



Darrel Parker

On December 14, 1955, 24-year-old Darrel Parker, a forester in Lincoln, Nebraska, came home for lunch and found his wife, Nancy, 22, had been raped, beaten, and strangled.

The crime shook the city. Parker accompanied his wife's body to Des Moines, Iowa, for burial and was there on December 20, when he received a call from police asking him to return for questioning. He arrived on the 21st and spent the next 12 hours being interrogated by John Reid—the inventor of the Reid Technique, a method of interrogation that was highly regarded at the time, but came under intense criticism in later years for inducing false confessions.

At the end of his interrogation, Reid said Parker confessed. Parker recanted the confession almost immediately, but to no avail.

Parker went on trial in the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas in May, 1956. The evidence against him consisted almost solely of his confession. He was convicted by a jury on June 2, 1956. Parker was sentenced to life in prison.

After his direct appeal was denied, Parker filed a federal petition for a writ of habeas corpus. In February 1969, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit ruled that the confession had been coerced and ordered Parker retried or released. The state appealed and the U.S. Supreme Court reversed and sent the case back to the trial court for a hearing on whether the confession was voluntary.

Parker was released on his own recognizance in December 1969. After the Supreme Court ruling, Parker agreed to waive the hearing, the confession was found to be voluntary and his conviction was reinstated.

Days later, the Nebraska Board of Pardons commuted his sentence to 25 to 45 years in prison. Parker was then paroled.

He ultimately moved to Moline, Illinois, where he became superintendent of parks, remarried and moved on with his life.

In 1975, Wesley Peery was convicted of murdering a woman in Havelock, Nebraska and was sentenced to death. While on death row, he told his lawyers about 13 murders he had committed—but refused to allow them to tell anyone about it until after he died.

One of those murders was Nancy Parker. Peery had actually been questioned about the murder before Parker's husband was questioned, but he had been disregarded as a suspect. Peery had a meticulous memory of the murder and provided a multitude of details that coincided with the evidence in the crime.

After Peery died in 1988, his confession to killing Nancy Parker was revealed.

State: Nebraska

County: Lancaster

Most Serious Crime: Murder

Additional Convictions:

Reported Crime Date: 1955

Convicted: 1956

Exonerated: 1991

Sentence: Life

Race: Caucasian

Sex: Male

Age: 24

Contributing Factors: False Confession, Official Misconduct

Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?

:

No

Based on Peery's confession, Parker sought a pardon. In 1991, he was granted a full pardon by the Nebraska Board of Pardons.

In 2011, attorneys for Darrel Parker filed a claim for \$500,000 under the Nebraska Wrongful Conviction and Imprisonment Act.

In August 2012, the state of Nebraska issued a declaration of innocence to Parker and agreed to pay him \$500,000. Attorney General Jon Bruning publicly declared that Parker was wrongly convicted and apologized.

– *Maurice Possley*

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The National Registry of Exonerations is a joint project of the University of the Michigan Law School and the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University School of Law.

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56 years after wife's murder, still trying to clear his name

By PETER SALTER / Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Wednesday, December 14, 2011 1:00 pm

Long year for Darrel Parker: He turned 80. Renewed vows with Ele on their 40th. He's getting ready to retire at the end of this month, getting ready to move into a retirement home at the end of the next.

And he sued Nebraska for \$500,000, claiming he was wrongfully convicted and locked up for murdering his first wife on a snow-draped morning in Antelope Park exactly 56 years ago.

He's holding up, Ele says from their home in Moline, Ill. Always in good spirits.

"He's OK, now. Darrel is the kindest, gentlest man. He's a sweetheart. But this could drag on forever."

It's been nearly a year since a Lincoln lawyer dusted off Parker's decades-old and decades-long case -- the brutal crime, the claim of a coerced confession, the imprisonment, the appeals, the pardon, the admission by another man, the disappearing evidence.

"This was the most significant murder case in Lincoln in the 1950s," said Herb Friedman, who sat in on some of the original trial as a pre-law student. "It was controversial from the beginning."

Controversial still. If the case reaches a courtroom, Friedman will likely challenge what evidence remains, contest the confession and put the only living principal from the case on the stand.

"The whole cast of characters is gone now," Friedman said. "Except Darrel."

Friedman got involved nearly a year ago, after interest in the case resurfaced with the release of "Barbarous Souls" by Lincoln native David Strauss. The attorney filed a claim against the state on Parker's behalf -- a required step before the two could sue under the Wrongful Conviction and Imprisonment Law.

Friedman sued in July. Since then, the two sides have traded motions, trying to establish the facts of the case and trying to recover evidence and documents.

Depositions will come next, Friedman said. A trial could start sometime next year.

And Darrel Parker will drive west across Iowa -- as he did in 1954, when he was a young man with a young wife and a sturdy future in Lincoln.

The Iowa State grad was hired as Lincoln's first forester, and he and Nancy Ellen moved into a city-owned house in Antelope Park. On Dec. 14, 1955, he said, he went home for lunch to find her beaten body in their bed. She had been bound, raped and strangled.

Police questioned a con named Wesley Peery, released him, and then put Parker in a windowless room with John Reid, a polygraph operator from Chicago.

"Mr. Reid succeeded in manipulating and psychologically coercing the plaintiff into giving a totally false confession," the lawsuit says.

Parker recanted the next day and has maintained his innocence. Still, he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

In 1969, a federal appeals court ruled his confession involuntary and reversed his sentence. But the U.S. Supreme Court reversed that ruling -- sending the case back to Lancaster County for a new hearing on the confession.

The prosecutor offered Parker a deal: Waive that hearing and the state would recommend commuting his sentence, and he could stay free on parole.

That was really no choice at all, Friedman said.

"If you had the choice of going back in front of the court -- inhabited by people who put you in the prison in the first place -- what would you do?"

Parker waived the hearing. He was pardoned in 1991, but he kept up his efforts to formally clear his name. And he pinned his hopes on using DNA testing of evidence from the scene -- a semen sample, a pubic hair, lengths of rope.

"It would be the best evidence of whether our client is innocent," said Daniel Friedman, who's working the case with his father.

But that evidence -- along with much of the court file -- had disappeared. An early motion by Herb Friedman uncovered only a file that contained motions, pleas and jury instructions.

In one of its early moves, the state subpoenaed copies of records from Strauss, the author of "Barbarous Souls." Parker's lawyers likely will challenge their authenticity.

They're just copies, Herb Friedman said.

"Copies of copies of copies. Not certified ... It's only half the evidence. The parts that could clear Mr. Parker are gone, either intentionally or unintentionally."

The attorney general's office doesn't discuss its position or strategy of ongoing cases, said spokeswoman Shannon Kingery. Nor would it say whether it expects the suit to go to trial.

"This is a uniquely challenging case and we won't hypothesize on the outcome."

If it does, Parker's lawyers will likely attack his confession. And they could bring into play a confession by Peery, the early suspect in the case. Peery was on death row in the 1970s for a separate killing when he told his lawyers he killed Nancy Parker; they kept his secret until he died of natural causes in 1988.

Still, a clear shape of the trial won't emerge until a judge answers some key pretrial questions, Daniel Friedman said. Like which evidence is admissible, and what Parker's lawyers must do to prove him innocent of a crime that took place 56 years ago.

Back in Moline, Ele Parker is watching her husband finally get ready to stop working. After Darrel Parker was paroled, he worked his way up to director of a parks department. Then he spent the past 13 years working for a law firm.

He tells her they can't live their lives waiting for his exoneration, she says. But she knows, too, he won't give up.

He lost his first wife, and then he lost his freedom.

"He'll never forget it. He'll never get over it."

http://qctimes.com/news/local/state-of-nebraska-clears-moline-man-of-murder/article_64872750-f384-11e1-9cb7-001a4bcf887a.html

State of Nebraska clears Moline man of 1955 murder conviction



AUGUST 31, 2012 11:00 PM • [PETER SALTER](#)

The state of Nebraska gave Darrel Parker his freedom decades ago. Friday, it gave him back his innocence.

The moment Parker, who now lives in Moline, had awaited for nearly 57 years came on the second floor of the Capitol: an apology and a final, formal admission that he didn't kill his wife on a snowy Lincoln morning in 1955.

"You never give up hope, you never give up hope," an emotional, 80-year-old Parker said at a news conference, flanked by his lawyers and the attorney general. "I tell people, 'Now, I can die in peace.'"

The state had just agreed to stop fighting Parker's wrongful conviction lawsuit. Instead, Attorney General Jon Bruning apologized, admitted Parker was wrongly convicted and announced the state would pay him \$500,000, the maximum allowed by law.

"It became crystal clear that Mr. Parker is innocent," Bruning said. "This was the most important thing I could do as attorney general, to right this wrong."

And with that, Parker's lifelong legal saga — his insistence that his confession was coerced, his appeals, his search for missing evidence, his lawsuit, his refusal to stop at nothing less than his exoneration — was over.

Over, more than a half-century after it started, in a small home in Lincoln's Antelope Park.

The bloody, brutal crime days before Christmas shook Lincoln, which had just reached a population of 100,000.

Darrel Parker was a year into his job as Lincoln's first forester, and his wife, Nancy, 22, was developing recipes for Gooch's flour and noodles and hosting a television cooking show.

He stopped home for lunch Dec. 14, 1955, to find his wife's beaten body. She had been bound, raped and strangled.

Police questioned a con named Wesley Peery, released him, and then — just days after Nancy was buried — put Parker in a windowless room with John Reid, a polygraph operator from Chicago.

"Mr. Reid succeeded in manipulating and psychologically coercing the plaintiff into giving a totally false confession," Parker's lawyers wrote in his wrongful conviction lawsuit.

Parker recanted the next day. For decades, he and his lawyers have argued the confession was coerced, that Parker was tortured psychologically, even drugged.

But the confession was enough to convict the 24-year-old of first-degree murder, and he was given a life sentence.

He was a model prisoner, put in charge of the penitentiary's grounds, and allowed to serve his time in the unlocked greenhouse.

He made a friend in prison, Parker said Friday, a man serving life for killing a gas station attendant.

He told his friend: "As long as I live, I shall fight this."

He would never get Nancy back. But he spent most of his adult life trying to restore his name. He argued his case to the U.S. Supreme Court. He was paroled in 1970 — after his confession was deemed coerced — and pardoned in 1991.

But he continued to seek a full exoneration. He hoped DNA testing — unavailable at the time of the crime — would eliminate him as the killer. Then he learned much of the evidence, including crucial hair and semen samples, had vanished.

Through all of this, he was rebuilding his life. He found work with a tree company in the Quad-Cities.

He married Eleanore — Ele — in 1971. He got a job with the Moline parks department and worked his way up to supervisor. He retired, then spent the next 13 years working for a law firm.

He retired again earlier this year, and he and Ele moved into a retirement home.

His drive to clear his name built momentum in the past two years. First, in 2010, Lincoln native David Strauss published “Barbarous Souls,” which examined the crime, the case and Parker’s relentless efforts to clear his name.

And the next year, Lincoln attorneys Herb and Dan Friedman took his case, suing the state for \$500,000 under its recent wrongful conviction and imprisonment law.

As a pre-law student in 1956, Herb Friedman sat in on some of Parker’s original trial.

“This was the most significant murder case in Lincoln in the 1950s,” he said last year. “It was controversial from the beginning.”

The lawsuit — brewing for months in the form of briefs and motions — moved to the courtroom last week for a hearing that drew Darrel Parker back to Lincoln, an old man this time, straining to hear what the lawyers and judge were saying.

Parker’s lawyers asked the judge to dismiss the case in his favor, citing a series of briefs in which the attorney general acknowledged Parker’s confession had been coerced.

The state’s lawyers objected, the judge took it under advisement, and Parker’s lawyers worried they would have to wait months to move forward.

That’s why they were surprised when the attorney general’s office contacted them earlier this week.

“It was a pretty incredible thing for the state to go from filing a motion to completely dismiss the case, to withdrawing that motion and asking for a trial, and then to say, ‘You’re right, we’re wrong.’ All in the span of about 10 days,” Dan Friedman said Friday.

At the news conference, Bruning was asked about his reversal.

His office handles thousands of cases, he said, but he took a personal interest in this one. The more he read, the more convinced he became of Parker’s innocence. A light went on, he said.

“It’s just about doing the right thing. We want to do the right thing.”

Bruning’s office also considered the evidence against Wes Peery, the first suspect questioned in Nancy Parker’s death.

While on death row for killing a Havelock, Neb., woman in 1975, Peery told his lawyers he had killed Nancy Parker but made them pledge not to disclose his confession until after he died.

A heart attack killed Peery in prison in 1988, but his confession hadn’t helped Parker’s case — until now.

Parker accepted the attorney general’s apology. All he wanted was to be treated fairly, he said. And Friday, he was.

“It can’t possibly make up for all those years,” he said, but added: “I’m not bitter. I’m not built that way.”

Parker has returned to Lincoln several times since his parole in 1970, and he always avoided the Antelope Park home he shared with Nancy.

He planned to change that Friday.

“Today, I’m going to go back, because I can handle it now.”

Previous story

LINCOLN, Neb. — Darrel Parker’s 57-year fight to clear his name ended Friday at the Capitol, with the Nebraska attorney general’s office offering an apology, \$500,000 and a complete exoneration.

“You never give up hope, you never give up hope,” an emotional Parker said at a news conference, flanked by his lawyers and the attorney general.

“I tell people, ‘Now, I can die in peace.’”

Parker, now 80 and living in Moline, was convicted of first-degree murder in the Dec. 14, 1955, slaying of his wife, Nancy, in their city-owned home in Antelope Park.

He was paroled and pardoned but never exonerated — until Friday.

In his wrongful conviction lawsuit, filed last year, he said he was coerced into giving a false confession in the rape and murder of his 22-year-old wife.

The lawsuit invoked the death row confession of another man, a convicted killer, who said he murdered Nancy Parker. And it pointed out that critical evidence and court files had disappeared in a case in which all of the original players, except Darrel Parker, have since died.

The state didn’t settle the suit; instead, it filed an offer of judgment — agreeing with the lawsuit and Parker’s claims. The \$500,000 is the maximum allowed under Nebraska’s 2009 Wrongful Conviction Act.

“It’s just about doing the right thing. We want to do the right thing,” Attorney General Jon Bruning said. “It became crystal clear that Darrel Parker is innocent.”

The Parkers, both Iowa State grads, had moved to Lincoln after Darrel was hired as the city’s first forester. Nancy developed recipes for Gooch’s flour and noodles and hosted a cooking show on KOLN/KGIN-TV.

Parker and his lawyers have long pointed toward a former city employee named Wes Peery. He had done work around the house in Antelope Park before the killing, and he was the first suspect questioned by police.

While on death row for killing a Lincoln woman in 1975, Peery told his lawyers he had killed Nancy Parker but made them pledge not to disclose his confession until after he died.

Peery died of a heart attack in 1988, but his confession hadn't helped Parker — until now.

And although Parker has returned to Lincoln several times since his parole in 1970, he hadn't been back to the Antelope Park bungalow he shared with Nancy for nearly 57 years.

He was going to change that Friday.

“Today, I'm going to go back, because I can handle it now.”

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Neb-man-wrongly-convicted-to-get-500K-from-state-3830959.php>

Neb. man wrongly convicted to get \$500K from state

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GRANT SCHULTE, Associated Press

Updated 12:42 p.m., Friday, August 31, 2012

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning apologized Friday to an 80-year-old man wrongfully convicted in the 1955 killing of his wife, and asked a judge to approve giving the man \$500,000 in state compensation. Bruning announced that his office would no longer fight Darrel Parker's lawsuit seeking damages for the nearly 14 years Parker spent in prison. The award is the maximum amount permitted under a 2009 state law that entitles wrongfully convicted people to compensation from the state.

"Today, on behalf of the state of Nebraska, I concede Mr. Parker's innocence," Bruning said. "We believe he is due the maximum amount allowed by law, and I want to allow Mr. Parker to say whatever he wishes to say. But I want to sum it up by saying, sir, I am sorry."

Parker, who now lives in Moline, Ill., broke down while speaking at a news conference and said he was "overwhelmed" that the ordeal had finally ended, but not angry.

"It can't possibly make up for all these years," he said through tears. "I'm not here to rub somebody's face in this terrible thing. I'm not bitter. I'm not built that way."

Parker was convicted in 1956 of first-degree murder in the death of his wife, Nancy, who was found raped, bound and strangled in their Lincoln home. Parker spent nearly 14 years in prison. He was paroled in 1970 and received a full pardon in 1991, after another man, Wesley Peery, confessed while sitting on death row for a similar slaying. Peery's confession to his lawyer was protected by attorney-client privilege, but became public after he died of a heart attack in 1988. Bruning said his office decided to "do the right thing" after reviewing case records and Peery's confession.

Peery had worked around the Parkers' home in 1955, and was questioned during the initial murder investigation but released. Earlier this year, the Lancaster County attorney's office discovered 14 witness reports of a vehicle near the murder site that matched the description of a vehicle Peery owned at the time.

"Law enforcement just dropped the ball with regard to the true murderer," Bruning said.

Parker was 24 when he returned home to find his wife dead in their bed. Her feet

and hands were bound, handkerchiefs had been stuffed in her mouth and her face was badly bruised. The medical examiner concluded she had been raped, then strangled with a cord knotted around her neck.

Hours after his wife's funeral in Iowa, Parker was summoned to Lincoln police headquarters and subjected to a 12-hour polygraph test, according to his lawsuit. He confessed during the police interrogation, but soon recanted. The lawsuit alleged the investigator who administered the polygraph coerced him into the false confession.

He was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. In 1969, a federal appeals court overturned the conviction, saying the confession was forced, and Parker was released. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed that ruling a few months later and, according to the lawsuit, Parker was offered a deal by the county attorney that would allow him to remain free on parole if he would drop his objections to the confession.

Parker thanked his lawyers, Herb and Dan Friedman, for their work on the case. Herb Friedman was a pre-law student when Parker was arrested, and worked on the case for decades. His son, Dan, later joined the legal team.

"Over the course of these years, we've had many, many court hearings — none all that successful," Parker said. "It would have been easy to lose hope. But I firmly believe, whatever your persuasion, there's something greater than us out there that can help us get through these trying times."

The 2009 wrongful convictions law was passed in an effort to compensate the so-called "Beatrice 6" and others wrongly imprisoned in Nebraska. Six people were convicted in the 1985 rape and murder of 68-year-old Helen Wilson, of Beatrice. They spent a combined total of more than 90 years in prison, until DNA evidence exonerated them all in 2008.

Some later brokered settlements with the state over their convictions, including at least one for the maximum \$500,000.

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Neb-man-wrongly-convicted-to-get-500K-from-state-3830959.php#ixzz25V3sIXan>

<http://www.amazon.com/Barbarous-Souls-David-L-Strauss/product-reviews/0810126710>

Book: Barbarous Souls re Darrel Parker case

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful:

4.0 out of 5 stars Barbarous Souls by David L Strauss is a great book in a variety of ways., January 25, 2011

By Dale Guilford - See all my reviewsThis review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

In one way it is an intriguing character sketch of a quiet, gentle man who becomes the victim of a bizarre and brutal series of terrible circumstances and coincidences. It also examines the character and personalities of a number of law enforcement officers, legal minds and members of the jury who are involved with the case. Along with these things, it reveals the important roles of the press and perhaps, most importantly, the author himself.

In another way the book is a detailed examination of the legal process and the strange way it worked in the murder case involving Darrel Parker. It raises all kinds of questions about how things are done as well as left undone. It is an alarming notice of what can happen when the system becomes more important than the people who are involved with it.

Finally, it is a compelling story told in a masterful way. Strauss writes in a carefully detailed manner that only someone who has completed the unimaginable amount of research and inquiry that was necessary can. He has the uncanny ability to tell the almost unbelievable things that are going to happen in the book and make you want to read on in order to find out how they could be true. The first thing the reader wants to do when he finishes a chapter is to start the next. It is a hard book to put down. Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | Permalink

Comment Comment

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars great read, January 25, 2011

By stolmaker - See all my reviewsThis review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

Strauss has created a vivid and memorable description of lives transformed through murder, despair and shoddy use of technology and psychological manipulation. His research is deep and detailed. Obviously he became obsessed with this case like Capote did with In Cold Blood. Make your own evaluation of guilt or innocence, the whole story is here. Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | Permalink

Comment Comment

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars Eyeopening, January 14, 2011

By Flite - See all my reviewsAmazon Verified Purchase(What's this?)

This review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

This book represents one man's fight against the criminal code of Nebraska. There is missing evidence that would help further prove his innocence. What happened to the evidence is his quest? This book was sad, and my heart goes out to Darrel and his wife. He received no compensation from the State of Nebraska for his years of internment in prison. He was truly manipulated by the system.

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Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | Permalink

Comment Comment

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars Barbarous Souls, December 24, 2010

By Cynthia D. Graber "sinky" (Nebraska) - See all my reviews

(REAL NAME) Amazon Verified Purchase(What's this?)

This review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

Excellent Book! Learned some interesting information that I didn't know about or didn't remember. I grew up in Lincoln, NE., so I could relate to several of the subjects and places that were mentioned in the book. Once I got started I couldn't put the book down.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | Permalink

Comment Comment

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars Fascinating read!, December 20, 2010

By Calliope - See all my reviewsThis review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

This was a fascinating look at a wrongful conviction case. The story is set in 1955 and lie detector technology is in its infancy. There are so many moments in this poor man's life where you just cannot believe how the stars align for him. I believe he is innocent and I cannot understand Nebraska's unwillingness to set the record straight and exonerate this man. Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | Permalink

Comment Comment (1)

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

5.0 out of 5 stars A Must Read, March 22, 2011

By Mike in Omaha - See all my reviewsThis review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

In early 2011, the State of Nebraska admitted that DNA evidence and transcripts from the 1955 trial have been lost (Omaha World Herald). So Mr. Parker's opportunity for using DNA testing to exonerate him is gone.

Mr. Strauss's book is a fascinating "nonfiction novel" that takes the reader through the entire case. To me, it is chilling how investigators and prosecutors can develop "tunnel vision" in the quest for a conviction at the expense of finding the truth.

This novel appears in the wake of two other recent cases in Nebraska. DNA testing was used to exonerate the "Beatrice 6" decades after the rape and murder of a Beatrice woman. To this outsider, the investigative and prosecutorial progression in that case appear to be eerily similar to Mr. Parker's. In another case, the State of Nebraska lost a lawsuit when a Judge ruled Lucille Kilgore was due back-pay for work performed for the state, but the State drug out the case using appeals until the elderly woman died in poverty.

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5.0 out of 5 stars Barbarous Souls, January 3, 2012

By Sodbuster - See all my reviews This review is from: Barbarous Souls (Paperback)

I have a personal interest in this story, it was fascinating to read about the manipulation, the ineptness, and the desire to destroy an innocent man's life, just to get that quick conviction and close the door on this case. Had the police, and prosecutors taken the time to analyze the facts, instead of having the mind set that Daryl Parker was guilty from the get go; My Mother would still be alive today. Wesley Perry, before he passed away volunteered his confession of the rape and Murder of Nancy Parker to two Lawyers while in carcerated for my Mothers murder. He did this out of the hopes that his story would be published in book form, and that his sisters would be the beneficiary of his lifes work - being a monster; This information is explained in the book Barbarous Souls, and should be enough to award Daryl Parker a Full Pardon and compensation; Help other customers find the most helpful reviews

Was this review helpful to you? Yes No Report abuse | [Permalink](#)

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<http://www.cvsal.com/InnocentMan.htm> (from website of voice stress test advocaes:
national Institute for Truth Verification)

Polygraph Sends Innocent Man to Prison for Life
[Training Schedule](#)



Man pardoned in 1955 killing of wife sues Neb.

By TIMBERLY ROSS
Associated Press, Jul. 23, 2011

OMAHA, Neb. -- A man convicted and later pardoned in the 1955 rape and killing of his wife in their Lincoln home has sued the state of Nebraska for wrongful conviction.

Darrel Parker, now 79 and living in Moline, Ill., is seeking \$500,000 plus interest for the 13 years he spent in prison. He was pardoned in 1991.

Parker's lawsuit, filed Wednesday in Lancaster County District Court, said authorities coerced him into confessing he killed his 21-year-old wife, Nancy.

The Nebraska Attorney General's Office declined to comment on the lawsuit.

Parker, Lincoln's first forester, was 24 when he returned home to find his wife dead in their bed. Authorities said she'd been raped and strangled.

Hours after his wife's funeral in Iowa, Parker was summoned to Lincoln police headquarters and was subjected to a 12-hour polygraph test, according to the lawsuit.

Parker "at this time was emotionally distraught because of the death of his wife," the lawsuit said. "He was never advised of his right to remain silent, was never advised of his right for legal counsel and was placed under emotional pressure that no average person under the same circumstances would be expected to endure."

Parker confessed to the crime during the police interrogation but soon recanted. His lawsuit said the investigator who administered the polygraph test coerced him into the false confession.

Still, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. In 1969, a federal appeals court overturned the conviction, saying the confession was forced, and Parker was released. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed that ruling a few months later and, according to the lawsuit, Parker was offered a deal by the county attorney that would allow him to remain free on parole if he'd drop his objections to the confession. He agreed.

Parker's attorney, Herb Friedman, said the alternative would have been for Parker to face additional court proceedings before judges who'd been involved in his case before their appointments to the bench.

"There's no real choice in that," said Friedman, though he acknowledged the issue will likely be raised as the lawsuit proceeds.

Parker was pardoned in 1991, after a confession from a death-row inmate was released. Wesley Peery was convicted of killing a Havelock woman in 1975 and told his attorneys of other crimes he committed. Details of those confessions were not released until after Peery died of a heart attack in 1988.

Parker had filed a claim earlier this year under a 2009 Nebraska law that compensates victims of wrongful conviction but he didn't get a response. That cleared the way for his lawsuit.

<http://www.bnd.com/2011/07/23/1797092/man-pardoned-in-1955-killing-of.html>

----- Original Message -----

From: Robert L Warden

To: CWC@LISTSERV.IT.NORTHWESTERN.EDU

Sent: Friday, August 31, 2012 4:33 PM

Subject: More Good News

Dear Friends,

Darrel Parker—who was wrongfully convicted 56 years ago of the murder of his wife Nancy in Lincoln, Nebraska, based on a false confession obtained by the Chicago polygraph pioneer and interrogation expert John E. Reid—was officially exonerated today.

CWC Legal Director Steven Drizin was deeply involved in the exoneration effort. As a result of Steve's expertise on false confessions, David Strauss contacted him about a book about the case, entitled *Barbarous Souls*. Steve wrote an afterword for the book (now available on Amazon). The book attracted the attention of a Nebraska father-son legal team, Herb and Dan Friedman, who agreed to represent Darrel in a lawsuit seeking compensation. Steve then helped write and edit key pleadings and brainstormed case strategy.

Today, Darrel appeared at a joint press conference in Lincoln with Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning, who acknowledged that the murder had been committed by a serial killer named Wesley Peery. Under the Nebraska compensation statute, Darrel, now 80 years old, will receive \$500,000, the maximum allowed.

For details, see:

<http://nebraskaradionetwork.com/2012/08/31/mans-name-cleared-in-death-of-wife-after-56-years-could-get-500k-audio/>

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