

THE BIZARRE case began at 6:05 on a warm June morning with the insistent blasting of an automobile horn in front of the police station at Riverdale, Ill., a town on the southern fringe of Chicago. When Assistant Police Chief Ray Krass and Sgt. William Nortof hurried outside to investigate, they found a handsome young man sitting behind the wheel. He wore only a wet shirt tied around his waist and a pair of sport shoes.

In response to their questions, he gestured impatiently toward the rear. In a kneeling position on the floor, wedged between the two seats, was a beautiful dark-haired girl. She was dead.

"Who are you? Who is the girl?" Krass demanded.

The man's lips moved, but only a frothy gurgle came out.

"Can't you talk?"

The young man shook his head and opened his mouth, pointing to his throat. It was raw and inflamed. Krass got a pencil and pad and said, "I'll ask questions and you write the answers."

The man nodded and took the pencil. He wrote that he was Arthur Marino, 28, the girl was Joan Coward, 17, his fiancée; they were both from Blue Island, and the previous evening had celebrated Joan's 17th birthday.

Early that morning, they were driving along Indiana Avenue, in the adjoining city of Dolton, when another car drew up beside them. Marino thought they were stickup men and stopped.

A tall, burly man leaped out and crowded in the front seat beside them. He pointed a gun at Marino.

The other car, an old Essex sedan, turned off into Sibley Avenue, then onto a gravel road. Prodded by the gun, Marino followed. They pulled off the road near an abandoned gravel pit filled with water. The two men forced the couple out of their car. They were both about 30, but it was dark and Marino couldn't see their features. The driver dragged the girl out of sight among some trees. The other man produced a bottle and forced Marino to drink from it.

"I think it was acid," Marino wrote. "It burned my mouth."

The gunman took Marino's wallet containing \$27, then forced him to undress and jump into the 30-foot-deep lake. For half an hour, he had to tread water. Finally, at dawn, the two men left and Marino scrambled out. It took him another half-hour to find Joan's battered body in a clump of weeds.

Marino said they were stopped by the two men at 4:35 a.m. Joan had just looked at her watch and remarked they ought to be going home. He said he hadn't taken the license number of the Essex; it was too dark.

Police Chief Charles Cook had been notified at his home; so had Chief Grover Cogswell of Dolton. They arrived at the Riverdale station as Marino was being examined by the physician. He ordered Marino hospitalized.

by William T. Brannon

Case of the Insignificant Clue

WHILE COOK and Cogswell examined Marino's car, Patrolman Fred Mohr took a squad to search the lake area. In the back seat of the car, the two chiefs found Marino's wet clothing, but nothing belonging to the girl.

In the field near the lake, Mohr and his men could find no signs of a struggle. But they located the girl's purse in a clump of weeds; and in a hollow tree, Mohr found a bottle containing household ammonia. Mohr studied the liquid inside and noted that there was still considerable foam at the top. "I wonder," he said, "how long before the foam subsides after ammonia is stirred up?"

Cook and Cogswell talked to Joan's grieving parents, who said they had opposed Joan's marriage because she was so young. But they said Marino, a music teacher, was a fine boy.

Last night was to have been a big event in Joan's life. Art was taking her to a movie, then to the Martinique ballroom to dine and dance.

At the hospital, Marino's throat had been treated and that afternoon he was able to talk. He said he had taken Joan to another place instead of the Martinique. They had stayed only about an hour because there was no orchestra, only a juke box. It was such a beautiful night they had decided just to ride. He gave the officers a timetable of their movements:

They had stopped for hamburgers about 3:30. Marino had exchanged greetings with Millard Courtney, a state policeman. They had danced at the Green Shingle for 20 minutes, then had driven east to Indiana Avenue. About 4:35, the two strangers appeared. Sometime between then and 5 o'clock, he had been forced to drink the ammonia and jump into the lake.

Patrolman Mohr finished his experiment and reported to Chief Cook. That night, Chiefs Cook and Cogswell drove over the route Marino said he had taken. They carefully timed the trip.



The next day, Cook and Cogswell conferred with Assistant State's Attorney Alexander Napoli. Then the three officials went to the hospital to see Marino.

"You murdered Joan Coward," Chief Cook accused, "and concocted that wild story to save yourself."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Marino said.

"All right then, I'll tell you. Joan had decided she was too young for marriage. But you wouldn't break the engagement. You threatened her; Joan had confided that to her closest friend.

"Last night, we went back over your route. You didn't stop at the Green Shingle, because it closes at 2 o'clock. At 4:35 a.m. the darkness had faded, and by 5 o'clock the sun was coming up. Yet you said you couldn't see the two men's features or the license number of their car.

"You killed the girl and you had her on your hands. You swished some of the ammonia around in your mouth to make your story convincing. But you didn't think about the foam in the ammonia—and that's what tripped you up."

Marino said he had been forced to drink the ammonia before 5 a.m. But the bottle was found after 8 o'clock, and there was still foam on top of the liquid.

Mohr bought three bottles of ammonia. He poured out enough so all three contained the same amount as the bottle found in the hollow tree. Each was shaken up until foam rose on top. Then Mohr waited for the foam to subside.

The foam had disappeared from all three bottles within two hours and 18 minutes. Marino had lied about the time he said he had been forced to drink the ammonia. When this part of his story was found untrue, the police soon disproved the balance of it.

Marino was found guilty and on February 10, 1950, he was sentenced to 50 years in prison.