

## Justice denied

by BRIAN LOCKHART

During the period of November 1957 to January 1958, 19-year-old Charles Starkweather, accompanied by his 14-year-old girlfriend Caril Ann Fugate, murdered 11 people in Nebraska and Wyoming.

No one is really sure why Starkweather became a mad dog killer.

Caril Ann later claimed she was an unwilling hostage, however, prosecutors pointed out she had many opportunities to escape from her so-called captor.

As killers go, it doesn't get much worse than Starkweather. His first murder was a shopkeeper who refused to sell him something on credit. Starkweather kidnapped the man and shot him to death.

After meeting Caril Ann and becoming infatuated with her, he turned up at her family home asking for her. Caril Ann's mother and stepfather weren't too keen on having a 18-year-old man they didn't like, pursuing their young daughter, and they told him to go away.

Starkweather responded by fatally shooting both of them and then clubbing Caril Ann's two-year-old sister to death.

The pair then went on a murderous rampage over several months, killing seven more innocent people.

He was finally captured. During his trial, he claimed Caril Ann had been the killer in several murders.

That seems unlikely, and Caril Ann claimed she didn't kill anyone.

Both Starkweather and Caril Ann were tried on murder charges. Caril Ann was convicted on charges of being an accomplice to murder and served 18 years behind bars.

Starkweather went on trial for his murders. He was found guilty and sentenced to death on May 23, 1958.

Just over a year later, Starkweather was executed in the electric chair at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

The entire process from arrest to trial, and the final result, took just under a year and a half.

It doesn't matter if you're a proponent of or against the death penalty in this case. The point is, that there was a speedy and fair trial, and justice was carried out swiftly. That is the way the justice system is supposed to work.

I usually don't care what happens in the U.S. justice system, but what is going on down there sure demonstrates why a federal criminal system, like we have here, is superior.

This past week in the U.S. state of Alabama, the state executed a man for the murder of his girlfriend. That in itself is not surprising. He was the 15th person executed in Alabama over the last five years.

However, the man committed the crime in 1988 ? 37 years ago.

Most of the executioners in the death chamber wouldn't have even been born when the crime was committed.

On the same day, in Florida, the state executed a man convicted of murdering a nursing student and mother of two children ? in 1994. That was 31 years ago.

This is not surprising. Over the past two and a half years, Florida has executed 13 people, including six in 2025 alone.

In Utah, this past week, a state judge ruled that a convicted killer is competent enough to be executed, despite the fact that the 67-year-old man has developed dementia while on death row. His lawyer describes him as a ?severely brain-damaged, wheelchair-bound man with dementia and significant memory problems.

The state plans to execute him by firing squad.

Utah is a lightweight in the execution business, having executed only one person since 2010.

The man they are going to strap to a chair and shoot committed his crime in 1988 ? 37 years ago.

In Texas, where executions are a sport, the state has executed nine men in the past year and a half. Three of those men were on death row for more than 20 years. One languished on death row for 34 years before being executed by lethal injection.

None of these men were Boy Scouts. They all committed heinous crimes and deserved severe punishment.

However, carrying out a death sentence almost 40 years after a crime was committed is not justice. It's a broken system.

In most countries, after serving 40 years, an inmate would likely be up for parole consideration and no longer considered a threat to society.

The long process it takes to execute someone is blamed on the appeals process.

When a man's life is hanging in the balance, having a judge say, ?I'll get back to you with my decision in three years,? just isn't acceptable.

That decision is then appealed, and several years go by before another decision is made.

If a judge takes that long to make a decision, perhaps being in a profession where decisions determine the course of a person's life, isn't the right place for them.

Justice is supposed to be blind.

In these cases, justice is totally disabled.