

Time (August 15, 1977) considers the unknown “Son of Sam” killer as a real life pulp fiction horror, come to life in New York: the sex crazed killer stalking his female victims and killing them in the night. By mid-1977, the series of fatal and nonfatal shootings that had been ongoing for over a year was being investigated by a multi-borough task force. But central command came late. Even then, a senior task force official refused to believe that the ninth episode could be linked to the previous eight because it had occurred in Brooklyn, even though previous incidents had moved back and forth between the Bronx and Queens. Little progress had been made, in part because those entrusted with studying the killer’s modus operandi were still offering motivational analysis based on a presumption that the killer was targeting females with long dark hair who, though unaware of it, provided a "stimulus" for the killer.

Psychiatrist James Brussel suggested that the killings were the result of rejection on the part of the mother or a recent “love interest. And the fact that he is attacking young women would point to the likelihood that a young woman is at the root of his problems” (Carpozi, Jr., 1977, p. 123). Psychologist Emanuel Hammer (Carpozi, Jr., p. 24) claimed the fact that there were women who were shot in the company of males meant they “could have represented women who rejected the killer in the past.” Also possible was that the victims were substitutes for the mother who was most rejecting when she was about the age of the victims. Or, “the current rejection by a young woman of the killer’s advances may touch upon a raw wound of earlier, maternal rejection.”

Brussel and Hammer (Carpozi, Jr., 1977) have simply skipped over the facts that *do* exist to propose their theory of rejection based largely on air. The first thing we can learn from any of the press reports is that Berkowitz repeatedly shot men as well as women. We can also see that this was always a multi-jurisdictional case, even though Berkowitz never left New York. By the second shooting incident, **Berkowitz** had already moved from the Bronx to Queens, where **Carl Denaro** was wounded but his female companion was not shot. Then,

3. 11/27/76 Queens **Donna DeMasi**, 16- Wounded

11/27/76 Queens Joanne Lomino, 18- Paralyzed

4. 01/30/77 Queens **Christine Freund**, 26- Killed

01/30/77 Queens John Diel, 30- Not hit

5. 03/8/77 Queens **Virginia Voskerichian**, 19- Killed

6. 04/17/77 Bronx **Valentina Suriani**, 18- Killed

04/17/77 Bronx Alexander Esau, 20- Killed

7. 06/26/77 Queens **Judy Placido**, 17- Wounded

06/26/77 Queens Salvatore Lupo, 20- Wounded

8. 07/31/77 Brooklyn **Stacy Moskowitz**, 20- Killed

07/31/77 Brooklyn Robert Violante, 20- Blinded

This list (e.g. Klausner, 1981) shows that this is a killer who changes jurisdictions, and whose victims vary in ages from 16 to 30. He did not pick “lover’s lane” couples, for his victims included those who were alone, with friends as well as on dates. And there are a surprising number of nonfatal injuries for someone supposedly *ordered to kill* by demons as the “Son of Sam” claimed.

But what links the cases is the killer’s consistent use of a most distinctive “calling card:” a Charter Arms .44 caliber Bulldog as well as ballistic evidence that showed all the victims to have been shot with the same gun. Further, this ballistic evidence could have been used to tie the first to the second shootings — which were only 10 miles apart and the wounded victims had given police almost identical descriptions of the killer. Even though the incidents occurred in different boroughs, it was the same police department. The problem was that the Bronx and Queens did not communicate, and links were not made until after the fifth incident.

The way Berkowitz approached his victims was not one which lent itself to stalking or to being triggered by a victim’s look or “stimulus.” Both the issues of stalking and of stimulus can be determined by studying what the victims had been doing right before their interactions with the killer. Most of the victims were approached when they were in their cars, either getting ready to drive off or recently stopped.

In the **first episode**, two girls were double parked for a few minutes when one got out to go inside. She had turned back to tell her friend something when the killer suddenly appeared, shooting at both girls. Freund and Diel had just left a bar, gotten into their car, warmed it up a moment when Diel shifted into gear. At that moment, the window crashed and Freund was killed. Denaro and Keenan had been driving around when they stopped at a tavern. Denaro was shot before exiting the car. Esau and Suriani had been driving around. About 3 A.M. Esau stopped to tell friends that they were going to continue to cruise around. Shortly thereafter, they had parked when the killer leaped out in front of them and fired through the windshield, killing them both.

If the killer had previously stalked his victims, he could not have anticipated the precise moment when the victims would stop and there would be no witnesses around. And – as these were people who had just stopped when they were killed, they could not have served as a stimulus to trigger the killings.

Stay tuned for the continuation of how the serial killer obtains his victims. . .

SUGGESTED LINKS

- **The crimes of serial killers: Are there victim-types? (Part 14)**
- **The crimes of serial killers: Motives, continued (Part 13)**
- **The crimes of serial killers: Motives (Part 12)**
- **The crimes of serial killers: Link between murderers and victims (Part 11)**
- **Part 10. Serial killers: The Crimes**

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