

# STARKWEATHER

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In many ways, he was like the other teen-agers of his era. William Allen, in his book, "Starkweather," described him as being fond of blue jeans, cowboy boots and a leather motorcycle jacket. His hero was James Dean. Starkweather tried to walk, talk, look and act just like his favorite rebel.

He dropped out of school at 16 before completing the ninth grade. His one passion, besides his steady girl Caril Ann Fugate, was stock car racing. He liked to race at Capital Beach near Lincoln and found he could take out his aggressions behind the wheel of a car in the demolition derby.

But he never really found an identity, for which so many teen-agers long. Starkweather was truly a rebel without a cause, according to Marjorie Marlette, a reporter for the Lincoln Journal in 1958.

"They (Starkweather and Fugate) were both striving to be somebody, to become an individual. He hadn't ever achieved anything — he didn't have anything to be proud of," Marlette said.

This lack of accomplishment in life spurred Starkweather on. He needed to prove himself, and killing was the act that vindicated him, according to Allen.

"I think he killed basically to try to get back at a society which had rejected him," said Leo Scherer, also a reporter for the Journal 25 years ago. "He had a lot of hate built up in him. There were warning signs all the way along that this was going to happen to Charlie Starkweather."

"Life didn't mean anything to Charlie Starkweather," Scherer said. "Once he started, the rest was inconsequential. I think anybody that touched his life during that spree that wasn't killed was just damn lucky."

According to Allen, Starkweather wrote the following in a letter to his parents soon after his capture:  
"But dad I'm not real sorry for what I did cause for the first time me and Caril have more fun."

One person who was involved very closely with the case is Joe T. Carroll, chief of police in Lincoln during the murder spree. He views Starkweather as having possessed a criminal personality, with "a streak of hatred in him."

"He was mad at the world," Carroll said. "After the first murder, it just became a chain reaction for him. He didn't have any more to lose. One more killing was immaterial."

At his trial, Starkweather's lawyers pleaded insanity and had several psychiatrists testify that he had difficulty in dealing with reality, according to Allen's book.

"He is suffering from a severe warping of the emotional faculties; that is, he is unable to experience feelings that other people do. People don't mean anything to him. They are no more than a stick or a piece of wood to this boy," Dr. Nathan Greenbaum said in court, as quoted by Allen.

Despite the testimony of doctors

on his behalf, Starkweather was insulted by his lawyers' plea of not guilty by insanity, Savery said.

"Charlie resented that. He felt he was sane," Savery said. "I think that anyone who commits the crimes that he committed and in the way that he committed them and to the people that he committed them has to be insane."

Even after the spree, while he was in custody, Starkweather seemed to exist in a fantasy world where others were considered playthings, Carroll recalled.

"One time during his trial, on the way to jail, he remarked that he'd love to be driving the police car because he'd love to run over the motorcycle officer escorting us," he said.

Although the courts today might have viewed Starkweather differently, in 1958 he was judged to be sane while committing the murder of Bob Jensen Jr. and was sentenced to death.

During the time he spent in prison before his execution, it appeared Starkweather was somewhat rehabilitated. He began to draw, paint and spend much time with the prison chaplain. He was said to have found God, according to Allen.

The following is part of a statement by Starkweather, which he sold to "Parade" magazine, as excerpted from Allen's book:

"Now I feel no rebellion toward anything or anyone, only love and peace. I received this love and peace through the Bible."

While some believe Starkweather had

changed behind bars, others believe he died with the same state of mind as when he took part in the murders.

"I did not feel there was any basic change of his personality from the time he committed the murders until the time he died in the electric chair," Scherer said.

Scherer was one of 11 people to witness Starkweather's execution, and it left a vivid impression in his mind.

"Charlie Starkweather dying in the electric chair, with no remorse. The look in his eyes, the hate. I think if five minutes before the execution, if you'd have let him go, and handed him a gun, he would have shot everybody in the room."

As much as he might have yearned for peace and normality in his life, Starkweather was, and still is, a question maker. Was he a product of his generation? Just one of hundreds of potential killers in this society? Or the one-in-a-million enigma that defies reason?

"If sometime in his life he could have gotten to the proper officials, he could have been helped," Scherer said.

His voice tinged with a trace of regret, Scherer added, "Charlie Starkweather was an individual that probably would have been better off if he had never been born in this society."

The final segment of this series will examine the effect Starkweather had on his hometown of Lincoln, which was stunned by the murders of nine of its residents.

## Shorts

The International Students Organization will meet Sunday at 3:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. All UNL students are welcome.

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"The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love," a free film presented by the Peace Corps, will be shown Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the East Union and at 7 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. In addition, a Peace Corps information table will be in the lobby of Henzlik Hall Monday and Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\*\*\*  
Hyde Memorial Observatory, on the south road of Holmes Park, will be open to the public from 7 to 10 p.m. each Saturday in February, when slide presentations with taped narrations will be shown. Groups may arrange for special programs by calling the Chet Ager Nature Center, 471-7895.

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"Gifts of an Eagle," the third film in the 1982-83 Audobon Wildlife Film Series, will be shown at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 3, in the auditorium of the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education, 33rd and Holdrege streets. Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$2.50 for students.

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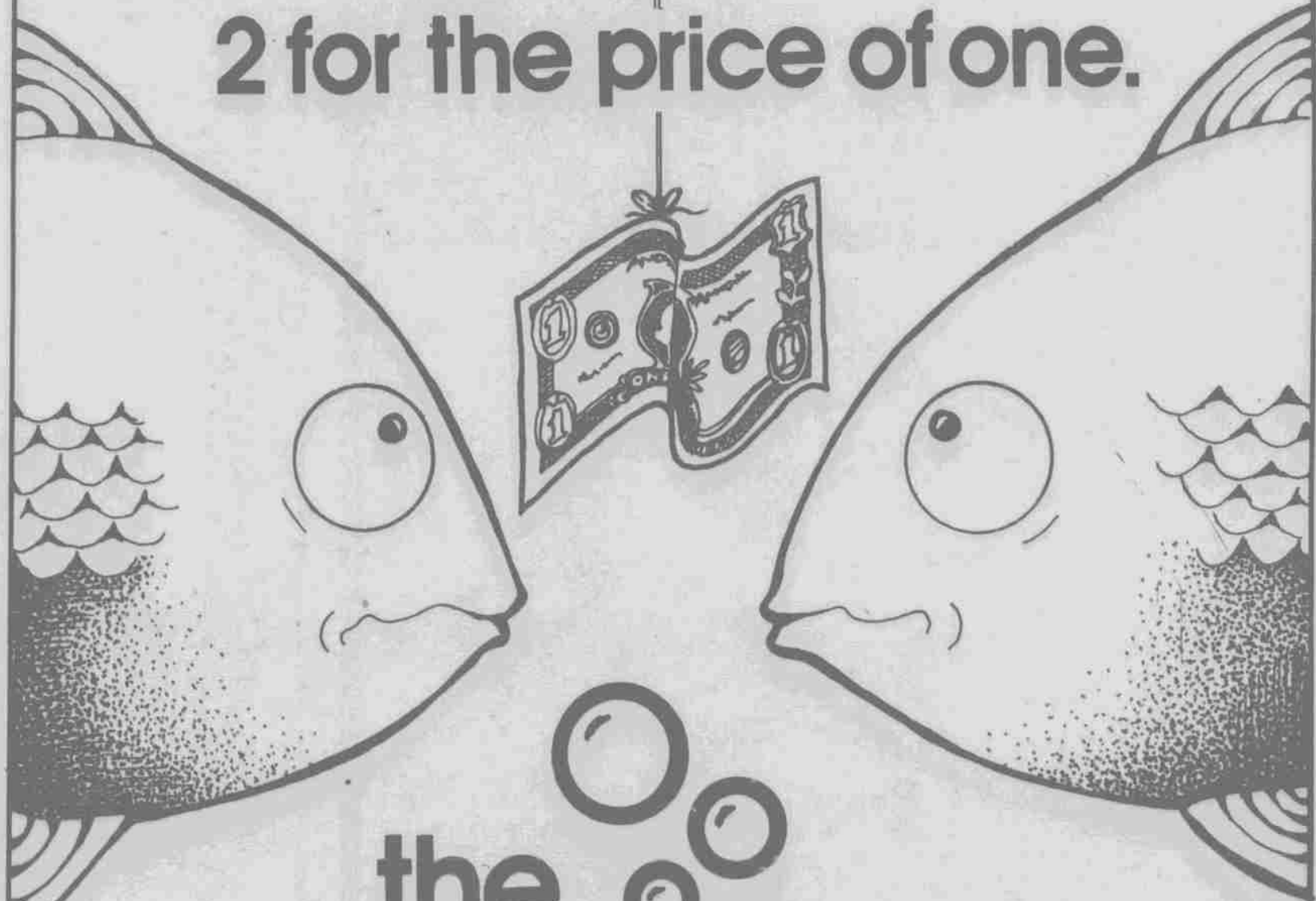
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