star and the World Herald covered the events without sensationalism or bias.

The Star published 82 stories for 846 inches. The World Herald printed 43 stories in 353.4 inches. The Star had one unimportant factual error between December 1958 and June 1959.
The Star continued to refer to Starkweather as "flame-haired" or "red-haired." Again, the paper did a good job digging for background stories and included interviews with Starkweather's and Fugate's families, attorneys and victims' families.

The World Herald's coverage included a few background, although it seemed as if reporters and editors missed opportunities to write in-depth features or interview primary figures in the case.

The World Herald used 26 wire stories out of 43 published. Several significant gaps in coverage occurred. Those omissions created confusion for the reader and disrupted the continuity of the story.

In my opinion, the Star did a better job informing the public during the final months of the case.

Although the World Herald provided steady coverage throughout the Starkweather case, it seems that at times only perfunctory stories were published. In my opinion, the frequent use of wire stories during "slow" times accounted for significant gaps in coverage.

The World Herald failed in its responsibility to keep from judging Starkweather before he was found guilty. The Lincoln Star also failed. In my opinion, that problem might have been partly responsible for the difficulties in finding non-biased jurors.

When the World Herald published background stories or features, coverage improved. But those stories were rare in the overall
coverage. There were no instances of bias, although early in the case there were several instances of sensationalism.

The Lincoln Star provided readers with a powerful look at two teenagers, their crimes, the effects on a community and penalties the teenagers paid.

A few articles, especially early in the case, showed poor judgment. However, those problems were outweighed by consistent background and feature stories. From the first days to Charlie's execution, readers were given a complete, in-depth view of the case.

The Star's major problem was its persistence in appearing to judge Starkweather before his trial. That marred the Star's otherwise good coverage.

Del Harding and Tom Allan provided background and insight to what it was like to report such a story. Their comments also provided a look at how the nature of journalism has changed since 1958. Both have vivid memories of the case and their feelings about it.

The Omaha World Herald dwarfed the Lincoln Star in staff and circulation in 1958. Despite the fact that Lincoln had the home-town advantage, the Starkweather case was the biggest crime story in Nebraska's history. It received national and international coverage and the public was intensely interested in it. The Lincoln Star's coverage was better than the World Herald's. The World Herald's coverage, while adequate in informing the public about major events, lacked the depth that the story warranted and the Lincoln Star gave it.
Charlie Starkweather (center) is led away from the courthouse by Sheriff Merle Karnopp (left), as an unidentified spectator looks on. Photo by Del Harding.
Caril Fugate at a press conference in 1958. Photo by Del Harding.
Punk’s Blood-Stained String Ends at 10 Dead With Wyoming Capture

States Try for Custody of Accused

Lincoln Slaying Jag Tops in Terror in Recent Years

How Couple Beat Dragnet Being Asked

Oil Leaser Wrests Starkweather Rifle in Roadside Scuffle

Sobbing Girl Friend Quits Killer Before Gun Battle Starts

Lincoln Gets Easy Sleep for First Time in 3 Days

Ten Who Died

Economic

Reliability

Popularity

Efficiency

Want Ads Get the 4th Dome...
3 MORE BODIES FOUND
Bennet Victims Bring Toll To 6

THE VICTIMS:
Bachelor Farmer, High School Boy, Girl

AUTOPSY REVEALS UNNATURAL FATALITY; 1ST DEGREE MURDER CHARGES TO BE FILED

Patrol Checks Leads

OFFICERS APPROACH HOUSE OF SLAIN MAN

JITTERY BENNET ARMED FORTRESS

Cove where high school pair's bodies were found... dark spots on floor are blood.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


