

CHAPTER 1



America's Fascination With Multiple Murder

The break of dawn on November 16, 1957, heralded the start of deer hunting season in rural Waushara County, Wisconsin. The men of Plainfield went off with their hunting rifles and knives, but without any clue of what Edward Gein would do that day. Gein was known to the 647 residents of Plainfield as a quiet man who kept to himself and his aging, dilapidated farmhouse. But when the men of the village returned from hunting that evening, they learned the awful truth about their 51-year-old neighbor and the atrocities that he had ritualized within the walls of his farmhouse.

The first in a series of discoveries that would disrupt the usually tranquil town occurred when Frank Worden arrived at his hardware store after hunting all day. Frank's mother, Bernice Worden, who had been minding the store, was missing; so was Frank's truck. But there was a pool of blood on the floor and a trail of blood leading toward the place where the truck had been garaged.

The investigation of Bernice's disappearance and possible homicide led police to the farm of Ed Gein. Because the farm had no electricity, the investigators conducted a slow and ominous search with flashlights, methodically scanning the barn for clues. The sheriff's light suddenly exposed a hanging figure, apparently Mrs. Worden. As Captain Schoephoerster later described in court,

Mrs. Worden had been completely dressed out like a deer with her head cut off at the shoulders. Gein had slit the skin on the back of her ankles and inserted a wooden rod, 3½ feet long, and about 4 inches in diameter, and sharpened to a point at both ends, through the cut tendons on the back of her ankles. Both hands were tied to her side with binder twine. The center of the rod was attached to a pulley on a block and tackle. The body was pulled up so that the feet were near the ceiling. We noticed that there was just a few drops of watery blood beneath the body on the dirt floor, and not finding the head or intestines, we thought possibly the body had been butchered at another location. (Gollmar, 1981, p. 32)

The brutal murder and dismemberment of Bernice Worden was not the only gruesome act of the reclusive man whom no one really knew. In the months that

followed, more of Gein's macabre practices were unveiled. Not only was he suspected in several other deaths, but Gein also admitted to having stolen corpses and body parts from a number of graves. Gein used these limbs and organs to fashion ornaments such as belts of nipples and a hanging human head, as well as decorations for his house, including chairs upholstered in human skin and bedposts crowned with skulls. A shoe box containing nine vulvas was but one piece of Gein's grim collection of female organs. On moonlit evenings, he would prance around his farm wearing a real female mask, a vest of skin complete with female breasts, and women's panties filled with vaginas in an attempt to recreate the form and presence of his dead mother.

The news of Gein's secret passion devastated Plainfield. The townspeople were shocked to learn of the terrible fate of Mrs. Worden and to hear of the discovered remains belonging to 51-year-old barkeeper Mary Hogan, who had disappeared years earlier after being shot by Gein. They were outraged by the sacrilege of their ancestors' graves. They were literally sickened remembering the gifts of "venison" that Gein had presented to them.

THE GEIN LEGACY

Any small town is shocked by a murder in its midst, but the horror of Gein's rituals surpassed anything that the people of Plainfield had ever encountered or even imagined. Outside Wisconsin, however, few people had heard of Edward Gein. As bizarre and offensive as his crimes were, Gein never really made headlines in other parts of the country; what happens in Plainfield is not nearly as important, at least to the national media, as what occurs in a large city like Chicago or Washington, DC. Very few eyebrows are raised at the mention of the name Ed Gein. Hardly a household name or a box office attraction, he might have been immortalized like Charles Manson in the film *Helter Skelter* (1976) had he killed in Los Angeles. Had he lived in a metropolis like New York City, director Spike Lee might have featured Gein in a retrospective docudrama, as he did serial killer David Berkowitz in the film *Summer of Sam* (1999). A killer from Plainfield, Wisconsin—which rings very much like Anywhere, USA—however, probably will never be regarded as important enough to warrant a major movie release called *Autumn of Ed*.

Although the name of Edward Gein is unknown to most moviegoers, he was discovered by Hollywood. His legendary place in the annals of crime has inspired a number of fictional films, both popular and obscure, as well as a low-budget portrayal of the Gein story, simply titled *Ed Gein* (2000).

The promoters of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) claimed that it was based on fact, although a crime of this description cannot be found in reality. One thing is for sure: The film contains numerous elements reminiscent of Gein's patently deviant behavior. For instance, the farmhouse of the Chainsaw family of killers, like Gein's house, is littered with spare body parts and bones. Also similar to Gein, the family has an armchair with real arms.

A little-known film imported from Canada more closely parallels the Gein theme. In *Deranged* (1974), a killer known as the "Butcher of Woodside" slaughters and stuffs his victims. At one point, he parades in the skin of a

woman he has just killed, similar to Gein's moonlight escapades. A poster ad for the film depicts a woman hanging from her ankles, just as the body of Bernice Worden was discovered.

Probably because of Anthony Hopkins's memorable portrayal of Hannibal Lecter in 1991's *The Silence of the Lambs*, some may forget the presence of a second despicable character in the film known as Buffalo Bill. Just as Edward Gein collected women's skin in order to recreate his mother, so the serial killer Buffalo Bill trapped and murdered his female victims for the same purpose, to harvest enough human skin to complete his "girl suit."

Perhaps the most noteworthy cinematic production inspired by the Gein case was the classic thriller *Psycho* (1960), the original version of which was directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Operating out of a warped sense of reverence, Norman Bates (played by Anthony Perkins in the original and by Vince Vaughn in the 1998 remake) stuffed and preserved his deceased mother just as Gein had tried using female body parts to symbolize and resurrect his mother. Both conversed with their dead mothers, and both struggled with strict moral constraints that had been enforced by their dominating and sickly mothers. Finally, Norman Bates was implicated in the deaths of two other young women, just as the excavation of undersize bones near Gein's farm suggested his role in the disappearance of two teenage girls.

MULTIPLE MURDER IN POPULAR CULTURE

Hero worship has always been an integral part of popular culture. Over the decades, we have celebrated those members of society who have reached the pinnacle of success in their fields by honoring them in movies, in documentaries, in magazine profiles, and even on trading cards. More recently, we have extended our celebration to what some consider our new antiheroes, those who have distinguished themselves in the worst possible ways by reaching the pinnacle of "success" as murderers.

In 1991, a California trading card company published its first series of mass and serial killer cards, spotlighting such brutal criminals as Edward Gein, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy, and Charles Manson. Selling for \$10 per pack (without bubble gum), they were no joke. Several other card makers soon followed suit, hoping to cash in on the celebrity of multiple murderers.

Even comic books have been used as vehicles for celebrating the exploits of vicious killers like Jeffrey Dahmer rather than traditional superheroes. One comic book, *The Unauthorized Biography of a Serial Killer* (Fisher, 1992), goes as far as to portray, in drawings, Dahmer sodomizing one of his victims. By taking on a starring role once held by the likes of Batman and Superman, the killer is unnecessarily glorified. As in Marshall McLuhan's famous adage "the medium is the message," the victims' memory is trivialized by placing them in a comic book format.

In a more respectable context, the coveted cover of *People* magazine has become a spotlight for infamous criminals. It was bad enough that Milwaukee's confessed cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer was on the cover of *People*, an honor usually reserved for Hollywood stars and Washington politicians, but the popular

celebrity magazine also chose Dahmer as one of its “100 Most Intriguing People of the 20th Century.”

During the 1970s, only one killer was featured on *People's* cover. By the 1990s, in contrast, the incredibly popular celebrity magazine printed more than two dozen different cover stories about vicious criminals, including Dahmer, David Koresh, Laurie Dann, and Theodore Kaczynski (see Levin, Fox, & Mazaic, 2002).

The public's taste and tolerance for front cover attention afforded multiple murder reached a limit when *Rolling Stone* magazine gave star treatment to one of the men suspected of setting off bombs at the 2013 Boston Marathon that had killed three spectators and seriously injured hundreds of others. The August 2013 issue featured 20-year-old suspected terrorist Dzhokhar Tsarnaev on the front cover in a photograph that had been touched up considerably. With his youthful face and wavy hair, Tsarnaev's image was reminiscent of rock stars that over the years have made it big when gracing the cover of *Rolling Stone*. Whether it was the recency of the bombing, the apparent anti-American sentiment behind the attack, or the photo editing toward glamour that struck a raw nerve, the magazine came under intense criticism for its approach. Numerous

newsstands and stores refused to sell the controversial issue. Yet despite a grassroots campaign to mount a boycott, the magazine flew off the shelves wherever available, giving *Rolling Stone* double its usual street sales for the issue.

Television has also helped to turn criminals—real ones like Florida's Aileen Wuornos and fictional ones like Showtime's Dexter Morgan—into celebrities. In fact, some observers have characterized serial killing as a chiefly media event (Gibson, 2006) that allows people to obtain close knowledge of the essential characteristics of serial killing and the propensities peculiar to specific offenders (Jenkins, 1994). This is a particularly salient by-product of the media-saturated nature of serial killing, given that it is statistically one of the least common types of crime (Haggerty, 2009). Media, at their worst, have catered to public hunger for gripping topics, financially exploiting gruesome

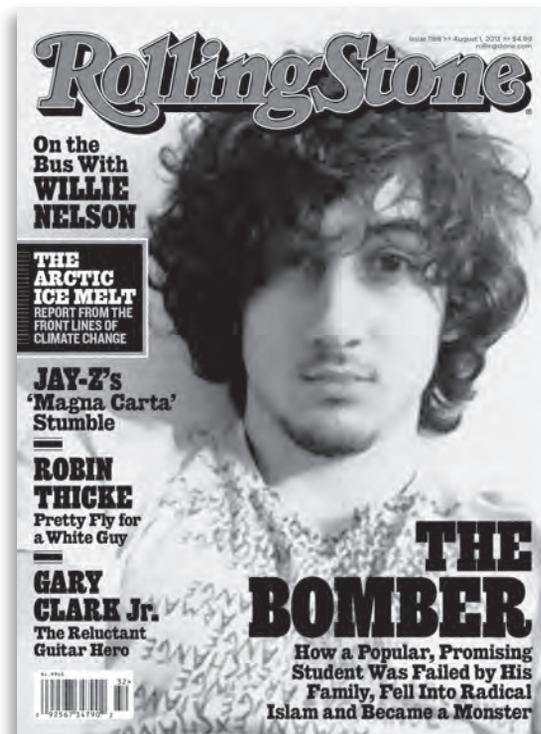


Photo 1.1 Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev appears on the August 1, 2013, cover of *Rolling Stone*. (Associated Press/Wenner Media)

events and turning the horrific into an institution of celebrity culture (Haggerty, 2009). The prevalence of attention to rare but horrifying events such as serial killing is not limited to television media. These stories saturate detective and true crime books and can be seen often in film and police dramas along with collector cards and comic books (Jarvis, 2007; Schmidt, 2005).

Docudramas on television or in the theaters are often biographies of vicious criminals—many of whom are played by leading actors and actresses, such as Mark Harmon as Theodore Bundy, Brian Dennehy as John Wayne Gacy, Jeremy Davies as Charles Manson, Michael Badalucco as David Berkowitz, and Jean Smart as Aileen Wuornos. Actress Charlize Theron also played Wuornos in the 2003 movie titled *Monster*, winning an Academy Award for the performance and, in the process, winning Wuornos some posthumous measure of sympathy. Having glamorous stars cast in the roles of vicious killers unfortunately infuses these killers with glamour and humanity.

Besides the undeserving focus on the criminal as the “star of the show” in these programs, television docudramas are sanitized by virtue of the restrictions that are placed on network television. Ironically, though, theatrical films such as *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *The Red Dragon* (2002), *Along Came a Spider* (2001), *Copycat* (1995), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *The Cell* (2000), and *The Horsemen* (2009) are able to depict all the horrible details of purely fictional crimes without fear of censorship.

A rare true-crime film that does not glorify serial murder can be found in *Henry—A Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986), a low-budget motion picture based on serial murderer Henry Lee Lucas and his partner Otis Toole. Among others of their dastardly misdeeds, Toole and Lucas are strongly suspected of abducting and decapitating 6-year-old Adam Walsh, the son of John Walsh of the long-standing Fox TV program *America's Most Wanted*. In *Henry*, the two killers are shown for what they really were—cruel and inhumane men without any redeeming social value. They weren't portrayed as smart, friendly,



Photo 1.2 Sometimes multiple murderers are played by celebrities. Actress Charlize Theron won an Oscar for best actress portrayal of serial killer Aileen Wuornos in the 2003 feature film *Monster*. (Mark J. Terrill/Associated Press)



Photo 1.3 Photo of an exhibit of John Wayne Gacy's clown paintings as displayed May 2011 in the Arts Factory in Las Vegas. (Author)

handsome, or charming, and they weren't played by actors most people would recognize as stars. Most important, the film refused to soft-pedal the monstrous acts of this killing team, showing their unmitigated cruelty without compromise.

THE SELLING OF MULTIPLE MURDER

The glorification of multiple killers has created a market for almost anything that they say or do. For example, the art work of John Wayne Gacy became much in demand, but only after he was convicted of killing 33 young men and boys in Des Plaines, Illinois, and especially after his execution by the state of Illinois. His very ordinary paintings of clowns have been displayed in art galleries and have become collector's items. His paintings had special significance because he had been known to dress as a clown to entertain children at neighborhood birthday parties. While he was still alive, Gacy made \$100,000 on sales of his paintings through a broker. Similarly, the paintings of deceased mass murderer Richard Speck, who slaughtered eight nurses in Chicago and then died in an Illinois penitentiary, now sell for up to \$2,000. Although this kind of price tag may seem relatively slight for original art, his paintings would hardly be worth the canvas they're painted on were it not for his bizarre notoriety.

Along the same lines, a Denver art studio produces and sells serial killer action figures. Similarly, collectors of what has been termed *murderabilia* can purchase a wide variety of clothing items emblazoned with their favorite serial killers or can bid on such items as a lock of Charles Manson's hair or a pair of his sandals at an Internet auction site.

Some individuals are so fascinated with serial murderers that they will purchase any item associated even remotely with a killer's hideous crimes. Bricks taken from Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment building were considered by some as prized souvenirs. Other serial murder fans were willing to bid for the refrigerator in which Dahmer had held his victims' body parts. Several websites auction off souvenirs associated with Dennis Rader, who was captured in 2005 for the BTK killing spree, including dirt taken from his home and sold by the ounce.

After it was discovered that Gary Ridgway was the so-called Green River Killer who had murdered at least 48 prostitutes in the Seattle area, eBay customers were eager to purchase Green River-related merchandise over the Internet. Until it was yanked from the website, customers could bid on a blood-red T-shirt bearing the image of Gary Ridgway and the words "I was good at choking." Or they could purchase a business card from the Green River Task Force and a used mug taken from the truck factory where Ridgway had worked for 30 years. The business card was sold for \$29; but the old mug brought only \$4.25.

Before his arrest in 1995, 47-year-old serial killer Keith Jesperson was dubbed the "Happy Face Killer" because of the doodle he scribbled on his anonymous confession. The long-haul trucker, who took the lives of at least eight women in five states, sells his artwork online. At two websites, his colored-pencil drawings of various animals in the wild were displayed with their price tags of \$25 each. A signed photograph of the killer came free of charge with every purchase (Suo, 2002).

A song written by multiple murderer Charles Manson became a cult classic when recorded by the heavy metal rock group Guns N' Roses on their 1993 album *The Spaghetti Incident*. To publicize their release, lead singer Axl Rose wore a Charles Manson T-shirt on the album cover. Patti Tate, sister of the Hollywood actress Sharon Tate, murdered in 1969 by Manson followers, said in response that the record company "is putting Manson up on a pedestal for young people who don't know who he is to worship like an idol" (Quintanilla, 1994, p. E1). Patti Tate's judgment was confirmed when an iconoclastic young rocker adopted the stage name Marilyn Manson. Charles Manson himself still maintains his own music "career," even from his prison cell. Tapes of his music have been smuggled out from the penitentiary and then distributed on CDs. No small wonder that Manson, even in his 70s, after four decades behind bars, still boasted that he is the most famous person who ever lived (Levin, 2008). Although his sense of importance is absolutely inflated, at least in terms of name recognition, Manson's claim may not be that much of an exaggeration.

Americans have become fascinated with the many "talents" displayed by vicious killers. Apparently, Sacramento serial killer Dorothea Puente was renowned for her culinary skills, so much so that in 2004, author Shane Bugbee published a collection of her favorite recipes in a book titled *Cooking with a Serial Killer*. Drifter Danny Rolling, convicted in the Gainesville student slayings,

performed his own musical compositions. He sang love songs to his sweetheart, both in court and, with guitar accompaniment, on the national television program *A Current Affair*. He and his then-fiancée Sondra London (1996) published a book containing his artwork and poetry, which many fans purchased at leading bookstores around the country.

Decades ago, the New York State legislature passed the Son of Sam law, prohibiting murderers like David Berkowitz from profiting off of their crimes. In 1991, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that this law was unconstitutional on First Amendment grounds. This decision by the Court hasn't prevented creative attempts to ensure that killers would not reap financial reward even while being punished for their crimes. For example, in 2010, Senator John Cornyn of Texas filed a bill to prevent the proceeds from the sale of murderabilia to be transmitted to convicted criminals through the U.S. mail.

It is disgraceful enough when private citizens buy and sell killer art and artifacts, but even the federal government has gotten into the sordid business. Compelled by court order, the General Services Administration (GSA) in May 2011 launched an online auction of personal items that belonged to "Unabomber" Theodore Kaczynski, the reclusive misfit who killed three victims and injured 23 others during an 18-year-long campaign of mayhem. Included on the auction block were his driver's license, birth certificate, academic transcripts, and personal checks, which had been recovered from Kaczynski's secluded Montana cabin (the same structure that drew large crowds when it was on display at the Newseum in Washington, DC).

The prized centerpiece to the GSA sell-off, of course, was the original 35,000 word manifesto that Kaczynski negotiated by threat of violence to have published in the *Washington Post*. Both the handwritten and typed versions were available for the highest bidder.

The auction was mandated as part of a \$15 million restitution order for Kaczynski's victims and their families. Although the objective was certainly laudable, hawking macabre property to those fringe collectors who wish to own a piece of infamy is a dubious way to raise money.

Rarely do serial killers have the financial means to contribute as restitution to the innocent people they harmed. For this reason, it is the government's place to establish and fund victim compensation programs. It is unfortunate, however, that the celebrity of someone as undeserving as Kaczynski would be advanced in the process.

CRAVING ATTENTION

Not only is the value of multiple murderer artwork and music inflated, but their statements to the press, both spoken and written, also are treated as "words of wisdom." Suddenly, they become instant experts in everything from psychology to criminal justice. The media often solicit their opinions about how victims might protect themselves from murder, what motivates other serial killers, and the role of pornography in the development of a sexual sadist. In fact, Ted Bundy's "expert testimony" on the eve of his execution concerning the dangers of erotic materials became ammunition for ultraconservative groups lobbying for federal antipornography legislation widely called the "Bundy Bill."

Thirty-eight-year-old serial killer Leslie Allen Williams, after his 1992 arrest under suspicion for the slayings of four women, exploited the Detroit-area media to the hilt. Rather than giving an interview to every media outlet that wanted one, Williams took requests. In a contest, the outcome of which he alone would decide, one local television station won an exclusive interview with the serial killer. In addition, one daily paper, the *Detroit News*, was chosen for the “privilege” of printing his 24-page open letter to the public that expounded on the theories and philosophy of Leslie Williams. Anyone who would question whether this was a privilege for the *Detroit News* should consider what it did to boost street sales over its competitor.

The relationship between the media and serial killers has become so intertwined that it has been described as “symbiotic” (Haggerty, 2009). The media seek the attention of their captivated audience by exploiting its interest in scintillating themes. For their part, the murderers look to the media to help them construct their serial killer identities. In fact, reading their own press clippings helps them to complete an identity transformation in the same way that reading the press does for athletes and entertainers.

Donald Harvey, who confessed to killing scores of patients while working as an orderly in Cincinnati-area hospitals, agreed to a taped, face-to-face interview with popular talk show host Oprah Winfrey as part of a show on nurses who kill. During the taped segment, Harvey visibly showed enjoyment in recounting the details of how he killed his victims. He described with glee how he had injected some with poisons and had suffocated others. Realizing that Harvey was having the time of his life talking about murdering patients, producers of the Oprah Winfrey show wisely decided that it would be insensitive—if not unethical—to air the program and canceled it. By doing so, the producers deprived Harvey of a chance for stardom on a national stage. The show’s producers correctly recognized the fine but critical line that divides informed analysis from unhealthy glorification.

KILLER COMMUNICATION

Some Americans disparagingly refer to serial killers as animals—of course, only in a figurative sense. Actually, what distinguishes humans from animals is the ability to communicate verbally and in writing, and some serial killers have, in fact, chosen to reach out through such means to contact the police, the press, or the public.

Letter carrier David Berkowitz, initially labeled “The .44 Caliber Killer” for his repeated gun assaults on young couples in parked cars in 1976 and 1977, did more than just tote the mail. During his killing spree, Berkowitz sent a series of letters to brash *New York Post* columnist Jimmy Breslin. Besides his lengthy and sometimes incoherent ramblings, Berkowitz offered the police a bit of assistance, with Breslin as the go-between, in the closing of one of his notes:

P.S. Please inform all the detectives working on the case that I wish them luck. Keep them digging, drive on. Think positive. Here are some clues to help you along. The Duke of Death, The Wicked King Wicker. The 22 Disciples of Hell. John Wheaties, rapist and suffocater of young girls.

At the same time, Berkowitz was displeased about his new-found public image. The killer wrote a letter of complaint to Captain Joe Borelli of the NYPD, hoping to set the record straight:

I am deeply hurt by the newspaper calling me a woman hater. I am not. But I am a monster. I am a little brat. I am the "Son of Sam."

Unlike Berkowitz, most serial killers elect strategically to remain silent regarding their identity and their activities. Some murderers-at-large, those who are social isolates in personality, resist any impulse to go public out of their own personal awkwardness and discomfort in interpersonal relations. Others recognize that killing "under the radar" is most advantageous for continuing their crime sprees without detection or apprehension—that is, if pleasure and fantasy fulfillment are what motivates them.

Of course, not all repeat killers are driven by sexual sadism or the need to dominate their victims. Certain motivations for murder necessitate that the killer expose and publicize his or her existence, if not identity.

One type of power fulfillment involves not so much dominating innocent victims but spreading fear throughout a community, gripping an entire city or region in an atmosphere of panic and hysteria. In a series of chilling unsolved homicides in Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the mid-1970s, for example, the unidentified killer began writing to the police and the media. His one-way communication intensified the level of fear and apprehension among residents of this previously relaxed Midwestern community.

Early on in his crime spree, the killer phoned a local newspaper reporter and directed him to locate a mechanical engineering textbook on the shelves of the Wichita Public Library. Inside the text, the reporter found a letter in which the writer claimed credit for the recent massacre of a local family and promised more of the same in the future. In his letter, the killer wrote, "The code words for me will be . . . Bind them, Torture them, Kill them." He signed the letter "BTK Strangler," for bind, torture, and kill.

The BTK moniker, originating with the killer himself, was commonly used by newspaper reporters in their articles about his string of seven murders. In January 1978, BTK sent a poem to a reporter at the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, in which he wrote about a victim he had slain a year earlier. In February of the same year, BTK wrote a letter to a Wichita television station complaining about the lack of publicity he had received for his murders. "How many do I have to kill," BTK asked, "before I get my name in the paper or some national attention?" (C. Scott, 1978). In addition, the killer compared his crimes with those of Jack the Ripper, Son of Sam, and the Hillside Strangler.

BTK's killing spree apparently ended in 1977. The murders seemed to have stopped, the leads in the case never panned out, and the media no longer heard from the killer. After more than 25 years, however, BTK resurfaced to terrorize the Wichita community again. In 2004, the *Wichita Eagle* marked the 30th anniversary of BTK by speculating what had become of his fate—the man had moved away, was imprisoned for some other crime, or had died, according to various theories. Feeling challenged and wanting everyone to know that none of those hypotheses was true, BTK reopened lines of one-way communication, insisting that

he had been around town all along. In a letter addressed to the *Eagle*, the retired serial killer included his usual contrived BTK return address and enclosed a photocopy of a missing driver's license belonging to a woman who had been strangled in 1986 and copies of three snapshots of her body lying in front of her television.

BTK was back—back not to resume his killing spree but only to toy with the police and the press for his enjoyment and fame. He even went so far as to send out a word puzzle, created from a computerized spreadsheet, which contained various hidden clues about his identity and whereabouts. It is arguable that he resurfaced in part because of feeling slighted and

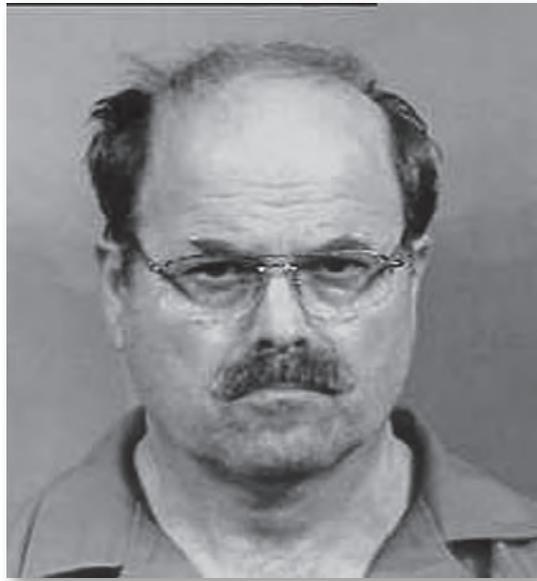


Photo 1.4a Convicted “BTK” killer Dennis Rader. (Sedgwick County, KS, Sherriff's Office)

upstaged by contemporary serial killers such as the DC Snipers, who were publicized all over the Internet and cable television. Of course, these communication outlets were not in existence during BTK's prime crime years.

Unfortunately for him, but fortunately for the residents of Wichita, the BTK Strangler's ego and narcissism were his downfall. The police were able to trace the IP (Internet Protocol) address of the computer he had used to create the puzzle—that being a desktop machine located at Christ Lutheran Church in Wichita. It didn't take the authorities long to identify the source: Dennis Rader, president of the Congregation Council.

Rader mistakenly believed that he and a police lieutenant of the Wichita Police Department shared a special bond. Rader must have been disappointed when he learned that police reassurances that a floppy disk could not be traced back to a specific computer were false (Hansen, 2006).

Even following his capture, Dennis Rader couldn't resist the urge to talk with the cops about his crimes. Having failed in his life's ambition to join the police force, he chatted with the detectives as if he was one of the guys. Rader described his arrest and admission of responsibility to Harvard University psychologist Robert Mendoza:

I saw this whole line of police cars. That's not good. And—they were right on me. Just that quick. I thought maybe it was a traffic stop or something. But as soon as one of 'em's behind me with the red lights and sirens, I knew that was it.

They pulled guns on me. Told me to lay down. And I sprawled out and they grabbed me real quick like in handcuffs and stuck me in a car. “Mr. Rader,

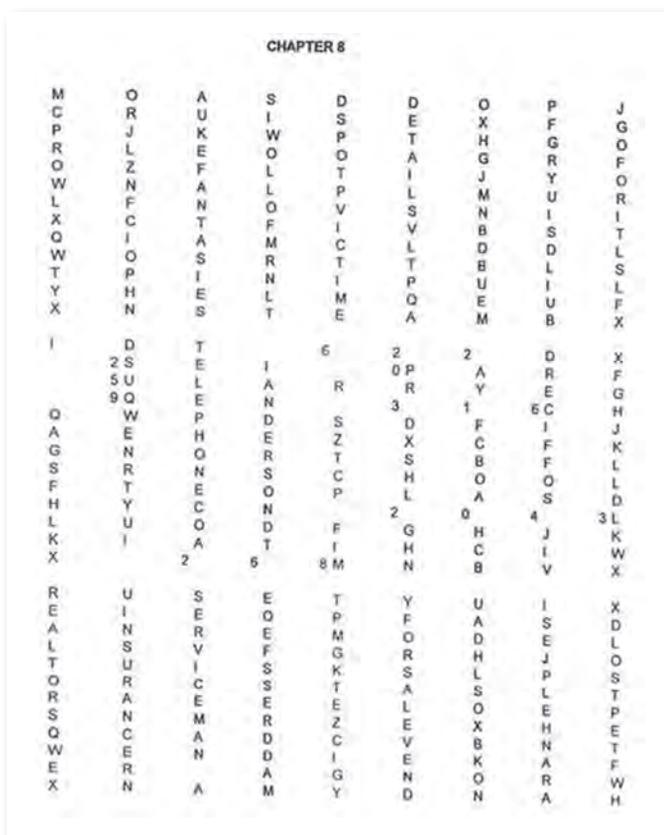


Photo 1.4b Rader taunted police by sending a word puzzle containing hidden clues to his identity. (Author)

do you know why you’re going downtown?” And I said, “Oh, I have suspicions, why?”

At first it was kind of—kind of a cat and mouse game. That they had a suspect. But it, but it, but it did kind of hurt, you know. Like you said, I had the power, you know, I was a law enforcement officer technically and here I am—these law enforcement officers were trying to do my duties. That kind of hurt a little bit.

I know a lot of the police terminology. I know how they do things. So it, yeah, it’s kinda a bonding type thing, you know.

I enjoyed it. And once the confession was out and I admitted who I was, then, then the bonding really started. You know, I just really opened up and you know we shared jokes and everything else. It’s just like we were buddies. (Secret Confessions, 2005)

For some serial murderers, boasting about their violent exploits is more accurately an act of taunting. Out of sheer arrogance, certain killers tease the

police or the public with a “you can't catch me” message. For them, winning the cat-and-mouse game with law enforcement is a powerful fringe benefit to their killing sprees—potentially as fulfilling as the homicides themselves.

California's Zodiac killer, whose first suspected murder—that of Cheri Jo Bates—dates back to 1966, appeared unconcerned about being captured as he sent letter after letter to the newspapers, claiming intellectual superiority over the police. Even his first communiqué, received by the Riverside Police Department in November 1966, long before he had established his elusiveness, tauntingly announced his intentions (Wark, n.d.). His use of capital letters reflected a certain bravado and confidence:

SHE WAS YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL BUT NOW SHE IS BATTERED AND DEAD. SHE IS NOT THE FIRST AND SHE WILL NOT BE THE LAST I LAY AWAKE NIGHTS THINKING ABOUT MY NEXT VICTIM. MAYBE SHE WILL BE THE BEAUTIFUL BLOND THAT BABYSITS NEAR THE LITTLE STORE AND WALKS DOWN THE DARK ALLEY EACH EVENING ABOUT SEVEN. OR MAYBE SHE WILL BE THE SHAPELY BRUNETT THAT SAID NO WHEN I ASKED HER FOR A DATE IN HIGH SCHOOL. BUT MAYBE IT WILL NOT BE EITHER. BUT I SHALL CUT OFF HER FEMALE PARTS AND DEPOSIT THEM FOR THE WHOLE CITY TO SEE. SO DON'T MAKE IT TO EASY FOR ME. KEEP YOUR SISTERS, DAUGHTERS, AND WIVES OFF THE STREETS AND ALLEYS. MISS BATES WAS STUPID. SHE WENT TO THE SLAUGHTER LIKE A LAMB. SHE DID NOT PUT UP A STRUGGLE. BUT I DID. IT WAS A BALL. I FIRST CUT THE MIDDLE WIRE FROM THE DISTRIBUTOR. THEN I WAITED FOR HER IN THE LIBRARY AND FOLLOWED HER OUT AFTER ABOUT TWO MINUTES. THE BATTERY MUST HAVE BEEN ABOUT DEAD BY THEN. I THEN OFFERED TO HELP. SHE WAS THEN VERY WILLING TO TALK TO ME. I TOLD HER THAT MY CAR WAS DOWN THE STREET AND THAT I WOULD GIVE HER A LIFT HOME. WHEN WE WERE AWAY FROM THE LIBRARY WALKING, I SAID IT WAS ABOUT TIME. SHE ASKED ME, “ABOUT TIME FOR WHAT?” I SAID IT WAS ABOUT TIME FOR HER TO DIE. I GRABBED HER AROUND THE NECK WITH MY HAND OVER HER MOUTH AND MY OTHER HAND WITH A SMALL KNIFE AT HER THROAT. SHE WENT VERY WILLINGLY. HER BREAST FELT WARM AND VERY FIRM UNDER MY HANDS, BUT ONLY ONE THING WAS ON MY MIND. MAKING HER PAY FOR ALL THE BRUSH OFFS THAT SHE HAD GIVEN ME DURING THE YEARS PRIOR. SHE DIED HARD. SHE SQUIRMED AND SHOOK AS I CHOCKED HER, AND HER LIPS TWICLED. SHE LET OUT A SCREAM ONCE AND I KICKED HER IN THE HEAD TO SHUT HER UP. I PLUNGED THE KNIFE INTO HER AND IT BROKE. I THEN FINISHED THE JOB BY CUTTING HER THROAT. I AM NOT SICK. I AM INSANE. BUT THAT WILL NOT STOP THE GAME. THIS LETTER SHOULD BE PUBLISHED FOR ALL TO READ IT. IT JUST MIGHT SAVE THAT GIRL IN THE ALLEY. BUT THAT'S UP TO YOU. IT WILL BE ON YOUR CONSCIENCE. NOT MINE. YES, I DID MAKE

THAT CALL TO YOU ALSO. IT WAS JUST A WARNING. BEWARE . . . I
AM STALKING YOUR GIRLS NOW.

CC. CHIEF OF POLICE
ENTERPRISE

Three years later, the killer's communications, both letters and phone calls, picked up in pace. He also adopted the sign of the Zodiac, as well as its name, as his calling card and monogram for murder. The moniker only intensified the frightfulness of the assailant whom police would never identify.

There are two general classes of multiple murderers based on their motivation—those who find killing a fulfilling end in itself, and those for whom murder is a necessary, but not necessarily desirable, means toward some larger objective, often political or profit based. The former is focused squarely on the act of killing, whereas the latter generally requires communication with third parties to get their compliance.

For the DC Snipers, who gunned down 10 innocent people near the nation's capital during a 3-week period in 2002, communication with the investigative task force, and ideally its leader, Chief Charles Moose of the Montgomery County Police, was necessary to gain their ultimate prize—a ransom of \$10 million.

Through notes left at the sites of shootings (one of which was scribbled on a tarot card for added effect), the killers gave instructions for the head of the task force to read at a press conference the phrase, “We have caught the sniper like a duck in a noose,” adapted from a children's folktale. The snipers, later identified as John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, were frustrated in their repeated attempts to reach the man in charge who could authorize the transfer of funds to a stolen debit account. For Muhammad and Malvo, communication was nothing more than negotiation for profit.

Unlike the DC Snipers, Theodore Kaczynski, the central figure in the 2011 GSA auction mentioned earlier, was a prolific communicator and relentless negotiator. Given the moniker “The Unabomber” created by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for his series of bombings directed at university-based scientists and airline executives, Kaczynski was focused on advancing his cause, rather than seeking profit, power, or revenge. He wished to send a clear message of impending doom to alert the nation to what he saw as the evils of technology, and he used murder and the threat of further bombings in order to get everyone's attention.

Despite his distorted view, Kaczynski was a brilliant individual, a Harvard-trained PhD in mathematics who landed a coveted teaching position at the University of California. But he also struggled with mental illness throughout his life. As he withdrew deeper and deeper into minimalist ideology and schizophrenia, Kaczynski abandoned his teaching post and moved to a remote spot in Lincoln, Montana, to take up a simple, reclusive existence.

From his tiny, secluded cabin, lacking in the basic comforts of electricity or running water, Kaczynski toiled away making bombs and sending occasional letters to the *New York Times* outlining his outlook and philosophy, excerpts of which were published by the *Times* in the hope that someone would recognize the ideas and phrasing.

More importantly, Kaczynski spent long hours polishing his 35,000-word treatise, "Industrial Society and Its Future," in which he warned of the dangers of human enslavement to technology:

The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race. They have greatly increased the life-expectancy of those of us who live in "advanced" countries, but they have destabilized society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world. The continued development of technology will worsen the situation. It will certainly subject human beings to greater indignities and inflict greater damage on the natural world, it will probably lead to greater social disruption and psychological suffering, and it may lead to increased physical suffering even in "advanced" countries.

Kaczynski sent copies of his work to both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, along with an ultimatum: Either his document is published unedited and in its entirety or more people will die. With advice from the FBI, the *Post* capitulated to the killer's coercive tactics and published the manifesto as an eight-page supplement to its September 19, 1995 edition.

KILLER GROUPIES

Because of their celebrity status, infamous multiple murderers attract a surprising number of extreme sympathizers, so-called "killer groupies." Several convicted serial killers, such as Hillside Stranglers Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, were pursued and married while serving life sentences for their brutal and sadistic murders of young women on the West Coast. Other multiple murderers have married from death row, giving the traditional vow "til death do us part" an ironic twist. The pattern of behavior is sufficiently common to have been assigned a clinical label: *hybristophilia*, a paraphilia in which someone is sexually aroused or attracted to a person who has committed particularly vicious or gruesome crimes. In its more common form, hybristophiles merely seek to be close to some "bad boy." Occasionally, however, hybristophilia can lead to behaviors far more dangerous than mere adoration and devotion, including participating in murder for the sake of their loved one.

So why would someone in her right mind correspond with, visit, or even fall in love with a man who has raped, tortured, and mutilated innocent victims? Why would hundreds of women attempt to visit Los Angeles Night Stalker Richard Ramirez, who was convicted of stealthily entering more than a dozen homes in the dark of night and killing the occupants? And why would so many women send proposals of marriage to suspected repeat killer Joran Van Der Sloot just days after his incarceration in the country of Peru? Why would a woman like Veronica Crompton be so attracted to Sunset Strip killer Douglas Clark that she would break off her relationship with Hillside Strangler Kenneth Bianchi, but and only



Photo 1.5 The celebrity of killers often attracts adoring fans and groupies, even marriage proposals. A spokesman for San Quentin Prison holds photo of “Night Stalker” Richard Ramirez and his new bride Doreen Liroy, taken during their wedding ceremony inside the prison. (Associated Press/Lacy Atkins)

tally murdered five college students in Gainesville, Florida. One adoring fan wrote to the killer, “I fell in love the first time I saw you. I have even seen you in my dreams. . . . You’re a very handsome man” (Blinchow, 1999, p. 42). A 29-year-old woman sent Rolling bikini-clad photos of herself and wrote, “I love you with all my heart. . . . I don’t care what you’ve done in the past. . . . I wish I could hold you and comfort you.” She addressed her letter, “To my sweet prince” (Blinchow, 1999, p. 42). Many other women sent Rolling red roses, locks of their hair, and love poetry. Some sprinkled their letters with perfume and begged the killer to allow them to visit. Of course, Rolling’s 2006 execution put an end to the romantic fantasies of many adoring fans.

Underlying all these motivations, however, are the glamour and celebrity status that killer groupies find exciting. One teenager from Milwaukee appeared years ago on a national TV talk show to admit that she would give anything to get an autograph from serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer; it is likely that she also collected the

after she had committed a copycat crime in hopes of exonerating her incarcerated boyfriend?

Actually, there are several reasons why serial killers are pursued by adoring women. Some groupies may be attracted to their idol’s controlling, manipulative personalities. A Freudian might attempt to trace this attraction to a woman’s need to resurrect her relationship with a cruel, domineering father figure. At least a few killer groupies strive to prove that their lover is a victim of injustice. These women’s fight for right gives their otherwise unfulfilling lives a strong sense of purpose. Others wish to break through the killer’s vicious façade with thoughts such as, “The whole world sees Johnny as a monster. Only I see the kindness in him; he shares that only with me. . . . I feel so special.” Still other devotees simply are comfortable in always knowing where their man is at 2 a.m.—even if it’s on death row: “He may be behind bars, but at least he’s not out in the bars with some other woman.”

Dozens of women wrote love letters to Danny Rolling, the serial killer who in 1990 brutally

autographs of rock stars or rap artists. The young girl never got her wish fulfilled before Dahmer was murdered by a fellow inmate.

In general, serial killers are more accessible than other celebrities. If a fan wants to get close to rock idol Justin Timberlake or rapper Eminem, she generally doesn't have a chance. But with someone like Night Stalker Richard Ramirez, all she would have to do is write a few gushy love letters and she might even get to meet him and perhaps even marry him. After watching TV coverage of Ramirez's 1985 arrest, Doreen Loiy, a freelance magazine writer, carried on a decade-long courtship with the convicted serial killer. Following her 1996 marriage to the condemned inmate, Doreen Ramirez told CNN, "He's kind, he's funny, he's charming . . . I think he's really a great person. He's my best friend; he's my buddy." Because her husband was on death row, Doreen was not permitted conjugal visitation at any time. Despite the physical limitations, the marriage survived until 2013 when Richard Ramirez suffered a fatal heart attack.

THE IMPACT OF CELEBRATING MURDERERS

Is the glorification of multiple murder—trading cards, art galleries, songfests, and killer groupies—nothing more than harmless media hype? Certainly the families of murder victims don't think so. From their point of view, the sanitized, romanticized, and glamorized image of a killer who is, in actuality, little more than an unrepentant, vicious, sadistic destroyer of human life only adds insult to injury.

The harm extends well beyond the victims and their loved ones. Worshipping a killer whose actions are so hideous that he ought to be soundly condemned debases our entire society. Making monsters into celebrities only teaches our youngsters—especially alienated and marginalized teenagers—a lesson about how to get attention. "Want to be noticed? Want to feel important? Simple. Shoot lots of your classmates. Then, you'll be on the cover of *People* magazine, you'll be interviewed on CNN, and you'll make headlines all over the nation, if not the world!" Columbine High shooters Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine under the headline "The Monsters Next Door." Adult readers may indeed have viewed them as monsters, but how many young teens instead saw them more as celebrities and heroes? From the perspective of a few alienated youngsters, not only did Klebold and Harris get even with the bullies and the jocks, but they are famous for it!

By featuring the vicious acts of villains, therefore, we may be inadvertently providing young people with a dangerous model for gaining national prominence. We may also be giving to the worst among us exactly what they hope to achieve—celebrity status.

SENSITIZE, NOT SANITIZE

Author Lonnie Kidd might have recklessly, albeit unwittingly, put a stamp of approval on murder with his failed attempt at satire. His 1992 book *Becoming*

a Successful Mass Murderer or Serial Killer: The Complete Handbook might easily be misunderstood as a murder how-to book by people who are looking for an excuse to kill. In a section titled “To Get Rid of Your Children, Your Spouse’s Children, Others’ Children,” for example, Kidd (1992) suggests,

You will have no problem finding lots of brat children to kill. They are also easily convinced to go off alone with you. You could easily beat them to death. Kick and stomp their little faces and heads into the ground! Hear them promise to be good little boys and girls; but, you know better! They will continue to be little brats if you do not do away with them. (p. 100)

In a disclaimer, Kidd (1992) argues that his book is “a way of calling attention to very serious phenomenon [sic] in a satirical manner” (p. 1). Notwithstanding the legitimacy of his avowed objective, not all of Kidd’s readers would possess the sophistication needed to get the joke. Those who are already predisposed to mayhem and murder might instead find plenty of encouragement in the pages of Kidd’s troubling manual.

In the pages to follow, we certainly do not strive to enhance multiple murder celebrity. Rather, we hope to shed light—but not a spotlight—on the motivation and character of these vicious killers. We appreciate the important distinction between analyzing the gory details of a crime and glorifying the image of the criminal. At times, we describe the sickening circumstances of a multiple murder, but always with a purpose—to remind us that these killers are monsters, undeserving of celebration and fanfare.

At the same time, we must be nothing less than candid about what atrocities modern-day serial and mass killers have committed. Leaving out the gruesome details might reduce the reader’s discomfort, but it would inadvertently minimize the horror of the murders and maximize sympathy for the perpetrators.