

## **DNA Links '70s Rapes to Serial Slaying Cases Unknown Southern California killer was 'East Area Rapist'**

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By Erin Hallissy and Charlie Goodyear,

The East Area Rapist forged a trail of terror from Sacramento to San Ramon in the late 1970s, randomly breaking into women's homes and raping them while their husbands were kept silent.

Just as suddenly as he began his spree of 40 rapes, the attacker disappeared at the end of the decade without ever being identified.

Now, through recently analyzed DNA evidence, the Contra Costa County crime lab has linked the notorious East Area Rapist with an elusive serial killer who murdered 10 people in Southern California coastal communities between 1979 and 1986.

The rapist-killer's identity is still unknown, but police say it is clear that the same man, described in police records as methodical, sexually deviant and with above-average intelligence, committed all the crimes. It is a finding that has relieved investigators, who thought they'd never solve the cases, and also has worried them because the man remains unidentified.

"This guy is about as bad as you can get," said Frank Fitzpatrick, director of the Orange County crime lab, which analyzed the genetic profile on the serial killings. "The speculation is that he was either arrested (for a different crime) or died or moved out of state."

Retired Sacramento County sheriff's detective Richard Shelby, who investigated the East Area Rapist cases, said yesterday he thought the suspect was still alive and might have a family.

"He called one of the victims," Shelby said. "It was 1990 or 1991. She talked to him for a minute. She could hear kids in the background and a woman."

Shelby believes the East Area Rapist first struck in 1974 with a burglary in which he violently beat a dog to death. Two years later, a couple of sexual assaults in the Sacramento area convinced police a serial rapist was at work.

"In all the cases, he tied them so tight their hands would turn black," Shelby said. "He always used a new pair of shoelaces to bind them." In most cases, he was armed and wore a mask -- a welder's mask in one case.

### **RAPIST MOVES TO CONTRA COSTA**

By 1978, the rapist started hitting Contra Costa County, attacking women in Concord, Danville and San Ramon.

"He would go into nice homes, usually occupied by a man and a woman," said Karen Sheldon, director of the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department crime lab. "He would tie up the male. He then put dishes or something on his back so there would be noise if the guy moved while the suspect was committing the rape. I think he liked to have a man present. He enjoyed the risk."

The rapist frequently threatened to kill both the man and woman if the dishes fell off and broke.

A task force was formed to try to solve the crimes, said District Attorney Gary Yancey, but leads fizzled out, and, although some suspects were investigated, no one was charged.

For years, women throughout the Bay Area were fearful of his return, keeping their windows locked and worrying about break-ins, but the criminal never struck again.

Last year, the crime lab, which was reviewing old cases, prepared a genetic profile of the rapist. Investigators remembered an old rumor that the suspect might have moved to Southern California, so on little more than a hunch they began contacting police in Santa Barbara and Irvine and ended up at Orange County's crime lab.

In January, the DNA profile of the East Area Rapist was matched to the unidentified killer.

## **MURDERS SHARED CHARACTERISTICS**

The murders in Laguna Niguel, Ventura, Goleta and Irvine shared characteristics. Police believe the assailant picked his targets carefully and,

after breaking in, committed a "blitz" attack. Police have definitively linked six murders to the same suspect as the East Area Rapist, but they believe he may have killed four others in similar attacks.

In several cases, the murderer broke in at night while a couple were sleeping and tied them up before bludgeoning them to death. In at least one case, he raped the woman while the husband lay helplessly bound nearby.

The behavioral profile that police had already assigned to the Orange County slayings suggested the killer chose victims in upper-middle-class to affluent communities, that he was a skilled burglar and that his previous sexual relationships involved bondage and sadism.

Orange County officials are still seeking a suspect who matches the killer's genetic profile. Fitzpatrick said the DNA work had been sent to the state Department of Justice's DNA lab in Berkeley, where a genetic databank of known felons is being compiled. No match has been made yet, but Fitzpatrick is hopeful that as more criminals are entered into the system, a suspect will be identified.

If a match is made, the man could not be charged with the Northern California rapes because the statute of limitations has expired. But Sheldon said it was worth it to go through old cases to try to identify the perpetrator.

"It was good detective work," Sheldon said. "It's not common. It was a challenge just getting people interested in a case that had passed a statute of limitations."

And Yancey, who was on the task force 20 years ago as a deputy prosecutor, said knowing that a suspect had been identified could bring closure to the victims.

"I think it's very important for the peace of mind for those individuals," Yancey said.

Last week, Attorney General Bill Lockyer encouraged police and prosecutors throughout California to review unsolved sexual assault cases without suspects and unsolved rape-murders to determine whether DNA testing of biological evidence could allow them to target a suspect.

Even if the statute of limitations in old cases has expired, preventing the suspect from being prosecuted, there's still a benefit to doing the DNA work, said Contra Costa Deputy District Attorney Paul Sequeira, who heads the sexual assaults division.

"I like the idea of knowing who the guy is," Sequeira said. "I think it's better that (the victims) know who he is. It's scary to know there's this Mr. X out there. At least if they knew who it was, they could keep tabs on him."

### What Are The Odds?

Chances that two randomly selected people would match DNA found at crime scene:

Number of DNA matches:	Odds
3	1 in 500
6	1 in 200,000
9	1 in 300 million
13(x)	1 in 100 trillion

(x) Used by FBI's national database