



## Verdict of Homicide in Gestemer Death

A coroner's jury returned a verdict of homicide by a party or parties unknown in the death of Fred Gestemer, 74, who died Nov. 26 at the home of Mrs. Ida Finchem at Fletcher in Jefferson county, Mo. The coroner's jury met last Thursday night in DeSoto.

Barney Finchem and his wife Ida were arrested following an investigation into the death of the aged Gestemer and were released Saturday from the county jail at Hillsboro under bond of \$2500 each. They are charged with obtaining money by fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation. Their preliminary hearing has been set at Hillsboro Dec. 17. Barney Finchem resides at 2514 DeKalb st., St. Louis, and commutes frequently to his wife's residence at Fletcher, where four persons including Fred Gestemer were being taken care of. They had no license to operate a nursing home, though there is a suspicion that they were operating one.

The sensational news of the neglect and eventual death of Gestemer, which broke late last week in the daily newspapers and by radio, emphasizes the sordid plight of some helpless persons who are the victims of a nursing home racket. But more important, it also emphasizes that kindness, cleanliness, and professional care if available and is the key to happiness for many others who for various reasons cannot be cared for in their own homes, and who seek the refuge of the legitimate nursing home. Not all persons by any means receive neglect. The opposite is true, if one will take the trouble to investigate.

Mrs. Finchem has reportedly stated that she accepted pay from her guests, who included the aged and ill Fred Gestemer, Mrs. ~~Marie~~ Marie ~~Tilker~~ Tilker who is a blind widow, Mrs. ~~Tilker's~~ 30-year-old son who is an incompetent, and Cecelia Krajci, aged 59. Their daily diet was two bologna sandwiches and three cups of coffee, with doughnuts or chili for special occasions. Gestemer died of a head injury suffered some four to six weeks prior to his death. His left foot and lower back showed advanced gangrene. His body was undernourished. He had been housed, according to the reports, in an unheated chicken shack with the 30-year-

old Paul Barber, Mrs. ~~Tilker~~ and her son, Paul Barber, were removed to a St. Louis institution after an investigation last week but Cecelia Krajci refused to leave Mrs. Finchem.

Mrs. ~~How~~ Marie ~~Tilker~~ has stated that Mrs. Finchem had obtained more than \$3000 from her and that \$2000 of that sum was used to buy the isolated farm at Fletcher last August. Mrs. Finchem had also planned to obtain money from Paul Barber on an insurance policy that was to be cashed in.

The Missouri State Nursing Home Association has campaigned vigorously to compel such operators of homes to bring the home up to a health and happiness standard which will qualify for a license, or get out of business. Homes which fail to qualify not only mete out misery for a while, but are considered a

disgrace to the nursing home profession as a whole.