

## **The Path of the Original Night Stalker**

By Colleen Cason

*Ventura County Star*, November 28, 2002

Cases linked to DNA evidence:

**SACRAMENTO, CONTRA COSTA COUNTIES: 1976-1979**

Known as the East Area Rapist.

Victims: At least 36 female victims living in middle- and upper-middle-class neighborhoods. At first preyed on women; then targeted male-female couples.

Manner of entry: Usually pried sliding-glass doors with a screwdriver.

Bound?: Always with pre-cut lengths of rope or shoelaces. Had the woman tie up the man and he tied up the woman. Usually took jewelry and driver's licenses.

None of the items were recovered. Detectives believe he kept them as souvenirs.

The rapist's quirks: After the man was tied up, he put dishes or perfume bottles on him, threatening to kill everyone in the house if they rattled. Prowled in neighborhoods before he committed the rape. Ate food out of the victims' refrigerator.

**VENTURA: MARCH 13, 1980**

Victims: Lyman Smith, 43, an attorney; Charlene Smith, 33, sold gold jewelry and did interior designs.

Found: By Lyman Smith's 12-year-old son, Gary, in the master bedroom of the single-story house on High Point Drive, overlooking the ocean.

Cause of death: Both were bludgeoned.

Murder weapon: Fireplace log found on the bed.

Manner of entry: No sign of forced entry.

Bound?: Yes, with pre-cut lengths of drapery cord, left on the bodies.

Sexual assault: Charlene was raped. Evidence collected at the scene stored and later analyzed for DNA.

Of note: House was ransacked; only Charlene Smith's personal jewelry was missing.

The killer's quirks: Fibers of an unknown origin found on Lyman's ankle. A length of cord was left on the bed.

NIGUEL SHORES: AUG. 19, 1980

Victims: Keith Harrington, 24, a medical student at UC Irvine; Patrice Harrington, 28, a nurse. The Harringtons were newlyweds.

Found: By Keith's father, in their bedroom in a single-story house in a gated community on Cockleshell Drive, overlooking the ocean.

Cause of death: Both were bludgeoned.

Murder weapon: Blunt instrument, not found at scene. Never recovered.

Bound?: Tied with cord. Suspect took knotted rope but left lengths of cord on the blanket.

Manner of entry: No sign of forced entry.

Sexual assault: Patrice was raped. Evidence collected at scene stored and later analyzed for DNA.

Of note: Nothing was stolen; the house did not appear to be ransacked.  
The killer's quirks: A single burned wooden match found inside the home.

IRVINE: FEB. 5, 1981

Victim: Manuela Witthuhn, 28, a loan officer. Alone in the house; her husband, David, was hospitalized with a viral infection.

Found: By her parents, in the bedroom of the single-story house on Columbus, a cul-de-sac, with parks on each end.

Manner of entry: Unknown, but a rear sliding-glass door had pry marks. A screwdriver was found nearby. The sliding-glass door was open when the body was discovered.

Cause of death: Bludgeoned with unknown object not found at crime scene. A nine-pound lamp and crystal carving were missing, as were her answering machine and jewelry.

Bound?: Wrists were bruised as if she had been tied but ligatures gone.  
Sexual assault: Manuela was raped. Evidence collected at scene later DNA was analyzed.

The killer's quirks: Wooden matches were found in the house, some burned almost to the end, some lighted and immediately blown out. A ball of fibers was found on her spine.

IRVINE: MAY 5, 1986

Victim: Janelle Cruz, 18, a restaurant cashier.

Found: By a real estate agent, the house was on the market with a "for sale" sign in the yard. She was in a bedroom of the single-story house, on Encina, 1.5 miles from last Irvine crime scene. The house backed up to a community playground.

Manner of entry: Unknown. A male companion who left the house shortly before the slaying said he heard a garage door shut. Cruz told him it was the washing machine.

Cause of death: Bludgeoned, probably with pipe wrench discovered missing after the crime.

Bound?: Her wrists showed abrasions as if they had been restrained by the suspect's hands or perhaps a bath towel.

Raped: Evidence gathered at the scene, later analyzed for DNA.

The killer's quirks: Cruz was struck in the face, instead of on the skull as were the other victims. Cruz bore a resemblance to Charlene Smith.

Detective Larry Pool believes the following cases are linked to the Original Night Stalker by the method of operation:

GOLETA: OCT. 1, 1979

Victims: Jennifer Horinek, 33; Abraham Himmel, 33, both computer programmers.

Found: Alive by neighbors, around their single-story home on Queen Anne Lane, across the street from San Jose Creek.

Manner of entry: Kitchen door pried open.

Weapon: Serrated knife.

Bound?: Yes. Pre-cut cord and nylon twine.

Sexual assault: No. Horinek believes the suspect may have been stimulating himself.

Of note: Their attacker unplugged a TV but did not steal it. He fled the scene on a stolen bicycle.

GOLETA: DEC. 30, 1979

Victims: Robert Offerman, 44, an orthopedic surgeon; Alexandria Manning, 35, a clinical psychologist.

Found: By a friend, dead in the bedroom of a townhouse on Avenida Pequena, adjacent to San Jose Creek.

Manner of entry: Pried sliding-glass door.

Weapon: Gun.

Bound?: Both with white, braided twine.

Sexual assault: No.

Of note: Shoe prints linked this slaying to the attack on Horinek and Himmel. Killer's quirks: Brought a large dog to the crime scene. Ate leftover Christmas turkey out of the refrigerator. Left a length of unused cord on Manning's body. Green material was found on Manning's leg and back. Manning bore a resemblance to Charlene Smith.

GOLETA: JULY 27, 1981

Victims: Cheri Domingo, 35, an office manager; Gregory Sanchez, 27, an employee at Burroughs Corp.

Found: By a real estate agent in the bedroom of a home on Toltec Way, a cul-de-sac that abuts San Jose Creek.

Manner of entry: Attacker likely reached through a window to the knob of a door off the master bedroom.

Weapon: Gun and blunt object, probably a pipe wrench missing from a shed after the murders. Sanchez was shot in the face, but the fatal wound was from a blunt instrument.

Bound?: Domingo was bound with shipping twine, which had been removed. Sanchez was not bound.

Sexual assault: No.

Killer's quirks: Fibers of an unknown source were found on Domingo's torso. Partially burned matches found in the fireplace were similar to those found at the Witthuhn crime scene. She bore a resemblance to Patrice Harrington.