

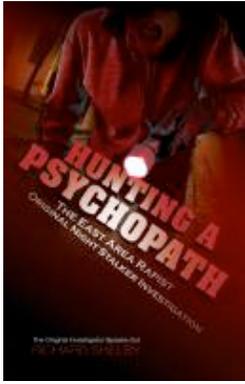
A person wearing a dark, textured hoodie is crouching in a dimly lit environment. They are holding a flashlight that is turned on, casting a bright beam of light onto the ground in front of them. The background is dark and indistinct, suggesting an outdoor or industrial setting at night.

HUNTING A PSYCHOPATH

THE EAST AREA RAPIST
ORIGINAL NIGHT STALKER INVESTIGATION

The Original Investigator Speaks Out:

RICHARD SHILLY



HUNTING A PSYCHOPATH chronicles the search by multiple agencies for a serial rapist/murderer who terrorized Northern and Southern California between 1976 and 1986. Known as the EAR/ONS, he remains unidentified. Retired Lieutenant Richard Shelby, one of the original investigators, speaks out for the first time. By opening new doors, this book may lead to the Final Chapter of this three decade long search.

Hunting A Psychopath

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HUNTING A PSYCHOPATH

The
East Area Rapist /
Original Night Stalker Investigation

The Original Investigator Speaks Out

Richard Shelby

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Chapter 1:

As It Began to Unfold

Not many of us have ever seen a free-flowing electron, but those with normal hearing have heard them. All cops rely on them. With no place to call home, the electrons are what we hear when a radio station is improperly tuned, or someone has keyed a police microphone preparatory to speaking. That sound is what you may know as static. That brief sputter of freedom-seeking electrons is how a police officer knows information is forthcoming. It is that expectation of the radio sputter which keeps them mentally on their toes. They do this without even realizing they are eternally on the alert for that static; it is the precursor to their knowing. Officers depend on their radios for necessary information as well as their own security.

It was well into a swing shift, sometime in late spring, 1974, when those escaping electrons grated against my nerves, grabbing my attention. I was the patrol sergeant assigned to Rancho Cordova at the time. A suburb east of Sacramento, it did not officially exist until 1955, when it became populated enough to justify the establishment of a post office.

Rancho Cordova began as a Mexican land grant of 5,000 acres which was used for farming. Then the gold dredges came through leaving behind huge piles of river rock. Later, the untouched parts became a vineyard. Today, the original streets bear evidence of their past by the names they carry as

they twist and turn like grapevines through town; names like Gold Run, Coloma, and Zinfandel.

With the American River and its naturally occurring greenbelt areas next door, along with those twisting streets, Rancho Cordova was a prowler's paradise.

The shift had been unusually quiet on this one particular night. Hunkered down in my squad car, green dash lights dimmed way down, I had been driving around posing as a beat officer, waiting for something to happen. In a word, I was bored.

The dimmed dash lights were not by accident either, but rather a habit formed just two or three years earlier. There had been a group from the bay area of California who named themselves Zebras. The so-called Zebras were a group of African-Americans (I am Welsh-American) who declared war on the white man, and in particular the white cop. Initiation rites for new members required the killing of a white man, preferably a cop, although an Asian would do just as well. There was even a movie starring Ernest Borgnine focusing on what was then becoming a favorite American past-time—sniping at cops in a squad car. The Sacramento Police Department lost Dick Bennett in this fashion.

For a while, most patrol officers kept their dash lights dimmed to avoid making themselves better targets. By 1974, the so-called Zebras had crawled back into whatever swamp they had slithered out of, but the habit of caution remained for some. I discovered the dimmer dash lights made it much easier to pick up on details outside the car. It is for that very reason the habit remains with me today.

The call heralded by those escaping electrons, on this one night, was a typical request for assistance. A citizen wanted to report suspicious circumstances at his neighbor's house. He was hoping someone would investigate. Although not at the top of the list, this is the sort of call for which most patrol officers live. To paraphrase author Joseph Wambaugh, "It is the unexpected that keeps cops being cops. If cops already knew the outcome of every call they responded to, they might as well be bakers or bankers." So being both a cop – and bored – I exercised my supervisory powers and notified radio dispatch that I would also be attending the evening's event.

The complainants lived in the house at the corner of Dolcetto and Dawes. It was their neighbor's house on Dolcetto that had their attention. I was only seconds behind the other two squad cars as we all arrived. Before I even stopped my squad car, I could see two people standing in an open side door to the house. Lighted from behind by the interior lights, they were nothing more than two unidentifiable silhouettes, motioning for us to come to them.

The officer, who was actually assigned to this call, spoke to them just long enough to learn why we had been called. They had heard suspicious noises coming from the backyard of their neighbor's house, a house where no one was supposed to be home. The reporting officer and I entered the rather long and empty backyard, while the third officer took a position near the front corner of the neighbor's house. Finding nothing amiss, we all three returned to the side door for the rest of the story.

Apparently, their neighbors were out of town for a few days and had asked our complainants to keep an eye on their

property. Hearing noises from next door, the complainants called the Sheriff's Department. The three of us again checked the exterior of the house and the yards for any signs of trespass. Finding none, we said our goodbyes and departed, expecting to return to the boredom of routine.

I doubt if I was more than three blocks away when that brief static enlivened my life once more. The complainants had just called to say the prowler was still there. So back I went. It was no more than a couple of minutes before I was on the scene again. This time, as I pulled up, I spotted the neighbor's garage door rolled up as tight as a rubber band. It had been closed when we left.

Before checking the interior of the house, I made contact with one of the complainants. He told me that right after we drove off, he heard a couple of thumps and looked out to see a white male, about 5 ft. 9 inches tall, with blond hair, 16 - 18 years old, and dressed in military fatigues, jump off the roof of his house. Landing upright on both feet, the man ran straight for the back fence, which he vaulted with ease. I notified dispatch to cancel the other officers as the suspect was GOA, or gone on arrival.

Armed with this new information, I walked to the back fence and peered over the side. Immediately behind the fence was a large shallow cement-lined canal. Void of water, travel in either direction would offer literally dozens upon dozens of places for a quick exit. On the opposite side of that ditch was a small area with a lot of tall trees. Bordering that area was Dawes Street. To follow Dawes would quickly lead to the Rancho Cordova High School. Behind the school were large orchards and a nature area that was pretty much then as it was

a century ago. Miwok Indians from that era would have felt right at home. For all I knew, there were still a few of them in there.

There was no sense in giving foot chase, so I returned to the open garage door. The first thing I spotted was a piece of firewood, about eighteen inches in length, lying in the open doorway. It was covered in blood— like a lot of thick blood.

I determined not to notify the dispatcher or call for backup. As the sergeant on duty, I would have climbed all over any officer who failed to notify the dispatcher or call for backup. But I knew that if I did, the dispatcher would get excited and clear the air for emergency traffic only. Once that was done, bunches of squad cars would have materialized as if from thin air. You see, cops have every bit the tendency to rubberneck, as does any passing motorist, looking for blood at the scene of a car accident. So I entered the house alone...with a little trepidation, perhaps, but with a regular heartbeat nonetheless.

At the back of the garage were a couple of small steps that took me into the unlighted house. Over the course of my career, I have entered many houses where no one was home. There is always a feeling of empty that weighs heavily in the air. I think this feeling of empty is also recognized by burglars even from outside the house. I have watched a burglar intent on choosing a home to break into, suddenly stop his car, then, without hesitation, walk right up and break in. Somehow they seem to “know” when a house is empty.

But in this instance there was more than a feeling of emptiness.

There is a silence that becomes the size of an NFL lineman when death—any death—is present. That night I felt that NFL silence. Once experienced, you never forget it. Enough so that I almost stopped to request back up.

From somewhere there was enough ambient light to see by, so for safety reasons I kept my flashlight mostly off, using it only sparingly and when absolutely necessary. My thought was to make as little noise as possible while keeping my eyes adjusted to the semi-darkness. If there was anything in a dark corner, I was more likely to spot it with my flashlight off, but my handgun was in my hand, ready for immediate use.

As quietly as I could, I went from room to room searching for what I knew I would find; the source of blood on that piece of firewood. Every room was immaculate. Had anything been out of place, it would have shouted for attention. But the only thing shouting was that unseen NFL lineman.

The master bedroom was the last one I entered. It, as well as the rest of the house, was the epitome of perfect housekeeping; nothing was out of place. That is, right up until I peered at the floor between a night stand and the headboard. There, with its head partially under the bed, lay the family dog. Its intestines were spilling out of its side and onto the floor. It lay right where it had sought escape from evil. That pup had been struck so hard it was disemboweled.

Apparently, I had located the source of blood on that piece of firewood.

I had no inkling, at the time, that I may have just been introduced to the work of a psychopathic personality who

HUNTING A PSYCHOPATH

would one day be known as the East Area Rapist. Nor did I have any hint that the killer of the dog was going to be a big part of my future. He and I would cross paths again and again.

Chapter 22: Still Innocent

December 18, 1976

Ladera Way

Carmichael

While the task force creation intermingled with office politics was going on the EAR was also active. He proved it when he targeted a fifteen-year-old girl. He introduced himself to her just as he did with Marcy. Catching her totally by surprise from behind, he held a knife to her throat. In a forced whisper through clenched teeth he said, “Make a move and I’ll kill you. Do you have any money in the house? When are your parents coming back? You better tell me so I will know how much time I have.” These statements were just about word for word the ones he whispered to Marcy, except now he whispered them to Alice.

After his self introduction was over, he marched Alice into a utility room. As they walked towards the room he threatened her with, “Get moving. If you say anything or flinch I’ll push the knife all the way in and I will be gone in the dark of the night.” He really liked that phrase.

What occurred over the next hour or so was a literal repeat of the assault on El Segundo the previous October. He forced her into the backyard where he tied her, then he began ransacking the house. He could be heard putting something into a paper bag. As he was leaving, he tied her to a picnic table.

It was on that table a bloodied Band-Aid was found. It was carefully collected, logged, and transported to the crime lab. The blood stain was found to be group ABO, specifically type A+. Alice had no injuries requiring a Band-Aid, so it was thought to belong to the East Area Rapist.

It is worth noting he did not cut the telephone cord this time as he did in other assaults. Why he did not is anyone's guess.

Alice described her assailant as maybe 6 ft. tall with a regular build. His whisper was loud and she believed intended to sound rough, but she felt his natural voice was probably higher pitched. That was a description we were to hear again and again. He wore a nylon ski-type jacket, with a zipper in front, and a dark ski mask.

By deduction, Sergeant Irwin located the only port of entry into the yard which was past a neighbor's geriatric poodle in the yard directly behind the victim's house. All the other nearby backyards were inhabited by younger, unfriendly canines.

As with the other crime scenes, there was a school nearby and another large drainage ditch. The difference here, as Sergeant Irwin discovered, was part of the drainage ditch was below ground.

Having never experienced sex, Alice had no frame of reference by which to judge the suspect's penis size. But even better than her opinion was the doctor's medical report which stated her hymen was intact. This was after she had been raped three times!

One other thing happened at this scene that stands out. While in the victim's house, doing whatever I did, Captain Stamm arrived on the scene, which was something he rarely did. Asking me to step outside, he handed me a set of car keys. Pointing to a car parked at the curb, he told me it was mine for the duration of my assignment to this investigation. Apparently he and Lieutenant Root felt that since I was putting in so many hours on this case, and responding to all the scenes, I should have a car permanently assigned. I felt like a high-school kid who just got permission to drive the family car. That car remained with me until I was transferred out of the detective division. It was greatly, greatly appreciated.

With the exception of one house that was located around the corner from where the victim was assaulted, there is no record available for what was learned when the neighbors were contacted during the neighborhood canvass.

That one house, on Galewood, had an unwelcome visitor a week or so earlier. Somebody broke in while the woman living there was on the phone. Whoever it was left without harming or even speaking to her.

Epilogue

It was late at night when the man woke up thirsty. Standing by the sink in his unlighted kitchen, he looked out the window and saw something unusual. There, directly across the street was a man standing by his neighbor's front window. As he watched, the man stooped forward and looked through the bottom of his neighbor's window. After a moment he stood up, then walked to the side of the house where he disappeared from view. Another couple of minutes passed and he reappeared where he again stooped over and peeked through the same front window.

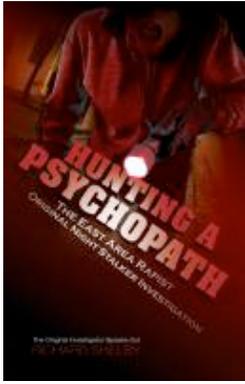
It was then the thirsty man's dog began barking. For reasons he does not know, he flipped on the kitchen lights. As soon as those lights came on, the man across the street turned and looked straight at him. Moving rapidly, with a stiff-legged walk, he started down the street. Quickly, he was in a full-out run—stopping only when he reached a sports car that was parked at the end of the block.

The witness described this apparent prowler as wearing a sports coat and slacks. To the witness the man looked like a car salesman.

This information was not reported to the Sacramento Sheriff's Department until years after it actually occurred. What is as important as the information itself is that it was eventually reported. Even more significant is that this is not an isolated instance of information being reported. That so many people

are providing information, years after the crime wave seemingly stopped, shows that there is a strong, popular, ongoing interest in finding this rapist/murderer. It is this persevering, if not growing interest, that will ultimately bring this psychopath out of his dark hole into the light of day. Only then will he be identified and excised.

When this happens, the status of “victim” need no longer exist for those who were made to suffer by him. With his identity known, and his being removed from society, the influence he has exercised over their lives can cease. That determination will naturally be up to them. But this I do know: Where there is an end, there is a beginning, and nothing should keep that beginning from being a good one.



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