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Q And what relation is he to Leslie Milam?

A A brother.

Q He is a brother?

A Yes, Sir.

MR. CHATHAM: That is all

MR. CARLTON: That is all.

(WITNESS EXCUSED.)

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H.C. STRIDER,

A witness introduced for and on behalf of the defendants,  
being first duly sworn, upon his oath testified as follows:

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. WHITTEN:

Q This is Mr. H.C. Strider?

A That's right.

Q What official position do you have in Tallahatchie  
County, Mississippi?

MR. CHATHAM: We will admit that Mr. Strider is the  
Sheriff of Tallahatchie County, and a good one.

Q Mr. Strider, did you have occasion on August 31st,  
I believe it was, to go down to a point on the Tallahatchie

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River to examine a body that had been found down there?

A I did.

Q What time did you get down there to the river bank,  
Mr. Strider?

A I would say around nine fifteen, something like that.

Q Had the body been brought to shore at that time?

A It had.

Q Were you there when it arrived?

A I was.

Q Did you examine the body, observe it and look at it  
after it was brought in?

A The best I could, Yes, Sir.

Q Now tell the jury about the appearance and condition  
of that body as you saw it that morning.

A Well, it was in mighty bad shape.

MR. CHATHAM: We object to that, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Just state the physical facts, not your  
own conclusions.

THE WITNESS: Well the skin had slipped - - I would  
say it had slipped on the entire body. The fingernails  
were gone from the left hand. A ring on the right hand  
was holding the skin that held the fingernails on that  
hand. And the entire body, the skin was slipping or it  
had completely gone off it.

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Q What was the condition of the head? What did you observe there?

Q There was a small hole about one inch above the right ear. There was two - - well, maybe two or three gashes on the head. And one was long - - well, I would say about an inch above the right ear, extending around, about over the left eye. And then one was just a little above it, and then between there was a short one about an inch long.

Q This hole you speak of that was over the right ear, did you determine whether it penetrated the skull?

A I cut a stick about the size of a pencil and tried to find if it penetrated through the skull or not, and I was unable to find if it penetrated through the skull.

Q Mr. Carlton has called my attention to the fact that you indicated the left side of your head and you stated that the gashes were on the right side. Is that correct? Will you explain that?

Q No - - it is on the left side.

Q The gashes were on the left side of the head?

A The hole was above the right ear, and it was more to the front than to the back. And the gash was about along in here, and there was this cut place there (indicating his own head with his hand.)

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Q Did you observe the tongue?

A The tongue was extending, I would say, about two and a half or three inches. And the left eyeball was almost out, enough to almost fall out. And the right one was out, I would say, about three-quarters of an inch.

Q Was there any odor about the body that indicated it was decomposed or that decomposition had set in?

A It was so bad that we couldn't examine the body until the undertaker got there, and then he opened a deodorant bomb. And even then we couldn't get too close, and he had to use a quart of some kind of liquid. I didn't ask him just what it was.

And he covered the entire body with that then, and then we were able to get up to where we could tell something about the body.

Q You live on the Tallahatchie River, I believe, is that right?

A Well, about a quarter of a mile from the Tallahatchie River.

Q And you know the river pretty well, do you?

A I have known it since '35.

Q And you know the approximate temperature of the water there at that time of year, do you?

A I do.

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Q And about what is it next to the surface of the

river?

A I would say the top of the water at this time of  
year would run around seventy degrees. And the deeper  
you go, well, the cooler it will be.

Q Do you know the approximate depth of the river?

A Well, I would say from around twenty five to thirty  
feet on the average at The time when the body was found  
there. Of course, you will find some places deeper, but  
on the average I would say it is around thirty feet.

Q Have you on other occasions taken bodies out of the

river?

A I have.

Q Have you taken bodies out of the river during that  
part of the year, during the summer period, just about the  
same time of the year as it was then, in weather like we  
had here in August?

A I have.

Q Relate that circumstance to the jury, if you will,  
please.

MR. SMITH: We object to anything about taking any  
other body out of the river. That has nothing to do with  
this case at all.

THE COURT: I think the circumstances would be

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inadmissable. The objection is sustained.

Q Have you ever taken a body from the river that you knew had been there For a period of six days?

A I have.

Q Were the conditions under which that body was in that river about the same as the conditions under which this body was taken from the river?

MR. SMITH: We object to that, Your Honor.

THE COURT: The objection is sustained. But you can ask his opinion about the particular time that body was in the river, his opinion from his past experience.

Q What then, Mr. Strider, is your opinion based on your past experience in taking bodies from the river, as to how long this particular body that was removed from the water on August 31st had been in the river?

MR. SMITH: We object to that, if Your Honor please. He is not a doctor, and he is not qualified to testify about that.

THE COURT: He is not qualified as a doctor, but he stated that he has had experience with other bodies taken from the river from time to time. And I think he is qualified.

Q You may state your opinion on that, Mr. Strider.

A I would say at least ten days, if not fifteen.

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Q Referring back to the condition of that particular body there, could you tell whether it was a white person or a colored person?

A The only way you could tell it was a colored person - - and I wouldn't swear to it then - - was just his hair. And I have seen white people that have kinky hair. And the hair had slipped in some places on the head there, but some of it was there, and what I saw, it showed it to be sort of kinky, or that of a negro.

Q Was that body recognizable to be that of any particular person's?

A Well, if one of my own boys had been missing, I couldn't really say if it was my own son or not, or anybody else's. I couldn't tell that. All I could tell, it was a human being.

MR. WHITTEN: Your witness.

CROSS EXAMINATION

BY MR. SMITH:

Q Mr. Strider, I just have two or three questions to ask you. I hand you here a photograph that is marked as Exhibit 1 to the testimony of Mr. Strickland, introduced here yesterday, and I ask you if that picture represents the condition of the body taken out of the river that you

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have referred to in your testimony?

A That does.

Q That is it?

A Yes, Sir.

Q I will ask you if that photograph shows that the skin or flesh is sluffed off at any place?

A Well, you can't tell in several places. You see, the darkness of this picture shows that the entire skin on the body had slipped. This was made hours later, and it had begun to turn dark.

At the time it was brought out of the water, he was just as white as I am except for a few places around that was just a little darker than other places. And except for that, he was just as white as I am.

Q But this photograph does represent him as he was some hours later?

A Only that there is some dark places on there that has developed.

Q Now, Mr. Strider, either the same day or the day after you and the people got this body out of the river, there was a death certificate prepared for Emmett Till, was there not?

A That's right.

Q And I believe you signed that death certificate, did you not?



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A Yes, Sir.

Q And that death certificate certified the fact that it was the body of Emmett Till, isn't that correct?

A No, I didn't certify that body as Emmett Till. I said it was a dead body. I had never seen Emmett Till before, and I couldn't swear it was Emmett Till because I didn't know Emmett Till or what he looked like.

And another thing, his body at that time was not identified at the scene, because I asked his uncle at the time there at the scene - - could I just go ahead and tell what happened there?

Q Yes, Sir.

A Well, I called for his uncle. You see, I heard about this boy being gone or having disappeared there, and so I had the sheriff - - well, I got the sheriff's office over at Greenwood, I got them to go by and pick up the uncle.

And so then they went by and got the old man, and when he got there, he looked at this boy's body, and I said to him, "Mose, is this the boy that is missing from your home?"

And then he said, "I believe it is, but I couldn't say it is for sure."

And then I said to him, "What about this ring on

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his finger?" And then he said, "I don't know. I would have to ask my boys about that."

And then I said to him, "Do you mean to tell me, Mose, that he has been staying there at your home for a week with this ring on his finger, and eating there at the same table with you, and you don't even know this ring, or that you didn't notice he had a ring on his finger?"

And then he said, "No, Sir. I did not know about that ring. But my boys would know whether he was wearing that ring or not." That is what he said to me.

Q Mr. Strider, do you know whether that death certificate had the name of Emmett Till on it or not?

A No, I don't know.

Q When you observed that body, were there any wounds on his body other than about the head?

A There was no wounds at all that I could see. On his back it looked like probably it had just a little reddish cast to it. What could have caused that, I do not know. And I don't know whether it was bruised or not.

But there wasn't no broken places in the skin or anything like that. And his body wasn't bursted anywhere other than about his head.

Q Mr. Strider, from your qualified experience in handling dead bodies brought out of the river, you know

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as a matter of fact, do you not, that a body that is wounded and beaten up and injured will decompose much quicker than a body that has not been? Isn't that true?

A I would think so, Yes, Sir.

Q And you also know that conditions will vary in different bodies which will cause one body to decompose much quicker than another?

A Well, I wouldn't say too much about that. But I have taken bodies out of the river that were in there much longer than this.

Q But circumstances can make a difference, and circumstances can vary as far as a body is concerned, which might cause a body to decompose quicker or faster than another body?

A Well, I thought it depended on the temperature.

Q In your best judgment, Mr. Strider, was that not a bullet hole in his head?

A I wouldn't say whether that was a bullet hole or not. I couldn't find where it penetrated into the skull. And I know that I cut a little stick and tried to find if it penetrated or not, but I never could locate where it penetrated into the skull.

MR. SMITH: I believe that is all.

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REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. KELLUM:

Q Mr. Strider, I would like to ask you this - - -

MR. CHATHAM: If Your Honor please, we object to more than one counsel examining the same witness.

THE COURT: I think the objection will have to be sustained. That will have to be done through the same counsel.

BY MR. WHITTEN:

Q Just one point of identification - - the Mose that you spoke of was Mose Wright who testified here in this case, is that correct?

A Yes, Sir; Mose Wright, who said he was the uncle of Emmett Till.

MR. WHITTEN: That is all.

(WITNESS EXCUSED.)

(At this point in the proceedings, 3:40 p.m., the Court took a recess until 4:05 p.m., this date, at which time the proceedings were resumed.)

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the wounds that you saw on it, would that change your opinion as to the length of time that the body had been dead, as you saw it?

A No.

MR. BRELAND: That is all.

MR. SMITH: That is all.

(WITNESS EXCUSED.)

MR. SMITH: Before we proceed further, if the Court please, I would like to recall Mr. Strider to the stand.

THE COURT: All right, Sir.

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H. C. STRIDER,

Recalled as a witness for and on behalf of the State, having been duly sworn, upon his oath testified as follows:

RE-CROSS EXAMINATION

BY MR. SMITH:

Q Mr. Strider, you are the same sheriff Strider, who testified her a few minutes ago?

A That's right.

Q And you are the sheriff of Tallahatchie County?

A That's right.

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Q Sheriff, you testified that you went down to the river and found a dead body down there, is that correct?

A I didn't find it.

Q I mean, it was down there when you got there and you saw it?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And you had information that it was on your side of the river, did you not?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And I believe you testified that you couldn't tell whether it was a white man or a negro?

A That's right.

Q Sheriff, have you made any investigation to find out who that body was? Who that person was?

A Yes, Sir, I sure have.

Q And are you continuing your investigation?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And are you continuing your investigation at the present time?

A Not at the present time, no Sir. I have been tied up here in Court.

Q I realize that, just the way we all have. But what efforts have you been making to find out whose body that was?

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A Well, I have had several reports about a negro who disappeared over there at Lambert. And I went out there and investigated that, and one man would tell you that he saw him, or that he said somebody told him they saw him, and then someone else would tell me that someone else had told them something about it. And it would just carry you right around to where you started from.

Q But you got no information whatsoever to indicate whose body that was? You have not gotten any information about that as yet?

A No, I have not.

MR. SMITH: That is all

MR. BRELAND: No questions.

(WITNESS EXCUSED.)

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