

The Starved Rock Murders with Andy Hale

Episode 11: The Trial of the Century Part 2

ANDY HALE: Welcome back to the Starved Rock Murders with Andy Hale, a podcast where we are examining a tragic triple murder that took place over half a century ago, back in 1960 at the scenic Starved Rock state park located in lasal county, Illinois, where three women were brutally bludgeoned to death. My client Chester Weger was a 21 year old dishwasher at the Starved Rock lodge who was arrested for the brutal crimes convicted and served over 60 years in prison. Chester's currently 83 years old and out of prison on parole. We've been making the case on this podcast that Chester Weger was wrongfully convicted of these horrendous murders. Today, we're going to continue discussing Chester's 1961 criminal trial, including Chester's testimony to the jury. This episode is longer than usual because there is so much that needs to be told. We have a lot to talk about. Let's begin

(sound of eerie music begins to play)

ANDY HALE: In 1961, when Chester Weger was convicted and sentenced to life in prison, the state knew that they had presented a false narrative to the jury. They knew, they knew their case was built on one false assertion after another and they proceeded anyway. The state knew that the tree limb could not have been the murder weapon. They knew from multiple reports that there had to have been more than one assailant. They knew from a lab report that a hair found at the crime scene did not match Chester Weger. They knew that the twine found in the lodges kitchen and twine found at the crime scene were two different kinds. They knew that nothing had been stolen from the women and yet called it a botched robbery. They knew that a mysterious phone call had been intercepted by an operator who overheard two men discussing a third man's bloody overalls in the trunk of a car that were related to the murders.

ANDY HALE: They knew the identity of the two men on this phone call who were discussing a plan to burn the incriminating evidence. They knew that the official narrative was impossible. They knew that what they had presented to the jury, wasn't the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. And even knowing all these things and more, the state still asked for Chester Weger to be strapped to an electric chair and killed. The state asked the jury to take the life of a man based on one thing. And one thing only an implausible confession, a confession, the former prosecutor later called absolutely ridiculous extracted after an admitted month, long plan of psychological warfare and hours and hours of interrogation from an exhausted and terrified 21 year old dishwasher.

(music fades out)

Transition to conversation between hosts:

ANDY HALE: Whitney episode 11 <laugh>. I just wanted to start by saying I'm so glad I've been able to have you join me on this podcast road trip. It's just been great having you here with me. Well,

WHITNY BRAUN: Thank you. I mean, it it's, it's just such a pleasure and it, and it's, it's just one of those stories, right? That I feel like we, we could just keep talking indefinitely and still never cover all of it.

ANDY HALE: Absolutely. So today trial, the century part two, we talked last week in part one, how the state's case, the cornerstone of their case was this absolutely ridiculous confession. That's what former prosecutor, Tony Raccuglia called it. Absolutely ridiculous. And so the state had to take other circumstantial evidence to try to bootstrap and make that absolutely ridiculous confession, less ridiculous. So we talked about the jacket. They tried to say, oh, this is the jacket that Chester wore when he bludgeoned these three ladies and we showed, there were only minute spots of blood. Mm-hmm <affirmative> the size of a pinhead. We talked about how they tried to argue, oh, Chester had all these scratches and bruises on his face, long scratches, blood, you know, like he's fighting with these women, right? And then we bring out how he's interviewed by three Illinois state police officers within days of the murders.

ANDY HALE: Yeah. They don't mention anything. They don't notice anything. There's nothing on Chester's face that gives them pause. That was something the state just constructed with their leading questions in October of 1960, to get people to dig up dirt on Chester, we talked about the twine. They tried to argue the twine came from the lodge. It didn't, they couldn't prove it. It was common 20 ply twine. And they didn't even mention the 10 ply twine found at the crime scene that the lodge does not order does not have they found out 10 ply twine at Chester's house. So, and then we talked about their surveillance, the 24 7 surveillance. Let me pause that to me. When I went back and listened to last week's episode, I think what was most stunning to me was did you realize, did you know that it was literally 24, 7 with eight different officers? Yeah. From mid-October till the day before he confessed. I didn't know that. Did you?

WHITNY BRAUN: I, I did. Cuz that was part of, you know, what I had looked at when I first saw those documents, you had shown me long ago that said commit psychological warfare. You know what, what all did that entail? And it, and it was, it was 24, 7 relentless surveillance.

ANDY HALE: Anybody who is skeptical that this could be a false confession. That is all you have to know right there. I've never seen it. We'll never see it again. You could never get away with that today to think that they did a 24 7 surveillance with eight officers rotating throughout all the way up until the time you confess. So that was last week. That that's what we covered. I wanna get into some more of the criminal trial. Now part two is your seatbelt fastened. Are you ready to go?

WHITNY BRAUN: I am so ready.

ANDY HALE: All right. Let's start with the murder weapon. This was, this is a huge point. I mean, I could do this whole podcast episode just on the murder weapon. Let me put this in context we talked about in a prior episode, there was a Chicago Tribune, March 17th, 1960 newspaper article where Harlan Warren said, I'm reading this. He said he was fairly positive that the tree limb, which weighs 10 pounds and has a sharp fragment at one end was the death weapon. The limb was saturated with blood. Okay. This is on March 17th the day after the women's body. So found how is he saying that he has no idea. He has no clue Harlan Moore, what he is talking about. He's a state's attorney anyway. He's not an investigator. Yeah. All right. But that's, that's what he has concluded the next day. Oh, this tree limb they found with some blood on it is the death weapon.

ANDY HALE: He's fairly positive. Okay. Well, we've talked about this before, too. A week later, there's this March 24th, 1960 Chicago tribute newspaper article a week later. And it says another startling development in the murder inquiry is a report from the state police crime laboratory that has convinced state police that a three foot, 10 pound tree limb found near the murder scene was not used to bludgeon the women. And then it says the blood covered limb is so rotten in some places that it probably would've cracked under the impact. Had it been used to beat the women. Authorities said, okay. So after I saw that newspaper article, I went back to my file. I pulled up our trustee. We've talked about these notes. So many times, these March 20th, 1960 notes, I would urge anybody listening to go to our website and look at these. So you know what I'm talking about, it'll make it a lot easier to understand it's handwritten notes.

ANDY HALE: There was a meeting on March 20th after the crime lab briefed the state's attorney's office and the Sheriff's office. And there's just tons of information in there from the crime lab. And it specifically mentions the name shake S C H a I C H. That was the head of the climb lab. John shake. All right. So these notes here's

here's, this is where I'm going. They say on there, they talk about this tree limb that was found. And this is, this is the basis of that Chicago Tribune article. These are the notes. Limb was old, bark was soft, spongy, high moisture content, blood on club. But here's the most important one. Blood did not result on the limb from hitting

WHITNY BRAUN: Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

ANDY HALE: Wow. So what I think that means when you look at the Chicago Tribune article, which reported that they, you know, the limb was so rotten, it would've cracked. Yeah. The reporting like, yeah. There's blood on the limb, but it didn't get there from striking the women. Yeah. So what are some other ways it could have got there, I guess maybe drip or, or

WHITNY BRAUN: Blood or if the, if the women were being dragged, maybe it's a transference off their bodies onto, you know, onto it. I mean, who, yeah. Who knows,

ANDY HALE: But it's not what, what, what the crime I reporting a week later, blood did not result on limb from hitting. Yeah. I, that is absolutely shocking in light of what we're gonna talk about next that the blood it's just unbelievable. So the state I talked about this last episode, their argument, their closing argument was, and I'm gonna read it again verbatim. And I submit ladies and gentlemen that the blood was deposited on the jacket because this defendant was using these weapons, these binoculars in that camera and that log pounding, pounding, pounding into the head of miss outing. That's how the state argued the case. Okay. Pounding her with the log. And there's just, they know the state knows at the time of trial that the log that Warren thought was the death weapon cannot be the murder weapon. It was rotten. It would've cracked. And they're told the blood on the log was not the result of hitting. And yet they're arguing to the jury that this is what happened. That that log was actually used to beat these women. I mean, I, I just, again, I've said this, I just want to scream. How can you say that?

WHITNY BRAUN: I don't know. I don't know how you go full tilt, making an argument that you know is not plausible. You know, this scenario you're presenting to the jury is not accurate. How do you go all in on that?

ANDY HALE: Well, here's the point. I wanna make a distinction. Yes. This case was decided pre Brady versus Maryland, which means the state didn't have to turn over potentially exculpatory evidence. All right. That is true. But you still have a duty of being honest. Yes. There's an ethical duty of being honest. You can't just argue things that you know are false. You can't go into court and say things that you know are contradictory of the physical evidence. That's always been the case. So how does the state argue that the log is being used to pound pound pound? The head of misting when it's got these, it's

been told, they've been told by the crime lab that <laugh>, the log was old and rotten and the blood did not result on the limb from hitting. I mean, oh my gosh, Whitney. It just, it's unbelievable. I know. And so I'm, I'm gonna continue with this.

ANDY HALE: Um, cuz what happened then is this is the whole theory of the state's case. You know the log they've got this log that Warren found, you know, when he is walking around the crime scene, the day after it's marked as an exhibit, they bring it into trial. All right. So let's, let's continue to talk about this murder weapon. I'm also very critical of the trial testimony of John shake, the supervisor of the state bureau of criminal identification. Let me explain why. Okay. It's clear those handwritten notes that I referenced that meeting of March 20th, 1960 are detailing things that Mr. Sheik has told mm-hmm <affirmative> the Sheriff's office and the state's attorney's office. Okay. His name is specifically on those notes. So it looks like what happened is on March 20th, 1960, Mr. Sheik on behalf of the crime lab, he's briefing the officers. I think he's doing it orally mm-hmm <affirmative> and they're taking notes.

ANDY HALE: And that's when they say, you know, limb was old, bark was soft, high moisture content. Blood did not result on limb from hitting. Okay. So we know all that. Mr. Sheik knows all that. The state knows all that. The state elects to call him as a witness at trial. All right. The state didn't have to do that. They didn't have to call him, but they did. That's the choice the state made to elicit testimony for Mr. Sheik. Now let's look at the questions that he was asked in the answers that he gave at the trial. Okay. So the state calls him as a witness. They show him the log, he identifies it. And then he testifies how he examined the log at the funeral home on March 16th, which is the day the women's bodies are found, right? Yes. Okay. And he says there were stains on the log that had the appearance of blood.

ANDY HALE: Now here's where I get very, very critical him on cross examination. Chester's attorney John B Damara asked these questions question. Now, are you familiar with people's exhibit 64? Which is the log mm-hmm <affirmative> answer. Yes, sir. Question. You have identified this answer. Yes, sir. Question. Now, what were you asked to examine it for? And what did you do? What did you find? If you remember, let me pause. This is very important. He asked him, what did you find? And here's how Mr. Sheik that question. I'm reading it verbatim. I was not asked specifically to examine it for anything in particular. This exhibit was submitted to me for examination. At the time I received the exhibit, it had already haw. I measured the exhibit and made notations as to his description, examined it visually and found on the end opposite, the forked end, a number of hairs.

ANDY HALE: And then McNamara asks. Was that the extent of your examination and shake response? Yes, sir. Holy cow. So here's my

point. When, when McNamara says, what did you find? It is an open-ended question. All right. You can't get more open ended in general than that. And you know what? Mr. Sheik found, he found the limb was old, the bark was soft and soggy. There was a high moisture content. The blood on the log did not result from hitting, just like in those notes. Those are among the things he found. Yeah. And it was apparently so rotten that if it had been used to hit the women, it would've cracked. And Mr. Sheik doesn't mention any of that in his answer. I mean that he just says, no, that was the extent of my examination. He does not mention any of those things. I mean, Whitney, let me just tell you something.

ANDY HALE: Can you imagine, let me get, let me just get real here. Can you imagine what a bombshell it would have been in that courtroom on February 20th, 1961, which is the day Mr. Sheik was testifying. If he would've admitted that the log was rotten, would've cracked and the blood on the log didn't result from hitting there would have been audible. Gasps. Yeah. From everyone in that pat courtroom, that testimony would've utterly devastated. The prosecution's case. That log was not the murder weapon, the trial, in my opinion, would've been over that moment. Yes. That moment. Every would've been like, I mean, I got goosebumps right now. Whitney telling you this, saying this to you, this is the type of cross examination. That trial lawyers dream of something you elicit from a witness that wins your entire case. I mean, McNamara, doesn't, didn't have the benefit of seeing these notes that you and I are now seeing.

ANDY HALE: Yeah. These March 20th notes, he doesn't know this. Right. But he asked the right question. He wasn't afraid of the answer. I loved it. A lot of trial lawyers, you know, they'll say, don't ask a question on cross examination that you don't know the answer to. I disagree with that wholeheartedly. I always violate that rule. I asked people things, I get them talking McNamara wasn't afraid. He wasn't afraid. He said, what did you find? And shake. If he was honest, would have said all the things he found about that log. The most important being the blood on the log did not result from hitting shame on Mr. Sheik, shame on the prosecution. They all knew that. Am I overreacting to this? Cuz I wanna just scream.

WHITNY BRAUN: No, I that's. It's not an overreaction because that in my, opinion's a lie by omission. It's a lie by omission. Right? He is omitting the truth, which absolutely changes the game in the trial.

ANDY HALE: Unbelievable. That you just hide that you found it and then you just don't bring anything up. When you're asked, what did you find? Oh my God. And it, like I said, it's a game changer. It's game over for the state. At that point, everything's based on the lock. If all this comes out, it's just like the whole house of cards just yeah. Is blown over. It's gone. Oh my God. I'm so upset about this Whitney, but, huh. I mean, when I came across that testimony, I, I was like, I could not believe there was a question asked that

should have elicited a complete answer cuz there was yeah, there was that question asked. Okay. That's my point. McNamara asked the question and he deserved an honest answer and he didn't get it. Oh my God.

WHITNY BRAUN: So, so my question is does someone prep shake before and say, Hey, just, uh, be as vague as possible is, I mean like what?

ANDY HALE: Yeah. I think he, he's definitely prepped, uh, for sure. And they've agreed. He's not gonna talk about any of this, you know? Oh that that's and they know max so

WHITNY BRAUN: Frustrating.

ANDY HALE: They know MCIR doesn't know about it too, you know? Yeah. MC doesn't have those notes and I think it's

WHITNY BRAUN: Just so deceptive.

ANDY HALE: What happened is he winds up producing in court in this examination in April 1st report, a written report. But it apparently did not mention these these issues. And I think that, I think the reason is these things weren't put in a written report, they were reported orally and it, but it's in the notes. These March 20th notes are like the smoking gun for this issue. Yeah. He reports it. So once we know he reported it, it's something he found, it's something he found. Let me continue with this issue of the log they have is the murder weapon. I call this part the tweezers. Let me explain why. All right. You know, when I give closing arguments, I like to do PowerPoints and I'll just have a title. And people be like, what does that mean? <laugh> my PowerPoint here would just be called the tweezers. All right.

ANDY HALE: Let remind everybody again. The state's closing argument, pounded, pounded, pounded the three women with the lock. Okay. At trial, the state called Sergeant William Hall from the Illinois state police. He testified, he was at the funeral home March 16th, 1960, where the women's bodies were brought. They asked him if he'd removed anything from the body of miss Oetting. And he said he had removed several little small pieces of wood and a quote with her head with a tweezers. He said that these little pieces of wood were taking to John Sheik at the crime lab. Okay. So this is consistent with those handwritten notes. Let's go back to those March 20th handwritten notes that mentioned quote two small splinters of wood in hair for Mrs. Oetting. Okay. These notes are, are, I mean, they're huge. So the state then called this guy, Francis Chika, K I K a C H K a, who was employed at the forest products laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

ANDY HALE: He testified that he examined the bark particles removed from his Oetting and he described these particles this way. Quote, the particle here is extremely small. This little tiny fragment here

is about one 25th of an inch in dimensions. And then he testifies that in his opinion, these tiny, tiny bark fragments came from the lock. So what the state was saying was aha. The women were beaten with the log, these little fragments in Mrs. ING's head. They were like in one of her cuts came from this log. This proves it was the murder weapon. Okay. But here's my point, Mrs. ODing is we described last episode when I read those, the nature of her injuries from the closing argument, blunt force trauma, her head, I mean was explain her injuries again. You know, it's better than I

WHITNY BRAUN: Do. Yeah. So, I mean, I used the word last week, carnage mm-hmm <affirmative> I mean, her head was destroyed. Orbital esophagus fractured. I exploded jaw broken teeth cracked. I mean, her head was pulverized and there's no way a limb that's soft and that mushy would leave too little that a well a, it couldn't inflict that damage. And then B if, if you did hit her with it, it would've splintered and you would've had thousands of little splinters, not one or two. It, it doesn't make sense. It's it's, it's not, it's not plausible.

ANDY HALE: You made the exact point. I was hoping you'd make, you would have wood fragments all about her head, her face, her hair not, oh, I found a two little, uh, tiny particles. I'm gonna pull out with a tweezer. Right? I mean, that just shows you, uh, and cast out on the whole narrative from the state. And you know, I talked to a forensic pathologist and when he read the autopsy, what he said was this is heavy. A heavy object used to with strength is how we said, yeah. A heavy object used with strength, like swinging a baseball bat or as Jansen, uh, theorized a tire iron, a steel pipe. I mean this forensic, uh, pathologist even said like a sledge hammer. I mean, yeah. It's not also, by the way, it's not the camera and the binoculars. Yeah. Maybe they were hit with it once or twice, or maybe they, their, their hairs were on it, but you don't get these devastating, no facial injuries from those little tiny objects.

ANDY HALE: This is a heavy object used with strength. So my point of all, this is the state had evidence. It knew. I mean, it's not just what they thought they were told by the crime lab that this tree limb was not the murder weapon. The blood on it was not from hitting. And yet they went to trial telling the jury that it was, that was dishonest. They knew that was contradictory to the physical evidence that was wrong. That was totally wrong. They just constructed a narrative that they knew was false and contradicted all the physical evidence. I, I just cannot get over that part that they knew all that. And it's just shocking to see the lengths that they went to. All right. Let me take a deep breath. Um, I wanna now talk a little bit about the confession. Okay. Chester Weger testified in his own defense before he testified the state called Wayne HES and, uh, Wayne HES. What was his exact title? Do you remember? He

WHITNY BRAUN: Was the, uh, detective for Lasalle county. He was a county, uh, police officer that was given the rank of detective.

ANDY HALE: So he is asked, what's interesting is they put him on the stand, the state calls him and he basically says, yeah, you know, um, we were interrogating Chester. And then at some point, you know, he made an oral statement to me. They're like, okay, no further questions. And they don't, they don't ask him like, what did he say? So McNamara again, I love this about McNamara. <laugh> most lawyers wouldn't have done this. I would've, this is how McNamara stops out his cross examination. This is his very first question. He says, well, what did he say at the time? You know, what did he say? Meeting Chester McNamara was not afraid. And, and this is what he was doing, which I love. If somebody's gonna tell a ridiculous story. You want 'em to tell it. Yeah. Tell that ridiculous story to the jury. Yeah. Tell the ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what Chester Weger told you, Mr. HES tell it five or 10 times. We'd love to hear it. I would like it, Whitney, if you could read. Sure. Uh, I would just like you to read verbatim. We don't have to read the questions cuz there's, it's pretty much just a narrative read verbatim. What Wayne has testified to the jury that he claimed Chester Weger told him if you would please.

WHITNY BRAUN: Oh, happily. Okay. Bill came into the room and Chester started out by telling how he come down the bluff trail and into St. Louis canyon trail by the shortcut. And he met the ladies at the bridge and that this one woman in the lead had what he thought was a purse over her shoulders with the strap. He grabbed the strap. He grabbed at the purse or strap and the strap broke and it was at the bridge. He got, he talked to them at the bridge. If they would go back to the other end of the canyon, he would not harm them. He would not hurt them. And they talked it over among themselves. And with further conversations with Chester and they agreed to go along and go back to the other end of the canyon, where he would tie them up in order to give himself a chance to get away.

WHITNY BRAUN: He said that he didn't live around here and he wanted to get a chance to get out of the canyon. He said he wouldn't harm them if they would do that. And they agreed, but on the way down the trail, they asked him often, you are sure you will not hurt us if we do that. And he agreed, they got down to the, to the end of the canyon, right by this cave. And they asked him where they wanted, where he wanted them to sit. He had two ladies on the left hand side of the cave and he tied them together on the wrist and the ankles. And the other lady was on the right hand side of the cave. And he tied her separately, but he tied them loosely so that they would not shut off the blood pressure and the blood circulation. And as he got about 75 feet out of the canyon, away from the cave, one of the women got loose and run up behind him and struck him with what he thought was a pair of binoculars or a camera or something.

WHITNY BRAUN: And it kind of stunned him. And he leaned over and he saw this club and he picked up the club and he swung around and struck this white-haired woman. He hit her over the back, the head and the shoulders. And she went down unconscious. He looked at her and he thought he had killed her. And he picked her up and carried her back to the cave, which he since described as a Fireman's carry. And he dumped her at the mouth of the cave, right in the center. These other two women, when they saw what happened to this first lady, they started to kick and scratch and scream and they were tied up. They couldn't get away. He said that he thought that he had killed this other woman, Mrs. Murphy. And he said, I'll have to kill the other two so that I will not be identified.

WHITNY BRAUN: And so he picked up the club again and started to strike the other two women. And he said that he hit them and hit them and hit them about that time, the lady that he had carried back and that he thought he had killed, she became conscious and she got up and she started fighting him. And that when he swung the club again and knocked her down, he killed her too. He said that he went, he saw an airplane circling around, up in the air and he thought that he would drag them up in the cave. So they wouldn't see what was going on down there while he was dragging them up in the cave. He dragged the one on the left. That's Mrs. Murphy, which was the first one that he described that he dragged and that he dragged the other two. He dragged the two of them by the shoulders and one of them by the feet.

WHITNY BRAUN: And he told me how the shoe of one of them came off and it laid there in the snow. He went down there, he went through their pockets and I believe there was a rolled up handkerchief and a belt and something in the pocket of one of the ladies, he left the canyon and on the same way out, he stopped and washed the blood off of his hands and off his pants with the snow at the edge of the trail, he proceeded back to the lodge, wait a minute. He stopped at the Creek. And he said that he noticed a piece of comb at the bridge where he was the first time where he thought one of the ladies had used this as a weapon when the tassel at the bridge took place. And he picked it up. And when he went back to the lodge, he threw it in the pale and he went back to the lodge. He went to the back room. He said, nobody noticed him or saw him. And he proceeded back to work.

ANDY HALE: <laugh>

WHITNY BRAUN: Right. I,

ANDY HALE: And I love, I love this last question. Okay. So that's what HES says. And then McNair's question is, is that his oral confession?

WHITNY BRAUN:

And he says yes, to the best of my knowledge. And

ANDY HALE: I love this. McNamara says I have no further questions. I absolutely love that. It's exactly how I would've done it. It's like hearing you read that. Is it any surprise that the late former prosecutor Tony Raia called that? Absolutely ridiculous. Uh,

WHITNY BRAUN: No, it's it's it's

ANDY HALE: Oh my

WHITNY BRAUN: God. It's so nonsensical. I thought I killed the woman. Oh, she, she, she rose from the dead and then she attacked me. And, and then I noticed one of them had used a comb as an, as a weapon. I,

ANDY HALE: I wrote in my notes, I wrote him my notes. It was like Friday the 13th, you know, Jason was not dead. Mrs. Murphy rose from the dead and came to attack him again. I mean, this is like something out of a, a, uh, Friday, the 13th movie. I mean, this is, and then I love this at the end. I love that's the end. The, the very last thing he says is he proceeded back to work. <laugh> oh,

WHITNY BRAUN: Yeah. Just went back to work.

ANDY HALE: Can you tell me, I was trying to think about this. Can you think of another case where somebody massacred three people and then went back to their job? I was thinking about this. Like I, somebody mentioned me like the Richard spec case in the sixties where, you know, he killed all those nurses in that apartment complex, Richard spec. Didn't go back to work.

WHITNY BRAUN: Um,

ANDY HALE: You know, where, uh, did somebody go back to their job after bludgeoning people while they're on their break? I mean, are you kidding

WHITNY BRAUN: Me? Yeah. Even this scenario, as absurd as this, as this, uh, scenario is that they're presenting would've rendered Chester, so disheveled and covered in blood that there's, there's no way he walks into a formal dining room at a fancy restaurant and just goes, where are my dishes to start washing?

ANDY HALE: The whole thing is we've talked about this in episode six, how it just makes no sense, uh, everything about it is laughable. Um, not to mention it contradicts all the physical evidence. You know, we know the women didn't break away. There's so many things we know about this that are wrong. And I love this is what McNair said in his closing argument. J's lawyer. He said, I'm gonna read this part verbatim. Let me say this ladies and gentlemen, this confession is the most fantastic improbable thing that I have ever heard of and is capable of being fought up only by a man of bill DUTs caliber. I

thought that was great. And then he says this, which I thought was really well said, ladies and gentlemen, this confession is the record of a deputy sheriff with political aspirations who took this young American citizen, outraged, his Liberty violated the laws of the land trampled on the constitution, and then committed the darkest and deepest perjury in this court of justice to cover up his deed.

ANDY HALE: Oh my gosh. That gives me goosebumps. Just reading that. I mean, so well said, and let me talk a little, just briefly sincere on the confession about the airplane. You know, I was at some parole hearings with Chester Weger and there was, there would be occasions where somebody on the board would say, well, what about this airplane? That was going over only he could have known that. Right. All right. You know, my response to that is I don't trust anything involving bill Dumit no, because we're gonna talk about this more. He committed perjury. Uh, I don't trust anything. He did. I, I believe it's my opinion that, you know, he found out there was a plane flying overhead and just created that whole narrative. Got Chester to say it. I don't trust anything. He did. He was a member out at the Ottawa airport of like the Ottawa airman's club. He knew the people out at the airport. Right? Mm-hmm

WHITNY BRAUN: <affirmative> yeah. He knew Homer Charnow. Who was the owner of said plane and knew the flight logs. He knew when they took the planes out and when they brought them back in.

ANDY HALE: So I don't trust any of that. And, and just think about this for a minute. Uh, Chester says, oh, I saw plane going overhead. So I had to move the bodies into the cave. Wait a minute. If you saw plane going overhead and you worried about them seeing you and you've killed these ladies, wouldn't you just get the heck out of there and leave. You're gonna take all the time. It takes to drag those bodies into the cave one by one, all that time. I mean, the whole thing makes no sense about, you know, him having to do that. And another really interesting point. I didn't realize this, you know, we've talked about those notes that Anne Warren Smith found in. Was it her dad was Harlan Warren, her dad.

WHITNY BRAUN: Uh, yes, it was her father mm-hmm

ANDY HALE: <affirmative> she found after he died. Those, those handwritten notes. We've already posted these on the website. And I wanna read you what this says about the plane. It says, confession show how he did it. Big point. Why pull bodies underneath the cliff at time he was tying them up. Red plane flying overhead had to hide the bodies. How would deputy sheriff know they flew? And that is what it says. Wayne said, deputy made this up. What, what is that referring to?

WHITNY BRAUN: I mean, you know,

ANDY HALE: Is that Wayne HES?

WHITNY BRAUN: It it's got to be right. I mean, who, who else is it

ANDY HALE: Saying that, that dumb it maybe made this up.

WHITNY BRAUN: Yeah. I mean, who, who else? Who else could it be?

ANDY HALE: I've got it in front of me right now. His direct testimony. Then McNamara does this long cross examination. He asks him over and over and I'm not gonna just read every question and answer, but he basically asks him over and over. If he ever, well, if he ever threatened Chester Weger he ever made a threats to him? No, no, no. He denied all that every single time. Okay. He denied all that. We know when Craig Armstrong then testified. He Craig Armstrong assistant state's attorney said yeah, dumb it threatened Chester with the Thunderbolt several times. So we know dumb. It lied and committed perjury. And I love this again. McNamara is planning the seat in his cross examination. He's not afraid he wants the jury to understand this. This is what he starts out right out of the box. When he gets, uh, duit on the stand, his first line of questioning, he says, Mr.

ANDY HALE: Duit do you own an airplane answer? No. Have you owned an airplane? I owned a share one at one time. Where'd you keep that plane? Ottawa airport. You know, all the people out there quite well, don't you? I know a lot of them. Well, and you know, he talks about, I love this. He just asked the question. He says, Mr. Dumbed, isn't it a fact that between 9 30, 5 and 1105 on November 17th, 1960, that you told Chester Auto Weger that there was a red and white airplane flying overhead at Starved Rock park. No, sir. I love that. He asked him that and he asked him, he goes on and on about making, you know, did you make promises? Did you, did you say these things to Chester Wier, he denied all that, which we know is a lie. And then I think what's also important is Craig Armstrong at trial is asked if he told anybody else about dumb it's threats.

ANDY HALE: And he says that he told Harlan Warren, the state's attorney, Harlan Warren denied that at trial too. So he lied to saying he knew anything about the threats. So this is what you are dealing with. You know, guys that are just willing to go into court and lie about the threats to Chester. We hear because they knew how wrong it was. They knew how devastating it was. And, and let me go to this part. This is how the state had the audacity to argue about the threats in the closing argument. This is what they said. I'm gonna read this part verbatim. They've got one remark, which one witness says was made. And the other witness says was not made, well, let me pause there. Yeah, Chester's saying it was made actually it's two and Craig Armstrong saying it was made and dumb. It's denied it.

ANDY HALE: So it's not a, he said, she said, Craig Armstrong is not lying. When he said dumb, it made the threat clearly. And then they

say in the closing argument of the state quote, it is the unique term Thunderbolt. That is the only thing that they have been able to show by way of a threat. And I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, that to call that statement, a threat is a conclusion because Mr. Armstrong, who stated it was made as a matter of fact stated, he didn't know exactly what was meant. No, not a chance. You're saying Thunderbolt. Nobody knew that was a threat. Nobody knew what that meant. Everybody knew what that meant. And in fact, this is what Craig Armstrong said. He said, I knew, he said at that moment, I knew what Mr. Dumit meant by the word thunder, both. They all knew it meant the electric chair and you're gonna die from the electric chair.

ANDY HALE: And then what else else could it possibly be? Right. Right. I mean, right. And get this one they had, this is, this is like such a, this is like a kindergarten argument. I can't believe they made this. If I was like a mock trial coach, I would be all over him about this. I submit to you that if anybody made a threat to this defendant, they wouldn't have been beating around the Bush and talking about a Thunderbolt or something outta the blue, striking him. They would've said, quote, look, Chester. We know you're guilty. And you're going to fry in the electric chair. End of quote. That's what they would've said to him. The only thing that they can come in with is this innocuous statement, referring to a Thunderbolt. Are you kidding me? If I was on the jury, I'd have been looking at the lawyer.

ANDY HALE: Like how dumb do you think I am? Do you really think I'm that dumb? And do you have that much lack of respect for our intelligence that you're trying to say, writing the Thunderbolt had nothing to do with the electric chair. You're really making that argument to the jury. Seriously. I mean, that is insulting, insulting to the juror's intelligence. Oh my gosh. So the threats were made. They lied about it. And I wanna follow up with them at like what you said, Donna Kelly did some amazing work. I've said this before. I am standing on the shoulders of Donna Kelly and all the great work she did for Chester Weger and trying to prove his innocence. She just kind of paved the way for me and did a lot of the heavy lifting. She has two affidavits. I'm gonna post these on the website. One's from a guy named Gary Garon who was a lawyer.

ANDY HALE: And he was serving as the assistant state's attorney of lasal county in 1981. Okay. There was a case, there was a guy who got charged. I think it was murder. And he claimed that dumb. It had shown him these gruesome autopsy photos in an effort to get him to confess. Okay, by the way, let's pause. Chester's made that claim too. Chester has claimed Dumit showed him all these photographs and stuff, which dumb denies, keep that in mind. So duit denied that they actually got a search warrant and they pride opened DUTs desk. And they found in there a bunch of autopsy photographs that dumb, it had never disclosed. <laugh> I mean, are you kidding me? Oh my God, this, this is an affidavit I'm gonna post this on the website. I mean, it

says paragraph eight in captain dumb it's desk where seven or eight, eight by 10 photographs and a set of about 50 negatives, the photographs and negatives were of the crime scene and of the deceased person.

ANDY HALE: Oh my God. That is absolutely stunning. And hearing that now there's no doubt in my mind, he did the same thing, but Chester Weger showed him all these things. Photographs tried to get him to confess, put the pressure on. And there's another affidavit from another lawyer. His name was Edward Coolic Jr. And he was an assistant state's attorney in lasal county from 74 to 79. These are assistant state's attorneys in lasal talked about a case he had where during the trial, he says no law enforcement officer testified that Mr. Slitter, who had been charged with aggregated kidnapping had admitted to using force dumb. It then comes in and testifies in court that this, this criminal defendant had held a gun to the victim's head, which had never been brought up before. Yeah. And the guy's point was this had never been reported any police reports or anything. And he says that dumb it's nickname was dust pan Dumit mm-hmm <affirmative> because he would like clean up all these messes. So duit has this whole history Whitney that is super shady. Uh, yeah. The things I just read you, I, I, I can't believe were still going on and talking about all this, like, I feel like, you know, yeah.

WHITNY BRAUN: Dumit is a stain on, on the history of law enforcement in this country. I mean, he's, he, I, I think I may have mentioned this before, but he, he professionally was an, a avatar. He was, he was a Turkey farmer and then he got deputized by Lasell county. So he did not have lengthy law enforcement training. He was, I mean, in my, I, I would sort of describe him as, as frankly, a thug with a batch

ANDY HALE: It's just

WHITNY BRAUN: Terrible, who just really did horrible, unethical, inappropriate things, time and time and time again,

ANDY HALE: And lying in court. Yeah. As, as McNamara said, perjury in this court of justice, uh, is, is so bad. And Whitney, while we're on the subject of bill Dumit, am I correct? That he also got some of the reward money. Can you talk about that?

WHITNY BRAUN: Yes. There was roughly \$38,000 of reward money that was put up by the, uh, corporations that the husbands worked for, uh, and some other sources. But this is what's really upsetting bill duit Wayne HES, and Steve Kindig, the lie detector operator. Each got \$5,500 for securing a conviction of Chester Weger. And then they weren't the only ones other people. But I think the name that's gonna jump out to people here. Harlan Warren got a reward of \$11,000, 513 cents, which is an astronomical sum. Wow. In 1961 for securing the conviction. But let me just point out. He was not in office anymore. So he got a reward for an office. He didn't hold at that point. So

that's, it's so upsetting to me, it is such an ethics violation. I could scream.

ANDY HALE: It's so outrageous. And you know what I noticed when I was reading through dumb it's, uh, testimony, McNamara, McNamara's amazing. I love this guy. He brings out that, he says, Hey, did you ever get paid for any of your work? And he says, uh, oh, I got paid \$450 to, uh, take these crime scene photos. He was claiming he was a professional photographer. So he got paid to take these photos, which is his job. Well, then they called this woman from, uh, lasal county Sheriff's office. And they McNamara was great. He asked her like, well, how much was David paid? She's like, yeah, 450 for that. A couple hundred for this, a couple hundred for that. He got paid for like every time he took photos or did anything he got paid, she totaled it up to \$1,400. Wow. So he lied about that as well. And that's why I say I don't trust anything in this case that has to do with bill dumit. I just don't. So

WHITNY BRAUN: Also you just don't get a reward for doing your job. I'm sorry. When you are a public servant, you are paid a salary for your, for doing your job competently. Yes. You don't get a payoff for doing it better or achieving an outcome that a particular party wants. That is not how public service works. It shouldn't work that way. It, it, it legally doesn't work that way. And the fact that this was publicized, cuz we'll put this information up on the website. This is not a secret. This was advertised in the newspaper that he got this reward. This was not considered inappropriate and that time period. And that makes me wanna scream.

ANDY HALE: Unbelievable. Another, another one to put in the column of, can you believe this question? Mark question mark. Question mark. I've got two more things. I wanna talk about Whitney. I wanted to talk about Chester's testimony. Mm-hmm <affirmative> and I talk about, talk about the jury's verdict. So Whitney, I think the most dramatic way for people to hear this, I believe is with Chester ER's testimony. I want to do a question and answer format. Sure. For part of the testimony that I've highlighted, not all of it, it's just mostly doing the threats. I want people to hear the questions. I want people to hear the answers so they can get a flavor of all this it's it's so much stronger to hear it than me just to say, oh, Chester testified. He was threatened repeatedly. So can we walk through part of this? Yeah, absolutely. And you can play, you can play the role of Mr. McNamara and I will play the role of Chester Weger

WHITNY BRAUN: Okay. With pleasure. All

ANDY HALE: Right. Let's do it.

WHITNY BRAUN: Name is Chester Weger.

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: And you are the defendant in this cause. Is that right?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. I am.

WHITNY BRAUN: What is your address?

ANDY HALE: 10 22 and a half third street. Lasalle Illinois.

WHITNY BRAUN: And what is your occupation?

ANDY HALE: I was a painter.

WHITNY BRAUN: And did you do anything else?

ANDY HALE: I worked on dish washing work out at the starve rock cooked. How

WHITNY BRAUN: Long had you worked at Starved Rock. When did you begin? If you recall?

ANDY HALE: I first began in 1955 and I worked for about seven or eight months. Went in a service for two years, 1956 and 57 was employed again. When I got out.

WHITNY BRAUN: Are you married?

ANDY HALE: Yes.

WHITNY BRAUN: And how many children do you have?

ANDY HALE: I have two.

WHITNY BRAUN: Now. Mr. Weger, you were charged with the murder of Lillian Oetting

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN:

Did you kill Mrs Oetting?

ANDY HALE: No, I never, sir. I never killed anybody.

WHITNY BRAUN: Sometime. During the week of September 25th, you were questioned again at the lodge?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. I was first taken to the lodge for some more lie detector tests for the crime lab in Chicago,

WHITNY BRAUN: Following that. What happened that particular day?
Either the following day or possibly two days,

ANDY HALE: It was two or three days after that I was asked if I would
go to Chicago and take a lie detector test up there on a bigger
machine.

WHITNY BRAUN: Tell us what you did. Who took you and what happened?

ANDY HALE: They came to me and picked me up on Wednesday.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did they arrest you?

ANDY HALE: No. They picked me up to go to Chicago and I was told to
meet them at the top of the hill, near my parents' home at seven
o'clock and I went up there and Wayne Heston built them at both,
picked me up and they took me to the Morris blacktop. And I think
bill dumit at that time got out of the car and I went to Chicago with
Wayne has and bill dumit both.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did you have any conversations with Mr. Warren?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. Early in the morning, I did

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester getting back to this conversation that you had
with Mr. Harlan Warren, what, if anything was said by him or by you?

ANDY HALE: Well, before that, sir, I was threatened by bill Dumit.

WHITNY BRAUN: What did he say to you?

ANDY HALE: He told me that I had moved on the lie detector test and
everything, and that it only proved one thing that I was lying and
unless I would sign a confession, they would convict me. They would
get enough evidence to convict me. And they said they would convict
me. I told Mr. Dumit he wouldn't find enough evidence to do that. And
he said, there'd been a lot of people who got the chair on
circumstantial evidence and they would get enough to convict me

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. When was this? If you remember,

ANDY HALE: That was sometime early in the afternoon. Ronnie was first
threatened. This

WHITNY BRAUN: Was the time that you were up at Mr. Reed's office.

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. And I was threatened on and off until Mr. Warren
and sheriff Ray UTI came up there and when Mr. Warren came up there,
he said that I was definitely lying unless I confessed. He didn't

want nothing else to do with me. And he said, he gave me until morning to sign a confession.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. What piece say to you, if you signed a confession,

ANDY HALE: Mr. Duit said that if I signed a confession, I would get a life sentence. I would get out of the pen in 14 years. And I told bill when he told me that I told bill, there are three women killed. You take that three times 14. That's 42 for each of the three women. And he said to me, you'd be up for parole in 14 years. And they will only try you for one case. And then Mr. Warren came in and he referred to what bill said,

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester, how did he do that?

ANDY HALE: Bill said the same thing again. That is what he had said before. He said the same thing again. And he asked Mr. Warren, if he agreed with that and he said, yes. And he said, Mr. Warren said, I'm the state's attorney. And I'm the one that can help you. He said to me, it's in my power to see that you get a life sentence. If I confess,

WHITNY BRAUN: What did you say to him? If anything,

ANDY HALE: I told him I had no knowledge of what happened out there. I had nothing to do with the killing. I had nothing to do with killing anybody and I never killed those three women.

WHITNY BRAUN: Was that conversation you had with Mr. Warren and with William dut at the Reed laboratory in Chicago?

ANDY HALE: Well, before Mr. Warren and sheriff, where UCI came at one time, I had asked to see my wife and they said, we don't know if you'll ever see her again or not.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. What time did you leave there? And with whom did you leave and where did you go if you remember?

ANDY HALE: I can't remember the time I had no watch and I was away from the clock where the clock was in the room. I couldn't see anything. I couldn't see what time it was. I seen pictures again at Mr. Reed's office. They showed me pictures, similar to the ones they have here. I left sometime around one 30 or two o'clock in the morning to the best of my recollection.

WHITNY BRAUN: Whose car did you go back in and where did you go?

ANDY HALE: I came back and bill dumb it's car. And Wayne HES was driving his car back also.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. Were there any conversations during the ride back?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. There were

WHITNY BRAUN: Tell us what they were.

ANDY HALE: Well, I came outta Chicago and hit the highway, forties, something like that. If I'm not mistaken, it's the road that comes through Morris and coming back this way, we got off the turnpike on this road and bill dumit threatened my life again.

WHITNY BRAUN: What did he say to you? And what did you say to him?

ANDY HALE: Bill Dumit told me that in his opinion, he knew I was guilty and I told him I had nothing to do with it. I never killed anybody. And he said to me that if he had to spend the next two years of his life to convict me and in time they would get enough evidence to convict me. And if he had to, he would personally send me the electric chair.

WHITNY BRAUN: How many times do you say this?

ANDY HALE: He said that once before in Chicago, that he would spend the next two years of his life to convict me. And I was threatened with the electric chair throughout the entire ride home

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. How many times would you say to the best of your knowledge that bill DOITT threatened you during this ride back

ANDY HALE: A dozen times? I'd say to the best of my recollection, he threatened me with the electric chair and referred the electric chair as another thing as the Thunderbolt or words to that effect.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did Craig Armstrong say anything on this ride back

ANDY HALE: Craig Armstrong. Talk to me, but in order of threats or anything like that? No, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did you come home? Were you taken home?

ANDY HALE: No, sir. I was taken to the district attorney's office.

WHITNY BRAUN: Is that located here in the courthouse?

ANDY HALE: It's on the fourth floor. If I'm not mistaken,

WHITNY BRAUN: What happened up there? If anything

ANDY HALE: I was questioned on and off by Mr. Craig Armstrong.

WHITNY BRAUN: How long were you questioned and was it written down?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. It was written down by Josephine Thompson. If I'm not mistaken.

WHITNY BRAUN: How long did he question you

ANDY HALE: For a couple hours? To the best of my knowledge?

WHITNY BRAUN: What time was it when you were finished?

ANDY HALE: I'd say five 30 or something like that in the morning.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester did anything else go on except the questioning

ANDY HALE: I was taken home.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did they just take you home to give you a ride home? Was that for some purpose?

ANDY HALE: No, sir. When Craig was questioning me, he asked if he could see my brown jacket and I told him yes, that it was all right with me as far as I cared and they took me home in order to see my jacket.

WHITNY BRAUN: How did they get the jacket?

ANDY HALE: He asked me if he could see the jacket and take it with him. And I said it was all right,

WHITNY BRAUN: Did they do anything else?

ANDY HALE: They also took a pair of brown buck shoes in various strings throughout the house.

WHITNY BRAUN: When was the next time that you recall being questioned by any law enforcement officers and who was it?

ANDY HALE: I was questioned again that day when they brought me home by bill Dumit and Wayne HES to the best of my knowledge.

WHITNY BRAUN: How many times during the month of October, do you recall being asked any questions at all by bill dumit and Wayne HES?

ANDY HALE: I was asked questions off and on about every day after I came back from Chicago for a period about a month and a half

WHITNY BRAUN: Prior to November 16th?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. Bill DT and Wayne Hess. I got to Chicago for a lie detector test. They came down to my house on one occasion. They said they didn't know how this stuff got in the paper about some Chicago thing. And they told me not to say anything at all to any newspaper reporters. I was definitely threatened that day by bill Dumit.

WHITNY BRAUN: What did he say to you that day?

ANDY HALE: He told me that he knew I moved the test. I was lying when I was in Chicago. He told me to come clean with a confession and that he would save my life if they had to convict me and in time they would convict me. And he said, we will convict you. And that I would get the electric chair.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. How many times were you threatened in this manner? During that six week period by bill Dumit.

ANDY HALE: I was threatened on and off about five or six times. I was threatened by bill duit when he brought back my pair of shoes,

WHITNY BRAUN: Calling your attention to November 16th, 1960. What did you do that day? Did you work?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. My father and I was painting a church Depot in Peru and it got windy and we quit early in the afternoon and I returned home.

WHITNY BRAUN: What happened that evening?

ANDY HALE: I was laying down after supper and my wife came into the bedroom and told me that Wayne Hess was there and they wanted to see me. And I went out into the living room where Wayne Hess was. And he said to me that him and bill Dumit just wanted to talk to me for a few minutes. And he asked me if it was all right, if they could. And I said, yes, I went outta the house and I got down there into the car. And the next thing I know, I ended up here in Ottawa.

WHITNY BRAUN: Tell us where you were brought and what happened.

ANDY HALE: I was brought to the fourth floor of the building here. I was interrogated almost immediately after I got here by deputy doit and HES.

WHITNY BRAUN: Were you threatened at this time?

ANDY HALE: No, sir. Not right then. No, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: You were simply asked questions.

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: And then what happened?

ANDY HALE: I was told that they were having a lineup and they wanted me to appear in it.

WHITNY BRAUN: After they had this lineup. Then where did you go

ANDY HALE: Back to the interrogation room? What I would call it. It was a little room on the Northeast corner upstairs.

WHITNY BRAUN: What happened then at that time?

ANDY HALE: Well, bill dunit told me at that time that I had been identified by a young kid and he told me all the stuff that happened over there in deer park. And he asked me if I had done it and I told him no. And he said that a kid identified me and he said to me, do you want, do you want me to get him to prove it to you? And I said, I'd never seen that kid before. I'd never done anything. They took me back down and arrested me right before I went downstairs.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did they read a bunch of charges to you?

ANDY HALE: Not at that time. No, sir. They said I was under arrest and told me that they were going to handcuff me and they took me down there and put handcuffs on me. I was handcuffed and Wayne Hess got a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket and they put them on me and I was taken to the second floor.

WHITNY BRAUN: This was a second lineup.

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: How long did that take and what happened?

ANDY HALE: It took half an hour or 45 minutes. And I was asked if I've ever seen the people that was in the identification. And I told them no. And they asked this boy, if you ever seen me and I was taken upstairs again. And at that time they read off the warrants to me

WHITNY BRAUN: After they read the warrants. What happened? Do you remember how many warrants were read off to you?

ANDY HALE: There were 11. If I'm not mistaken, they said to me, they were charging me. Not only with the stuff that happened out at deer park, but also the murder of the three women, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: Then what happened?

ANDY HALE: Well, the first thing bill DOITT went over the stuff that was supposed to have happened in the canyon out there at the park and asked me if I'd done any of those things. And I told him no. And he said to me, do you mean to tell me that you never killed these women out there? And I said, yes. I said to him, I never killed anybody. He asked me about that time. And he asked me if I wanted to see the weapon. And he showed me the club and he also, and he also brought in a bunch of different pictures and he told me about the stuff in the pictures and the rest of the time he went over all the things that happened out there. And he asked me if I did it. And I said, no.

WHITNY BRAUN: Did he threaten you at that time?

ANDY HALE: He threatened me off. And on ever since the lineup, I was threatened my wife, I was told if I would confess that I, that I would be out in 14 years again. And if I didn't I'd get the electric chair, I was also told about the rape charge along in deer park that I could get a life sentence on it. And I got pretty scared about it. And then I seen my parents and I got to talk

WHITNY BRAUN: At what time was this that you saw your parents?

ANDY HALE: I was interrogated from the time I got off the second lineup until my parents came. It was, oh, I'd say about midnight or sometime in that area.

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. Tell me again, during this last session, after you were arrested to the best of your recollection, how long were you under interrogation by deputy Dumit and HES? If you remember,

ANDY HALE: I was interrogated for what I would say was four hours because I went downstairs after eight o'clock and I was interrogated after the first lineup immediately after I came back. And then I went upstairs for a few minutes, I'd say about 45 minutes. And then I went into this other lineup and I went upstairs again. And I was interrogated for the rest of the night

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester to the best of your recollection. How many times were you threatened by bill dumit about the electric chair? If you did not confess,

ANDY HALE: I can't say exactly. I was threatened quite a few times.

WHITNY BRAUN: Just your best recollection.

ANDY HALE: I was threatened 10 times or more that night.

WHITNY BRAUN: Were you promised anything by dumb it, if you would confess,

ANDY HALE: I was promised a life sentence and he said it would be better for the wife and kids. If I did confess, he said at least they would be better that it, they would be taken care of.

WHITNY BRAUN: Had you expressed some concern for your wife and kids?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. I had, because my wife worried more or less, I was more or less worried about what would happen to them and to my wife. I mean, throughout the whole ordeal, I was worried about them that night because they were home by themselves. And also about what had happened in Las south. And my wife

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester. When your wife and family came, did you talk with them?

ANDY HALE: Yes, sir. I got to talk to each one for a couple of minutes. My father came, he came into the room alone and I talked to him for 10 or 15 minutes, five or 10 minutes. And then my parents and my wife came into the room together.

WHITNY BRAUN: What happened then? At that time, Chester

ANDY HALE: Immediately after they left bill Dumit threatened me with my life. And he again brought up the ordeal that happened with my wife. And he said to me that she wasn't raped. And he started calling her in decent names. And I said to him, all right, if you want a confession, I'll give you one.

WHITNY BRAUN: Who was there when you made that statement,

ANDY HALE: Bill Dumit and Wayne Hess, both of them

WHITNY BRAUN: After you made that statement, then what, if anything happened? What, if anything, did they do or say,

ANDY HALE: Well, I was shown pictures again, to point out various objects. I was told to note things that is from the pictures and bill Dumit went over the story and they went over the story of what happened or what was supposed to have happened down there. And he asked me if I'd done it,

WHITNY BRAUN: Chester, was there anybody else there at that time and place?

ANDY HALE: Bill Dumit and Wayne HES, both of them

WHITNY BRAUN: Who came in later on,

ANDY HALE: They called up a court reporter.

WHITNY BRAUN: Who was that?

ANDY HALE: It was Josephine Thompson. I think that's her name.

WHITNY BRAUN: How much time went by between the time you said to them? All right. If you want a confession, I'll give you one and the time of Josephine Thompson's arrival, if you remember,

ANDY HALE: I can't recall it.

WHITNY BRAUN: Would it have been an hour or

ANDY HALE: More an hour or so?

WHITNY BRAUN: Could it have been less than an hour?

ANDY HALE: No, sir. I wouldn't say so. No sir, because bill Dumit showed me the various pictures and everything, and he told me to notice different objects in the pictures and everything that was said that night was gone over again.

WHITNY BRAUN: And then you gave the statement for Josephine Thompson. Is that correct?

ANDY HALE: Yes, I did, sir.

WHITNY BRAUN: Your honor, this would be a good time to break.

ANDY HALE: Oh, well, Whitney, I thought it was important. You know, that was, that was a lot to read and the reason I chose to do it that way, and I think it's important is I think you need to hear the testimony. You kind of need to feel it. You gotta hear the questions, you gotta hear the answers. You gotta hear the specific responses. The Winchester describes things. I just don't think, you know, I try to, I debate it in my mind. Should I just summarize this, you know, for in a minute or two and I just don't think it does it justice. I just don't think me saying, oh, Chester testified. He got threatened. Does justice to what you just heard was going on in Chicago on the way home. They don't drive him home. They drive him to the courthouse, more questioning, more questioning. I just thought it was important for people to hear it.

WHITNY BRAUN: Yeah. Uh it's it's relentless. I mean, it's just, it's just utterly relentless.

ANDY HALE: Yeah. I mean, I just think I just wanted people to hear that testimony and just to try to put a voice to it, you know, you know, I'm not doing it justice, cuz I'm not a 21 year old scared kid

sitting in a courtroom. Mm-hmm <affirmative>, who's facing the prospect of getting the electric chair, which he was. Yeah. You know, and I wanna bring up one little point, you know, you talk about you, look, you look for things that might be corroboration. And there was a point where do you remember where Chester said something? Like they wanted to know how they got in the papers, you know? Like, um, don't tell anybody about that trip to Chicago. Well, there was a Chicago Tribu newspaper article dated October 13th, 1960, where it talks about this Chester's being, you know, brought to Chicago, said the tests were scheduled without the knowledge of state police who did virtually all the investigative work on the murders.

ANDY HALE: So see, they were trying to keep it secret. It was, it was Harlan. Warren's little, let's take a road trip to Chicago, you know? Yeah. All right. Last topic. I know we've been going a long time here. Uh <laugh> you know, I'm drained from just from just doing this and I just it's draining. Yeah. Here is the important part. Now let's talk about what happened in the closing argument. Um, so Chester testified in his own defense. So the state put on all their evidence. Chester testified that he had nothing to do with these, these murders. In the closing argument, I wanna read you verbatim of some of the things the state said in the history of this state of this country, ladies and gentlemen, there has never been a more gruesome, more brutal crime than this. This is one of the most brutal heinous barbaric crimes that any man could ever commit at any time I submit to you that if ever a case deserved capital punishment, it was this case.

ANDY HALE: And you recall that you qualified yourself for the death penalty. Let me pause or explain what that means. You could not be on this jury. If you were opposed to the death penalty, you'd be stricken. You had, you had to have said yes, I'm willing to impose the death penalty if it's appropriate. Okay. So everybody on that jury had already said during jury selection that they had no problem imposing the death penalty, if it was justified. Okay? So then the state goes on, have the courage of your own convictions and sign a verdict for the death penalty. And then prosecutor Tony Raccuglia in his rebuttal argument said this, listen to this Whitney. Now I state to you ladies and gentlemen that this man does not deserve 199 years in the penitentiary. He doesn't deserve 299 years in the penitentiary. He doesn't deserve 399 years in the penitentiary. He deserves to be electrocuted.

ANDY HALE: Can you believe Whitney? In a case where prosecutor, Tony Raccuglia knows the confession is absolutely ridiculous. He also knows. He's not surprised that Chester would've confessed based on all the psychological pressure of doit and Hess, Harlan Warren, and all these guys know about Lois Selencik, the Palmatier brothers, the kid with the bloody overalls in the trunk of the car. Those are the real people involved. They put this fake case on Chester Weger and then they asked the jury to electrocute him. Yeah. Oh my gosh,

Whitny. I mean, does that, is that hitting you? Like it's hitting me. Yeah. It's it's horrifying. And I think that the reason they did that in part was, you know, if Chester dies, the secret dies. Yeah. If Chester's not around anymore, there's nobody advocating for Chester. There's no reason to dig into this. I'm not here. Right? Yeah. You know, I'm only here cuz Chester's alive.

ANDY HALE: You know, that's the only reason I'm here. And so the jury though does not impose the death penalty. I thought that was so telling the jury knew Whitney. They knew the jury knew that this didn't add up. They didn't wanna kill this guy. They didn't wanna kill this 21 year old kid. They knew something, something wasn't right. And let me read to you. This is incredible. There was a juror Nancy Porter. I wanna read you from a Chicago Tribune, December 15th, 2016 article. Let me just read these parts to you verbatim. Okay. This is from the, the article, but the only juror known to be still alive told the Tribune. She regrets her decision to convict Weger in what she called her first interview. Since the trial 92 year old Nancy Porter said she found the confession implausible in the idea that an unarmed Weger who stood a thin five foot eight could overpower three women unlikely still after a six week trial and hours of deliberations, Porter said she gave into the will of the other 11 panelists analyst quote.

ANDY HALE: I was the holdout and the quote said, Porter of lasal a recently retired hospital billing clerk. Everyone else wanted to go home. And I finally said, oh, okay. I didn't change my mind. But I was getting pretty dirty looks. So I gave in. I've been sorry, ever since Porter also said a sheriff deputy in charge of sequestered female jurors broke the rules in sharing incriminating information about Uighurs past and other details. Not allowed into evidence at trial, the jury convicted Uighur but voted against a death penalty. Oh my God. So she's saying she regretted her verdict. Everybody wanted to go home and they just do a verdict for

WHITNY BRAUN: Yeah.

ANDY HALE: Life sentence. And then this whole thing about the deputy in charge of the jurors sharing information about Uighurs past Chester's past, that was not allowed at evidence that's grounds for a new trial Whitney, 100% that I know it shown it is a new trial. It's a Doover that is such an egregious form of misconduct to go tell the jurors things about Chester that were not part of the trial that had been kept out. That is that's maybe the most outrageous thing I've even said on this whole podcast today. Yeah, that just when I read that at blew my mind, and this is an article by the way, when Chester was denied parole, and I wanna read you this last part, it says, if a confession or expression of remorse will win him, his freedom, he'd rather die in prison. Weger told the Tribune, why should I say I committed a crime that I never committed?

ANDY HALE: He said it as parole hearing I'll stay in prison. The rest of my life to prove my innocence before I'll make any deal with any of you crooked people. This is just it's. It's just absolutely crazy. What you, I got one more thing to say. When I think of all the time Chester Weger has been in prison and wanting to prove his innocence, picture this, he gets convicted, he's taken outta the courtroom. He's taken over to jail and he goes to prison in 1961. And somebody walks in and says to him, Chester, don't worry. There's this kid, Andy Hale. Uh, he's not born yet. It's 1961. He's gonna be born next year in 1962. He's gotta go to kindergarten. He's gotta go to elementary school. He's gotta go to high school, hang tight. He's gotta go to college. Just sit tight. Be patient. He's gotta go to law school. Yeah. But then he is gonna gotta practice for like 30 years <laugh> Chester. And he is gonna have to take up this weird path that somehow leads him to your case. Now, at this point, you're gonna be over 80 years old, hang in there, buddy in 60 or so years, he's gonna take up your case and he's gonna champion your cause for justice and he's gonna prove your innocence. Okay. So just, just sit tight. Can you imagine like thinking that, knowing that this is you're gonna have to wait this long?

WHITNY BRAUN: No, no. And, and, and I've thought about this a lot and I feel like fundamentally Chester's ultimate active resistance has been to stay alive. He has outlived pretty much every other contemporary. Right. And, and he's perhaps only out of prison now because he's outlived. So many of those that kept showing up at his parole hearings and fighting to keep him inside. And so, so he's here and that's, he's lived long enough to finally I think get a shot at this.

ANDY HALE: We've been talking for well over an hour <laugh> I don't know what we're gonna do here, Whitney. I mean, it just, we kept going and going. I, I just think everything we said here needed to be said. Yeah. I think people needed to understand. I'm trying to let people feel what it was like in that courtroom and what Chester was saying, but going through this trial, these last two episodes it's taken so much outta me because Whitney, they knew, they knew, they knew, they all knew it wasn't Chester Weger. They had, they had the Palmer brothers back in April when Lois Selencik, the hero reports, the telephone call that they trace. These brothers are involved with a kid with bloody overalls in the trunk of the car and all that evaporates and gets it somehow they are connected and that all goes away. And then you see this campaign starting in late September, taking Chester Weger to Chicago for the polygraph 24 7 surveillance in October state's attorney's office, interviewing all these lodge employees, trying to dig up dirt claim.

ANDY HALE They saw scratches all this nonsense, building a case around a murder weapon that they know wasn't a murder weapon, knowing that the twine wasn't tied to the lodge and putting forth the case, Whitney, I'm sorry. They all knew this was no accident. It was

intentional conduct to pin the son Chester Weger. It breaks my heart into. And it's just absolutely stunning and upsetting and digging into it. I mean, it just, it strikes me now more than ever what an obvious and outrageous plan they had as we've gone through this. So this is hard again to go through all this Whitney. Um, but I'm glad we did. Thank you for being there with me. Thank you for holding my hand through it. Um, of course we still have a lot more to talk about. We are not done. We, we, I know we've got another couple episodes under our belt for sure. Yeah. We're gonna get back into, uh, some other things there's so much interesting in this case. We still haven't talked about. So come back next week. Next Thursday, we're gonna continue the conversation. There's more to talk about. And Whitney, the car is about outta gas. Uh, we gotta pull over and, uh, refuel, get something to eat, get some sleep, rest up and be ready to go next Thursday. Yeah, absolutely. I'm looking forward to it.

WHITNY BRAUN: Me too.

(music fades out)

ANDY HALE: Thanks for listening to this episode of the Starved Rock Murders with Andy Hale, huh? There was so much to unpack with Chester Wheeler's criminal trial. It, it has taken so much O me, but I felt everything we discussed was so important. We'll be back next Thursday with a brand new episode that you won't wanna miss. Please visit our website. andyhalepodcast.com where each week we're posting the documents and newspaper articles that we discuss during each, if you know anything about the Starved Rock Murders, please email us no information or tip is too small. We need your help. Please reach out if you know anything. And if you know anyone you think was wrongfully convicted, if there's another Chester weaker out there, I would love to hear about it. If you enjoy today's episode, please subscribe, rate and review us wherever you get your podcasts. Your reviews and ratings mean so much to Whitney and me. This show is produced in collaboration with Finns Ellis sound, designed by studio D designed content and promotion by Bell and Ivy and hosted by myself and Whitney Braun. We'll see you next time.