**Case Study 4 – The Electrocuted Burglar**

**Summary**

The death of an apparent burglar electrocuted by a 220-volt security system at an [Aurora](https://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/chicago-suburbs/aurora-CHIS0002-topic.html) tavern has been ruled accidental, Coroner Mary Lou Kearns said Friday.

In deciding the death was accidental, the Kane County coroner's jury declined to call the death of 37-year-old Larry Harris a homicide, Kearns said.

The six-person jury, which included a cardiologist, was told that on Aug. 3, the day Harris was found dead by a police officer responding to a burglar alarm at the tavern, Harris had a blood-alcohol level of .08 percent, the state's legal definition of drunkenness. The jury also was told Harris had cocaine in his system.

Although no one during the inquest speculated on whether the drugs could have played a role in Harris' death, as police did after his death, Kearns said she did not believe it was a factor.

"The electrocution is something else," she said. "The electrocution alone could certainly cause his death. I don't think one thing had anything to do with the other."

A silent burglar alarm at George O's Place, 954 W. Lake St., failed to bring police in time to capture a burglar at the tavern in three previous burglaries, so the owner, Jesse Ingram, rigged up metal bars beneath the windows, attached an electrical cord and plugged it into the tavern's electrical system each night as he left, police said. He posted signs in several places on the tavern's exterior, warning would-be burglars that the building was "protected by 220-volt security wiring."

Harris apparently ignored or did not read the signs. When police responded to the alarm early Aug. 3, an officer found Harris' feet dangling outside a window. Electricity had entered his hand and exited his leg, traveling through his heart and stopping it in the process, Kearns said.

**Result**

The jury ruled in a civil case late Friday that the bar's owners, Barb and Jesse Ingram, were partially to blame for the death because they rigged the tavern with a 220-volt wire. But the jury also blamed Harris for breaking into the bar after 2 a.m. on Aug. 3, 1997.

In all, the jury awarded Harris' family $150,000 in compensation, but assigned half of the liability to Larry Harris, effectively reducing the award to $75,000. Of that, the Ingrams are responsible for $60,000, and the building's owner, Alma Moody, for $15,000.