

ONE OF 12 STAB WOUNDS PIERCED A CARPENTER'S HEART Negro For Trial Charged With Murder At Fremantle

Body of 29-y-o single carpenter Albert James Conlan, of Kerr-st., West Leederville, had 12 stab wounds in the front and back. One, which penetrated his heart, had caused his death.

Fremantle DMO Dr. Alan Reid Bean told this to Mr. K. J. Dougall, SM, in the Fremantle Police Court on Wednesday when 30-y-o Texas born negro, Joe Morris Hicks, seaman from the Pioneer Star, appeared on a charge of having, at Fremantle on Sept. 25 last, wilfully murdered Conlan.

* Hicks, a 6ft. gaugling Negro, dressed in a

light double-breasted summer suit of an exaggerated drape, suede shoes and open-neck shirt of large grey and white square checks, sat impassively in the dock with his arms folded throughout the proceedings.

Wearing modern shaped tortoiseshell rimmed glasses and a small neatly trimmed black moustache, he was not represented by counsel.

He merely shook his closely-cropped head when asked whether he had any questions to ask the 11 witnesses, and only spoke at the conclusion of the hearing when he was asked by the magistrate if he reserved his defence.

Then he sadly shook his head and said quietly, "I don't have anything to say."

Describing deceased's injuries, Dr. Bean said the 12 stab wounds were short incised ones, varying in length from 3/8" to 5/8" in length, except one in the back which was 1 1/2" long.

Wounds, made by a sharp, narrow instrument, penetrated to varying depths, except the ones in the back which went deep enough to make an incision in the left lung.

Witnesses Stories

Dr. Bean said that at the Fremantle lock-up on Sept. 27 he examined the accused but could find no swelling or definite tenderness or any wounds or abrasions on any part of his body. He would be unable to detect any bruising because of the color of the accused's skin.

"About 9.30 p.m. on Sept. 25 I was standing on the footpath in High-st. and noticed Conlan standing a few feet away from me," said pensioner Joseph McCracken, of Bellevue-tee, Fremantle.

"He was definitely under the influence of drink. He wore dark trousers and a white shirt but had no coat on. He was swaying on his feet, looking up and down both sides of the street, undecided which way to go. At last

his feet, looking up and down both sides of the street, undecided which way to go. At last he decided to go west. Then he met 2 dark men, both tall, one thin and the other stout."

Conlan passed some remark to them, said witness, and they both told him, "Go away; go home."

"I take it that the 2 dark men had had a quantity of drink," McCracken told Inspector J. I. Johnston, prosecuting. "The stout one was drowsy and the thin one full of life—sparking."

Conlan put up his fists, continued witness, and made a hit at the thin negro, who backed away from a number of blows and eventually got his arms around Conlan's shoulders. The two men struggled and nearly went through a grocer's window. They moved then into a doorway standing 3 or 4 feet back from the building alignment.

"After they'd been there about 2 minutes, I thought I'd better see what was happening," said McCracken. "I came closer and noticed accused apparently trying to punch Conlan on the back of the neck with his right hand. I called out, 'Hey, break it up there.'"

Accused, he continued, then ran west along High-st., around into Henry-st. in the direction of the wharf. Conlan was slumped in the doorway in a sitting position.

McCracken said he then walked away but next day identified Hicks in a line-up of negroes at the lock-up.

"Two Men Jostling"

Waterside worker Robert Henry Martin, of Josephson-st., Fremantle, told how he heard sounds of a scuffle in High-st., looked around and saw "two men jostling on the footpath." They ended up in a doorway. Then a negro ran past witness and turned into Henry-st.

"I saw the deceased in the doorway and realised he had been stabbed," said Martin.

realised he had been stabbed," said Martin. "He was all bleeding down one side. I put him into a sitting position and went for aid."

Mrs. Francis Eliza Harrison, of Willagee Park, who was sitting in a car in High-st. that night, said she saw 2 negroes come out of a cool drink shop. A white man, she now knew to be Conlan, stepped in front of them and said something, but she heard only one word "—." The thickset negro pushed the white man away and then the other negro pushed him. She saw some grappling but no blows struck.

Det. Leonard Cecil Wilson told how he and Sgt. Alexander Duperouzel visited the accused in his cabin on the Pioneer Star about 10 p.m. Questioned, Hicks said he knew nothing of any stabbing that night. He denied that he had a knife or that he had been involved in a fight ashore.

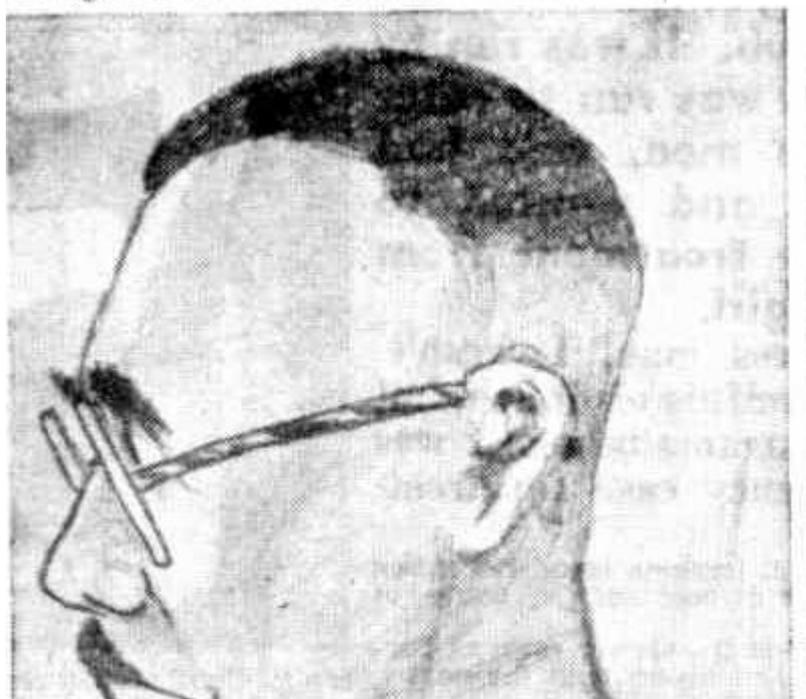
Hicks accompanied them back to the Fremantle CIB office where, after he had made a written statement to Det.-Sgt. Parker, he was arrested on warrant and the murder charge was preferred.

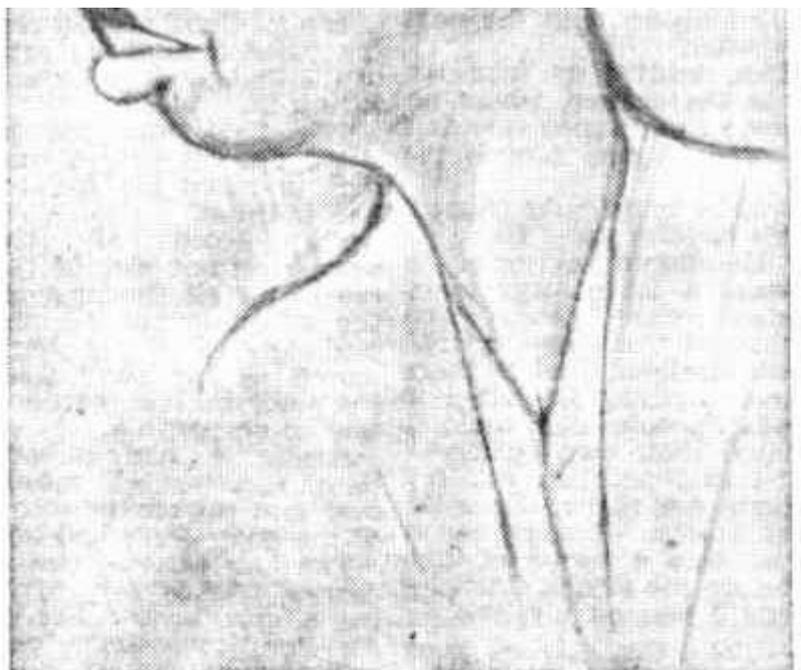
Det.-Sgt. Arthur John Parker said that the accused at first denied that he had been in any fight in High-st. After further questioning, witness said to Hicks: "I don't think you are telling the truth."

Accused then said that Conlan was kicking him in the lower abdomen.

"He was picking me and calling me names. I used the knife to defend myself," accused allegedly added.

After the magistrate had committed Hicks for trial at the Criminal Sessions in the Supreme Court, Perth, the accused stepped down from the dock, and, escorted by a young uniformed constable, walked quietly through the door to the cells.





**Our artist's impression of accused
negro Joe Morris Hicks.**