

November 29, 1960

MEMORANDUM

On Tuesday, November 29, 1960, Dr. B. F. Kukachka from the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Madison, Wisconsin, met with Deputies Dummett and Hess at 9:00 a.m. at Heston's Restaurant in north Utica. With the Doctor was Don Every who is an official photographer for the Laboratory.

They then drove to St. Louis Canyon and took the trail to the cave, the canyon floor, in the approximate area where the victims were found, looking for possible source of club which had been suspected of coming from a tree on the bluff or the areas adjacent to the cave. They then crawled to the top of the bluff and inspected the white oak trees and found none which could have produced a branch or club of the type found at the mouth of the cave. They also travelled along the stream above the waterfall in an easterly direction for other possible source and from standing large white oak trees. They followed it up to the end to the old gravel road and came back on the opposite side - found no trees which could have produced such a branch or club. They then proceeded back to the parking area.

The Doctor states there were many of these white oak trees east of the waterfall and along the stream and at least in their present condition which would include March 14, 1960, could not have produced this wooden stick found at the scene because either the stub remaining on the tree was too small in diameter or too badly decayed or lack of characteristics of the murder weapon.

Warren - Is it possible that this wooden club could have come from a white oak tree which might have been cut down or have been blown down by the elements and then this piece broken off and washed down the stream?

Doctor - That would be a possibility.

Warren - Can you give me an estimate as to the age of this particular wooden club or stick?

Doctor - The age after the death of the club?

Warren - Yes.

Doctor - No, I am afraid that would be impossible because the branches can remain on the tree in a dead condition for years and years, perhaps a much longer time on the tree than right on the ground. I suppose some of that could be checked, the time the branches died on the tree by judging from the growth of the trees in the area, I imagine those branches can persist for 20 or 25 years before they fall off or else the whole tree falls and breaks them off.

Warren - Taking into consideration the present texture and appearance of this wooden club and its relative strength, is it possible that this came from a tree that was dead but was still standing, that a limb simply broke off?

Doctor - I wouldn't think you could make any guess on that.

Warren - Can you give an estimate as to the age of the tree?

Doctor - No, I would hate to guess without making a ring count, that wouldn't give the age of the tree but of this particular branch at the time of its death.

The Doctor also explained to me that even though the club in its present condition seems to be pretty much dried out and would possibly break if it were swung very hard against a hard object, that if the club were soaked with water and frozen that it would add to its tinsel strength. The Doctor said he would hate to be hit with it in that condition.

Warren - In a frozen condition you could be hit several times and it wouldn't break?

Doctor - Yes, when it is frozen it definitely increases the strength.

The Doctor will forward a formal report concerning his findings.