

# Witness: Teens gawked at dead man

By LOU ORTIZ

Register Staff Writer

A crowd of teen-agers gathered to gawk at the body of a homeless man at a Des Moines park last summer after he had been beaten to death and lay in a pool of blood, witnesses testified Friday.

"They wanted to see this person," testified David Gardner about the on-lookers, who gathered to see Miland Van Mill as he lay dead in an empty wading pool at Westchester Park.

Prosecutor Melodee Hanes has described Van Mill as a gentle person, who often got drunk but not abusive. She said Van Mill was a fragile man — standing 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighing 120 pounds.

## "Didn't Have a Chance"

Van Mill, 42, had staggered into the park drunk during the early morning hours of Aug. 2. Later, when he was attacked by an adult and two 15-year-olds, "he didn't have a chance," said Gardner.

"They body-slammed him in the pool, and they thought it was so much fun," said Gardner.

Gardner, 17, testified Friday in the trial of Daniel Clarkson, who is charged with first-degree murder in

**“They body-slammed him in the pool, and they thought it was so much fun.”**

— David Gardner

the case. Also charged with first-degree murder are Orionne Turner of Des Moines and Timothy DeVore of Indianola.

DeVore and Turner will be tried as adults in separate trials later this year.

Van Mill, a Vietnam veteran, died when an artery near his heart burst after his chest was severely compressed. He had suffered 27 broken ribs, a brain hemorrhage and a torn larynx.

Van Mill often slept at the park, a popular hangout for teens who would drink and smoke marijuana there, according to Clarkson's lawyer, Robert Powers.

On the night Van Mill died, Clarkson, Turner and DeVore had been drinking and they decided to beat up the homeless man, testified Gardner. "I saw the three hitting Mr. Van Mill," Gardner said.

## "Acting Real Macho"

After the beating, Van Mill lay on the ground moaning and the three suspects "were acting real macho," said Gardner. "They were proud of what they had done."

Van Mill was beaten two more times and kicked repeatedly in the groin and head. Then he was dragged to the wading pool, swung around in the air and thrown to the ground, according to testimony.

"I remember Dan Clarkson stomping on Mr. Van Mill's chest," said Gardner.

A crowd of teens gathered to see Van Mill's body in the pool, testified Daniel Scar. "They looked and saw that he was dead and ran," he said.

Scar, 15, said that Clarkson was

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## CLARKSON

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surprised to learn that Van Mill was dead. But Clarkson later threatened to harm anyone who reported the incident, Scar said.

"He told us that if we ever told anyone he would kill us," Scar explained. "He said we should forget about it, like it didn't happen.

"I took him seriously because he had just gotten done killing someone," said Scar.

Scar said that Clarkson, DeVore and Turner didn't show any remorse. He also said Clarkson didn't appear to be drunk, although he was acting unusual.

On Thursday, Powers told jurors that his client was drunk and didn't know what he was doing because he had also taken LSD the night of the incident. He said Clarkson is guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Clarkson, 22, of Granger, faces a mandatory life prison term without parole if he's found guilty of the murder charge. He's been held in the Polk County Jail since his arrest in August.



# Teen dealt 50-year term in b

By CHRIS OSHER

Register Staff Writer

A 16-year-old was sentenced Monday to 50 years in prison for his involvement in last summer's beating death of a homeless veteran of the Vietnam War.

Orionne Turner of Des Moines pleaded guilty in April of attempted murder and first-degree robbery as part of a plea bargain. He originally was charged with first-degree murder in connection with the death of Miland Van Mill, 42, who died Aug. 2 in Westchester Park in northwest Des Moines.

William Logan, a psychiatrist with the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kan., testified Monday that Turner stood a good chance of being rehabilitated if sent to an inpatient care facility for therapeutic treatment.

Assistant Polk County Attorney Melodee Hanes countered by calling to the stand Michael Taylor, a Des Moines psychiatrist. Taylor said Turner should be sentenced to prison so he would be forced to realize there are consequences to his actions.

Turner told Polk County District Court Judge R. A. Walters he was sorry for the trouble he had caused his and Van Mill's families.

Walters, however, ruled that Turner should not be released on probation because of the serious nature of the crime.

A Polk County jury convicted Dan-

iel Clarkson, 22, of first-degree murder for Van Mill's death. Polk County District Judge George Bergeson sentenced Clarkson to life in prison without the possibility of parole in April. Timothy Devore, 16, pleaded guilty in March to the same charges as Turner and also received a 50-year sentence.

As part of the plea agreements, the prosecution was required to write letters to the Iowa Medical Classification Center in Oakdale recommending that Devore and Clarkson remain in the maximum security section of a juvenile detention facility until they turn 18.

## Man charged in attack under house arrest

A man who had been arrested in connection with an attack on two Southeast Asians was released from jail and placed under house arrest Monday.

As part of the terms of his release, San Tau Vong will be required to wear an electronic device on his wrist that will monitor his movements. He had been held at the Polk County Jail on \$100,000 bond.

Vong, 26, of 3004 78th St., Urbandale, has been charged with two counts of aiding and abetting and one count of attempted murder for his involvement in an incident that oc-