

Rape suspect: Trial a strong-arm tactic

Steven Garrison says police want information he doesn't have about Springfield's three missing women.

By Robert Keyes
News-Leader

Opening statements are scheduled to begin today in the Greene County trial of Steven E. Garrison, who is charged with raping and sodomizing a Springfield woman in August 1993 in her center-city apartment.

Garrison, however, believes the real reason he's on trial goes beyond the reported several-hour sexual assault that he says he never committed. It's all about three missing women.

In a series of telephone conversations from the Greene County Jail, Garrison, 37, told a reporter that he has been questioned as a suspect in the June 1992 disappearances of Stacy McCall, Suzanne Sirester and Sherrill Levitt. And because of that, he believes, police and prosecutors have falsely accused him in hopes of wrangling a deal out of him for information on the missing women's case.

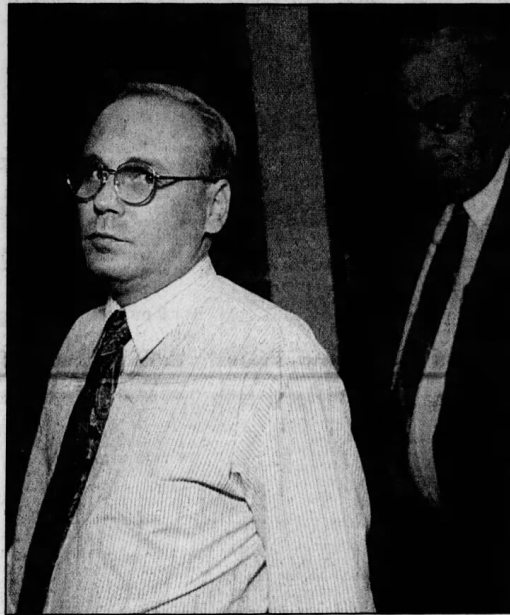
In a trial expected to last through the week, the Springfieldian is charged with first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary and the Class A felonies of rape and sodomy in the 1993 assault. They are Class A because Garrison allegedly used a knife in the assault.

Prosecutors contend Garrison climbed through a window of the woman's East Walnut Street apartment and assaulted her repeatedly over the course of several hours.

They further claim he stole \$552 from her before leaving her apartment.

Garrison admits to being there, but not against the woman's will. His attorney, Dean Price, will argue that the woman accused Garrison for financial gain. She sued her landlord as a result of the reported attack.

With three felony convictions and prison time behind him, Garrison stands to spend the rest of his life in prison if convicted of the charges.



Denise McGill / News-Leader

Steven E. Garrison enters the courtroom Tuesday with Eldon Cobb, a bailiff, behind him. The jury was picked for the trial of Garrison, who is charged with rape and sodomy.

Who's responsible?

The story of this week's trial begins on Aug. 8, 1993, more than a year after the three women disappeared.

But there may be a link between the reported sexual assault and the missing women's case.

Ten days before the alleged 1993 incident, Garrison was in the Greene County Jail charged with a weapons offense. Police considered him a suspect in the missing women's case. As one investigator put it: "The thinking

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