

Skeptic is stark-raving mad about 1959 execution

At 12:02 a.m. on July 25, 1959, a 19-year-old male was executed in the electric chair at the Nebraska State Penitentiary by a circuit executioner. For most of the citizens of Lincoln, it was a hot, airless day, but for this boy it was a cold day in hell.

The next morning, a body was taken to Wyuka Cemetery and interred in section 28, grave 996, a hop, skip and a jump from Wyuka's Babyland. It's a lonesome corner with little shade and a homely view of one of Lincoln's less prosperous residential districts.

But this grave wasn't made for

resting in peace, it was dug listlessly in the first light of morning by gravediggers eager to move on to more deserving cadavers.

The boy in the chair was supposed to be one Charles Starkweather, mass-murderer and song and film-fodder, who killed 11 people in just three days and, once arrested, told his lonesome tale like a folk song.

But was the boy in the chair, whose body sang and snapped as thousands of volts of electricity passed through it, really Charles Starkweather, or was it some other

guy?

There are those who would swear that Starkweather never was strapped into that chair, that he

Charles Lieurance



never died and that he was never laid to rest in grave 996.

Dave Hogswid is one of those people. For more than 10 years now Hogswid has led a crusade to prove that Charles Starkweather lives.

"Starkweather," Hogswid said. "He ain't dead. He's alive as you and me."

Hogswid is a small man, balding, with a long scar on his forehead.

"If somebody died that summer night in 1959, it was some other guy," Hogswid insists.

Hogswid says that the boy who died bore no resemblance to James Dean. One of Starkweather's most salient characteristics was his re-


semblance to actor James Dean.

"He was smaller and his head was rounder," he said. "A lot rounder."

There are a lot of questions that no one is answering, according to Hogswid. If Starkweather is dead, he asks, why is someone charging gasoline under his name at Eastside Conoco? If Starkweather died in 1959, why wasn't there a tombstone in Wyuka until much, much later? If Charles Starkweather is really dead, why can't anyone remember seeing his body and why do all the books

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