

Court Report

John Wayne Gacy, a former contractor and occasional party clown, went on trial in Cook County, Illinois, for the brutal murders of 33 young men and boys between 1972 and 1978. The evidence against Gacy was so strong that his guilt was not in question, and the case hinged on whether Gacy had been legally insane when he killed. The defense requested a change of venue from Cook County to Winnebago County, and the jury was then relocated to Cook County for the duration of the trial. Opening statements were delivered on Wednesday, February 6, 1980. Gacy's attorneys argued their client had been mentally ill and should not be held criminally responsible for his 33 murders.

Jeffrey Rignall, who had survived an attack by Gacy in 1978, testified and was so affected by recounting his ordeal that he vomited while on the stand. Kevin McMunigal, a criminal law professor at Case Western University's School of Law and former federal prosecutor, told A&E True Crime that Rignall's physical reaction reinforces how horrible these crimes are.