

Bible Belt Strangler Profile

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Sex: Male

Rationale: The killer only preys on females, and serial killers almost always target the opposite sex or those they feel sexual attraction to unless it is a comfort killer. The killer was able to overpower the victims, attacking up close with bare hands. Along with this, the distance between the roads and location of the discovered bodies is significant (dozens of yards away and up or down gradients to the dump sites without drag marks or use of any mechanical advantage), which shows that the killer had to have enough strength to carry the bodies over broken ground, indicating a larger and stronger male's ability to overpower a smaller and weaker female. There has been no recorded instance of a female serial killer who used physical strength or up-close methods of killing. Females are almost always comfort killers that use poison, rarely using weapons (guns, knives, axes, etc.), which give a female power over a male, to kill. Females almost always kill people they know; in this situation, the suspect is killing unknown people. Also, assuming the killer is a commercial truck driver; nearly all in this time period were male.

Age: DOB no later than 1962 but no earlier than 1936

Rationale: Nearly all serial killers begin their murders in their late teens or early to middle 20's, the age in which most mental disorders often manifest themselves and are diagnosable (not that some do not begin to display certain signs of disorders at younger ages). The killer would need to be relatively full grown in order to accomplish the killings since they were committed with bare hands. A teenage boy still not fully physically mature would most likely not feel comfortable using only his hands against a fully physically developed female. The killer must also be of or above the legal age required to possess a commercial driver's license in order to carry out the killings at such a long distance (working on the assumption that the suspect was a truck driver).

The upper end of the age range would be 48 at the time of the last known victim. There comes a time when age/health/strength will become a limiting factor in killing with your bare hands and moving adult bodies over a distance. We feel that around 50 would be the time period that would begin to limit his physical ability to no longer conduct the crimes in the same way.

Height: 5'9"-6'2"

Rationale: The killer must be average height or taller in order to overpower the victims (most of which fall into the average height ratio for women) efficiently. It would not be practical for the killer to attack someone bigger and taller due to the fact that bare hands were used to kill. If the killer had to carry victims to the dump site, the suspect would need to be able to hoist them and carry them without leaving evidence of the body's movement (drag or carry marks). A limit on height/size is necessary because if a trucker was inordinately large, the suspect may frighten a potential victim or draw unwanted attention at the truck stops, restaurants, and rest areas that truckers frequent.

Weight: 180-270 lbs.

Rationale: The killer must be average to above-average weight in order to have the confidence that needed to overpower the victims and move the bodies with only brute strength. It is likely the killer has a muscular build because of the method of killing and disposing of the bodies. Since the suspect is considered to be a truck driver, which is often sedentary, extra weight (especially in an older suspect) would be suspected. Weight also factors into the successful methods of killing (strangulation, suffocation, and blunt force trauma). We can also conclude that since the suspect is most likely from or living in the South for a long period of time, and the South is the consistently rated as the most overweight section of the contiguous U.S., that there is a higher chance that extra body weight is carried.

Where does he live/work: On or around Interstate 40/Knoxville, TN region

Rationale: A job as a truck driver most assuredly requires the suspect to frequently travel Interstate 40. All of the murders trend along the I-40 corridor or along roads that branch off from the interstate such as I-75 and I-81. We feel that many of the possible Jane Does outside of the main six are from areas that do not fit this pattern and can thus be excluded. The only victim that is not found along an interstate is the Wetzel County, West Virginia, victim who was only found along a state highway. We do recognize the difference in this one part of the MO, but we also feel that this was most likely the first known victim by looking at police data from the crime and estimations about time of death. It would not be that unusual to find a small change in MO after the first victim, which does not indicate a change in signature. That road still connects two major cities in West Virginia, and the victim was seen possibly hitchhiking from one of those.

Knoxville appears to be at the geographical center of the murders and also has I-40 going through it as well. We feel that anywhere along the I-40 corridor running from Knoxville to Nashville is a possibility; there are more bodies found along interstates that connect through Knoxville (Campbell, Knox, and Greene County victims). We feel that the killer either lives in a close proximity to Knoxville or works out of there as part of a job. Nashville is another possibility; however, unless there are unknown victims that would shift the geographical center of the killings, we feel that Nashville only appears to be a possibility because of its proximity to I-40 and size.

Motive to kill: Mission (but cannot rule out a lust (sexual) component)

Rationale: There is evidence that the killer could be motivated by a mission, thrill, or power/control. We feel that a Mission Oriented motive is the most likely motive. We have excluded lust as a singular motive since murders of this motivation usually involve overkill and a sexual nature to the crime including rape, object penetration, and necrophilia. We cannot totally exclude lust as a possible motive as the victims were found nude or partially clothed, and most of the victims (who all have similar physical features) were most likely in the sex industry of prostitution.

We also do not feel that it is a thrill killer because they often perform aberrant sexual actions upon the victim, use a weapon to torture the victim, rape the victim, and usually perform object penetration.

We also do not feel that it is a power/control killer because there is almost always evidence of victim torture before death, binding of the victim including ligatures, aberrant sexual activity, rape, object penetration, and necrophilia.

We feel that this killer is most likely a Mission Oriented unsub due to the fact the killer's motive matches best with the characteristics of a mission killer. After using a table produced by law enforcement to narrow the motives of serial killers by using characteristics of their crimes, Mission Oriented scored a 13 out of a possible 15 (while Thrill scored 11 and Power/control scored 10 of 15). There were no signs of rape, necrophilia, torture, binding of hands / feet, or torture weapons, ruling out almost all other categories besides mission.

Mission Oriented killers often see their victims as a means to accomplish an end. Most of the time these killers attack elements of society that they see as undesirable or harmful to society, thus convincing themselves they are "helping save society by cleansing it of undesirables". These often lead them to killing prostitutes, homosexuals, homeless, etc. The victims in this case were most likely prostitutes and the suspect may feel a duty to "clean the world of 'trash'". There are only three areas that the mission hypothesis does not totally correlate with the expected results: movement of body after death, strangling as a cause of death, and rape of the victim

We feel the body movement can be explained by several factors. First, many mission oriented killers are often mentally troubled (suffering from schizophrenia or paranoid schizophrenia). Because of this, they do not move bodies as they actually believe they are doing good instead of breaking a law. Obviously our killer knows laws are being broken, taking extensive precautions to cover any trace of identity. The suspect appears to not only be mentally sane, but also at least average to above average intelligence.

Often times mission killers do not use strangulation as the cause of death. Our killer used strangulation on some victims but also used suffocation and blunt force trauma to the head as causes of death. We feel that this is not a serious problem with our killer.

With many mission killers there is often sexual assault or rape of the victim. This is not present in our killer, but the suspect does leave victims nude or partially clothed. We feel that this mindset of seeing the prostitutes as dirty and evil may prevent sexual contact with his victims, although some pleasure is extracted from undressing the bodies and leaving them exposed.

Occupation: Truck Driver

Rationale: The killer must travel frequently; as all of the bodies, except one, were found next to interstates (with the one being beside a major highway between moderately large cities within a state). Commercial truck drivers have a larger radius for travel than most other jobs. The commercial freightliner would provide more concealment and space to hide/transport bodies over multiple days (as evidence suggest a couple of the bodies were not dumped until several days after their death) giving the suspect frequent access and opportunity. A truck stopped beside the interstate is totally normal and would not call as much attention as a car stopped beside the interstate would.

The Motor Carrier Regulatory Reform and Modernization Act, more commonly known as the Motor Carrier Act of 1980, was a law that deregulated the trucking industry. Since the law was passed, the number of new firms increased dramatically. By 1990, the number of licensed carriers exceeded 40,000, more than twice that of 1980. Combined with the Staggers Act (1980), intermodal freight transport surged, expanding 70 percent between 1981 and 1986. This caused tens of thousands of more jobs to open up in the trucking industry, which possibly could have caused the unsub to be employed in one of these new jobs, thus providing the opportunity to kill as never experienced before. Possibly this new exposure to the prostitution trade as a truck driver could have been the trigger that fueled the mission oriented motive for killing.

We feel the truck driver hypothesis is more likely than others who travel for their jobs like salesmen, nurses, etc. The reason is that suspects kill and dump where they feel comfortable. Salesman may travel the interstates, but most of their interaction with people is away from the interstates in town and business areas. If they desired to kill prostitutes, they would acquire them in the cities. If the killer were a traveling member of the health care community, he/she would most likely acquire victims in and around health care facilities. Many serial killers have killed patients and those in facilities for the aged, and if this killer were a member of the health care community, he/she would most likely follow that pattern.

Race: White

Rationale: All of the victims are Caucasian; it is most common for serial killers to kill victims of the same race (over 90% do). Most killers are comfortable killing victims of the same race as they often are found in areas that are racially homogenous to themselves and do not stand out when acquiring victims. The percentage of African American truck drivers in the 1980's was presumably lower than the average percentage for African Americans in other jobs as trucking did require some form of certification to qualify for the job. It would also be much less suspicious in the south, which still experienced overt

racism, for a white to acquire white victims. It would therefore be much less suspicious if the perpetrator were white and the same race as his victim.

Personal relationships: Yes, possible long-term relationships

Rationale: The killer shows all of the signs of being an organized killer by acquiring, killing, and dumping bodies in separate states. He also lures victims instead of just killing them where they are found. Therefore, it is most likely that the suspect is at least average to slightly above average in his intelligence and understands basic police techniques, which has aided his ability to remain undetected. His above average IQ helps to understand that these desires are not normal and must be hidden, using what Harvey Cleckly referred to as "the Mask of Sanity". He makes those around him feel that he is normal and makes others feel at ease in his presence even though underneath he has a brutal desire to kill. He gets prostitutes and hitch hikers to go with him (although they are more willing to do so) even members of those communities will not go with a person that appears violent, strange, or just "off". This ability will likely lead to heightened communication skills which may lead him to being perceived as having an awkward sense of innocence, but an approachable demeanor. Organized killers are often capable of serious or long

term relationships (Ted Bundy was engaged, Dennis Rader was married, etc.). However, if he is choosing a job such as truck driver, it shows that he does not do well with conforming to societal expectations of having an ever present boss with lots of conformity and rules. This killer will most likely have been involved with serious relationships including girlfriends (even long term) and possibly even a wife. He will also probably have close friends that after being told, may have seen some warning signs (like sudden rage or rants against his victim type) but will most likely be surprised that he was responsible for so many violent and brutal acts.

Relative Location of Residence: Around Knoxville or Nashville

Rationale: Knoxville may be considered the center of the crimes if the Wetzel County victim is included. If the Wetzel County is not included, Nashville is the geographic center. It is likely the suspect resides in one of these cities for access to the multiple dumping sites and the access to interstates and roads. We do feel that the Wetzel County, West Virginia, victim may be exhibiting unusual signs as it was mostly likely the first victim.

What Kind of Car: 18 wheeled semi or commercial cargo transport

Rationale: The killer must possess a large enough vehicle to store the victims (as several were held for a couple of days after death before they were dumped). The victims were also most likely killed inside of the semi (which would fit travel habits and assumed occupation) as well. Serial killers typically kill where they feel comfortable, and a truck driver would feel more comfortable on the interstate. Semi-trucks provide privacy by shielding the passenger side from road view when pulled off the side of the road. The

semi also does not draw as much attention as any other vehicle when pulled off the side of the interstate. Most of the victims were seen near truck stops near the interstate and a semi-truck is the least noticeable of all vehicles in those locations.

Religion / Religious Motivation / Affiliation: Possibly Christian

Rationale: The killer is likely to live in or around the "Bible Belt", in which the percentage of evangelical Christian adults is over 50% in most parts. Those numbers of practicing evangelicals were also higher in the 1980's than present. Nashville is also known as "The Buckle" of the Bible Belt. If the killer resides in this state, he is likely exposed to large amounts of Christianity from his family and society even if he or his family is not devout. It would not be abnormal to find, even in homes where the members were not extremely devout, a Bible on the table, Bible verses used as wall hangings or decorations, the use of Christian teachings for significant rituals like marriage and funeral services, and trips to church, especially on Easter or Christmas. Most Christians also believe that according to Biblical teachings, premarital sex and sexual relationships outside of the husband-wife arrangement are sinful. This may feed into the negative views on prostitutes and bolster the theory of a mission oriented killer.

Medical History / Physical Wounds: Defensive wounds from victims

Rationale: The killer may have possible scars or marks on his body from the victims trying to defend themselves (known as defensive wounds). Since the suspect kills victims with bare hands and close contact it would be likely they scratched, clawed, slapped, and bit in an attempt to save their lives. This would not require medical attention and is often easily explained away as side effects of the job as a trucker loading and securing cargo. The suspect may have some medical history of injury from heavy lifting, insomnia or sleep issues and elevated blood pressure (from job pressures, use of energy drinks, and use of insomnia pills such as “no Doze” or “White Crosses”). He may also have a later history of high cholesterol from the frequent consumption of fast food or greasy diner food and sedentary job. Back problems, or blood clots may arise from elongated periods of rest and the suspect may be slightly overweight, all a byproduct of his job.

Family History: Unstable Home, Absent Father, Domineering Mother

Rationale: It is likely that the killer grew up in an unstable home. The family members may have abused drugs or alcohol which led to an increasingly unstable home which included fights between adults, angry outburst, etc. There could also be a heightened chance that the suspect grew up with a mother of undesirable characteristics as females are targeted. Having a frequently absent or not intimately involved father also most likely contributed to the suspect’s attacks.

Right or Left Handed: Right handed

Rationale: The majority of the United States is right-handed so it’s safe to assume the suspect is as well. There is no evidence that suggests left-handedness, and the percentage of left-handed people in

America is only twelve percent. This rationale may have more support with access to ME reports on victims as they were either strangled, suffocated, or had blunt force trauma as cause of death. A right handed unsub would generally leave more physical damage to the left side of the body.

IQ: 100 +

Rationale: The killer is organized and nearly all organized serial killers have historically had IQ’s in the average to slightly above average range. It is suspected that the crimes were committed in a different place than the bodies were dumped. When bodies are taken from the original crime scene and disposed of in other places, this almost always indicates an organized killer. Considering that none of the original crime scenes (including place of abduction or death) are known, it is almost assuredly an organized offender giving credence to the rationale of an average to above average IQ.

Sexuality: Heterosexual

Rationale: Serial killers tend to target the gender they are attracted to, and this suspect only targets females. Also over 98% of the population surveyed in the 1980’s was listed as heterosexual. It is true that we feel the perpetrator seems to be mission oriented due to the fact he/she is killing possible prostitutes because they are often deemed “dirty” or undesirable. This may not assure that he is heterosexual by himself, but he at least feels comfortable in the

situation hiring a female for sexual activity, which we feel almost assuredly makes the suspect heterosexual.

Criminal History: Possible Solicitation

Rationale: Victims are suspected prostitutes/transients and estranged from their families. Due to the fact victims go unreported for very long periods of time (as long as thirty-five years), and were picked up on the side of the road, it can be inferred that the victims are estranged from their families. Prostitutes are also very popular with truck drivers, so the killer may have been cited before for similar occurrences. He made sure to pick victims that probably would not be missed. There also may be some history of various common variety criminal activity such as public intoxication, angry outburst, etc. Considering the suspect is a truck driver, it would not be unlikely that traffic citations associated with his job were acquired.

Build: Thick, Stocky

Rationale: The perpetrator is able to strangle, suffocate, and bludgeon the victims with physical superiority. There is no evidence of any physical weapons; meaning the killer is confident enough to attack the victim without a weapon. He is also physically able to carry bodies to the side of the interstate. Along with the fact the assumed lends itself to short period of physically demanding labor, all of these characteristics combine to give an average to above average (athletic, stocky, slightly overweight) build.

Mental Health: No History

Rationale: Similar to the majority of organized serial killers, the perpetrator operates in a manner that does not draw suspicion. The killer is able to keep “the mask of sanity” despite being mentally disturbed, so there is most likely no reported history of mental health issues with the killer, however, there may be a history of depression, alcoholism, etc. in the family as is found with most serial killers.