

Trial/Suspect out on bond when rape reported

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at the time was that Garrison's information could be critical" to the case.

So investigators and prosecutors did not object to reducing Garrison's \$10,000 bail to \$2,500 so he could post a bond and get out of jail, said Darrell Moore, chief assistant county attorney. The thinking, law enforcement sources said, was that Garrison might talk in a different environment.

But as a detective interviewed him in a Springfield hotel room, Garrison ran.

Because he was in police custody, investigators began "vigorously looking for him," Moore said.

Garrison was captured 20 days later and jailed without bond. It was nine days after the reported mid-town assault. He had quickly become a suspect in that crime, police reports state.

The victim, a 20-year-old Southwest Missouri State University student, described a heavily tattooed man with a beer belly as her attacker.

Garrison fit the description.

"Do I feel bad about it? Yes," Moore said. "But we're not responsible for what Mr. Garrison is alleged to have done. ... Through the years we've made decisions like this many, many times. Nothing like this ever happened."

Police detective Doug Thomas, the primary investigator in the missing women's case, was the officer alone with Garrison when he ran. Thomas would not comment on the escape other than to say, "There's nothing that happens down here every day that we don't have regrets that a different tack might have been taken."

While law enforcement sources believe this week's charges against Garrison are sound, they're less sure of where Garrison fits in the missing women's case.

Garrison accompanied a team of officers to a Webster County farm on Aug. 28, 1993, on a daylong search sparked by a tip that the women's bodies were buried there.

No bodies were found. Evidence, if any, found in the search remains sealed by court order.

Some detectives believe Garrison had no involvement in the women's disappearances. Others think he may be at the very heart of the still-baffling mystery.

Streeter, Levitt, and McCall have not been found since they were apparently taken from Levitt's 1717 E. Delmar St. home. Streeter and McCall, classmates at Kickapoo High School, had graduated the day before they vanished. Levitt is Streeter's mother.

Garrison's suspect status in that

case likely will not be presented to jurors this week.

And so far this week, Price did a good job of hiding from potential jurors the tattoos — some of which may be central to the prosecutor's case — with dress pants, a long-sleeved shirt and tie for his client.

The jury of eight men and six women chosen at the end of the day also may not have noticed Garrison's leg restraints, worn inside his pants, or the two plainclothes police officers in the courtroom in case the suspect

threatens anyone or tries to escape.

On Tuesday, a typical half-day jury selection process took all day. Eight men and six women, including two alternates, were chosen from a pool of 50 people.

A perceived conflict of interest that arose Monday between Garrison and Price was settled Tuesday with the agreement that the attorney had never represented a client in 1989 in a case in which Garrison was a witness.

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