

Week #7: Serial Killer Profile 01

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the "Black Widow" Belle Gunness reading to answer the questions below.

(SERIAL KILLER PROFILE)

"BLACK WIDOW" BELLE GUNNESS



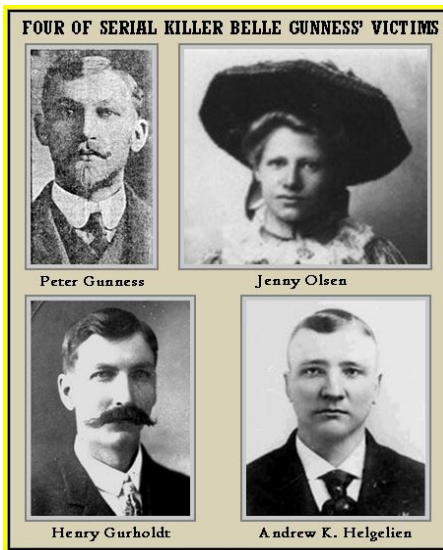
Serial killer Belle Gunness is reported to have murdered more than forty people between 1884 and 1908 before possibly disappearing without a trace. Belle was born Brynhild Paulsdatter Strseth on November 22, 1859 in Selbu, Norway. She was the daughter of a stonemason, changing her name to Belle Gunness when she immigrated to America in 1881 in search of wealth. What followed were a series of insurance frauds and crimes, escalating in size and danger. To the outside world, disaster and tragedy struck Gunness an inordinate amount of times. Properties she owned mysteriously burned to the ground, while her husbands, lovers, and children seemed to tragically drop like flies. But there was always a silver lining for Gunness in the form of a large insurance payout. Belle Gunness was one of the first "Black Widows" and became a prolific serial killer. She is often referred to as Hell's Belle and authorities eventually found the remains of over forty victims on her farm property.

In 1884 Belle Gunness married Mads Albert Sorenson. Belle's penchant for murder and insurance fraud started shortly after her marriage. Together the couple opened a confectionary store and had four children — Caroline, Axel, Myrtle, and Lucy. They also had a foster child named Jennie Olsen. With a husband, children, and a business there were plenty of opportunities for Gunness to claim insurance rewards. Not long after the store opened it, and their home, mysteriously burned down. The couple successfully claimed the insurance money. Soon after, Mads Sorenson died of heart failure on the one day his two life insurance policies overlapped which allowed her to claim two separate policies for only one dead body. The first doctor examined his body and discovered Mads had died of strychnine poisoning. But Gunness' doctor overruled the finding and determined that he had died of heart failure. Though her husband's family demanded an inquiry, no charges were filed. Not long after two of Belle's children, Caroline and Axel, died from acute colitis. However, acute colitis and strychnine poisoning share some common symptoms, such as abdominal pain, but this slipped past the coroner and Gunness got her life insurance money.

With plenty of insurance money in her pocket, she took her three remaining children to LaPorte, Indiana. In 1901, she bought a 42-acre farm at the end of McClung Road. Though a woman of means, she still wanted more. Soon after, a part of the farm burned down and she collected more insurance money. On April 1, 1902, she married Peter Gunness, a local butcher and widower. Her new husband brought with him two daughters, who Belle saw as dollar signs. Not long after the wedding, one child died under mysterious circumstances. Peter knew something wasn't right and sent his eldest daughter, Swanhild, to stay with relatives. She was the only child to survive Belle Gunness.



As it turns out, Peter should have left too. In December of 1902, he died when a meat grinder fell off a kitchen shelf and onto his head. Guinness' daughter Jennie told schoolmates, "My mama killed my papa. She hit him with a meat cleaver and he died. Don't tell a soul." This time the coroner noticed symptoms of strychnine poisoning and ordered an inquest. But no hard evidence was found and Guinness convincingly cried crocodile tears over her husband's death. However, they soon dried up when she cashed in Peter's life insurance policy.



Several more unexplained deaths followed as Belle Guinness was known for actively meeting wealthy men through a lovelorn newspaper column. Her suitors were her next victims, each of whom brought cash to her farm and then disappeared forever: John Moo, Henry Gurholdt, Olaf Svenherud, Ole B. Budsburg, Olaf Lindbloom, and Andrew Hegelein, to name just a few. When Belle ran out of husbands, she attracted would-be suitors to her "Murder Farm," telling them in her correspondence to bring their money and to "not to tell anyone you are coming!" The men all sought to buy "shares" in her farm by depositing their cash into Belle's bank account. At six feet tall and weighing 200 pounds, Guinness could certainly handle herself if one of her victims attempted to escape. When the transactions were done, she would poison their food or hit them over the head with a meat cleaver. Based on evidence later found at the "Murder Farm," it is believed she would dismember the bodies of her victims and either feed them to her pigs or bury them in the hog pen. Besides the men, Belle's adopted daughter Jennie's body would also eventually be found on Belle's property.

In 1908, one of her unfortunate suitor's, Andrew Hegelein, brother became suspicious and Guinness's luck seemed to be running out. On the morning of April 28, 1908, her farmhouse burned to the ground where town authorities found the bodies of Belle's three children: Lucy and Myrtle Sorenson, and Philip Guinness. They also found the corpse of a headless woman thought to be Belle Guinness. Investigators found another 11 bodies in the hog pen. One was Guinness' foster daughter Jennie Olsen, who had been missing since 1906. After combing through the ashes, the investigators found dental bridgework belonging to Guinness. The coroner deemed this sufficient evidence to confirm that the headless corpse belonged to Belle Guinness. After the fire, Belle's victims were unearthed from their shallow graves surrounding the farm. All told, the remains of more than forty men and children were exhumed.

Ray Lamphere, Guinness's hired hand, was arrested for murder and arson on May 22, 1908. He was found guilty of arson, but cleared of murder. He died in prison, on his deathbed Lamphere claimed that Belle was the killer and had faked her own death. Days before the fire, they had traveled to Chicago to find and bring back a housekeeper. Unbeknownst to the woman, she was to become Belle's headless body double in the fire.

Doubts remain about whether the headless woman is Belle Guinness or a body double. DNA results from 2008 were inconclusive. Yet, there is one case which suggests that Guinness did indeed fake her death. In 1931, a woman named Esther Carlson died in Los Angeles while awaiting trial for poisoning a man. She bore a striking resemblance to Guinness and was of a similar age. But the clincher is that Carlson had photographs of three children that resembled Guinness' children in her possessions.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain two facts about Belle Gunness prior to her immigration to America.

1 - _____

2 - _____

2. What was the first documented crime connected to Belle Gunness?

3. Who was Belle Gunness' first documented victim? Why was his death peculiar?

4. How did Belle's first 2 children die? What was the cause and possible cause of death?

5. Who was Swanhild Gunness? What makes her unique to this case profile?

6. What were the two possible causes in the death of Peter Gunness?

1 - _____

2 - _____

7. Who were two known victims of Belle Gunness? How did she meet these victims?

8. Based on evidence found, what did Belle do with most of her victims?

9. What was the motivation for Belle's crimes? How did she trick her victims?

10. Explain two facts about Jenny Olsen and how she was connected to Belle?

1 - _____

2 - _____

11. What happened to Belle's "Murder Farm"? What most likely caused this to occur?

12. Explain three details authorities found in the remnants of the "Murder Farm".

1 - _____

2 - _____

3 - _____

13. What do authorities believe happened to Belle Gunness? Why?

14. Who was Ray Lamphere and what information did he provide about Belle?

15. In your opinion, what do you believe happened to Belle Gunness?

Week #8: Serial Killer Profile 02

INSTRUCTIONS: Use the "*Dating Game Killer*" Rodney James Alcala reading to answer the questions below.

**SERIAL KILLER
PROFILE**

"DATING GAME KILLER"
RODNEY JAMES ALCALA

Rodney James Alcalá (born 1943) is a convicted serial killer who was sentenced to death in California in 2010 for five murders committed between 1977 and 1979. Alcalá is thought to be responsible for others. He is sometimes labeled the "Dating Game Killer" due to his 1978 appearance on the American television show *The Dating Game* during the exact time of his murder spree. Alcalá is also notable for exceptional demonstrations of cruelty: Prosecutors say he "toyed" with his victims, strangling them until they lost consciousness, then waiting until they revived, sometimes repeating this process several times before finally killing them.



Investigators have found a collection of hundreds of photos of women and teenagers photographed by Alcalá, and speculate that he could be responsible for numerous unsolved murders in California. He is also a suspect in at least two unsolved murders in New York. Authorities have compared him to Ted Bundy in how he used a smile and easy-demeanor to attract women. And, like Bundy, experts fear that, as evidence continues to mount, Alcalá may prove to be one of the most prolific serial killers in American history because all of his victims have not yet been found.

Alcalá was born Rodrigo Jacques Alcalá-Buquor in San Antonio, Texas to Raoul Alcalá Buquor and Anna Maria Gutierrez. He and his sisters were raised by his mother in suburban Los Angeles. Rodney joined the United States Army in 1960, where he served as a clerk. In 1964, after what was described as a "nervous breakdown", he was diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder by a military psychiatrist and discharged on medical grounds. Alcalá, who claims to have a "genius-level" IQ, graduated from the UCLA School of Fine Arts after his medical discharge from the Army, and later attended New York University where he studied film under Roman Polanski. New York officials have listed Alcalá as the main suspect in the case of *Ciro's Nightclub* heiress Ellen Jane Hover, murdered in 1977 while Alcalá was working in New York as a security guard. He is also suspected in the murder of TWA flight attendant Cornelia Crilley, which occurred in 1971 while Alcalá was enrolled at NYU.



In 1977, despite having a criminal record and official registration as a sex offender, Alcalá was hired as a typesetter by the Los Angeles Times in the midst of their coverage of the Hillside Strangler murders. During this period Alcalá convinced dozens of young women that he was a professional fashion photographer, and photographed them for his "portfolio." Most of those photos remain unidentified today, and police fear that some of the women in the portfolio may be additional victims of unsolved murders.

In 1978, during the height of Alcalá's murders the unidentified killer was accepted as a contestant on *The Dating Game*, despite being a convicted criminal and registered sex offender. Host Jim

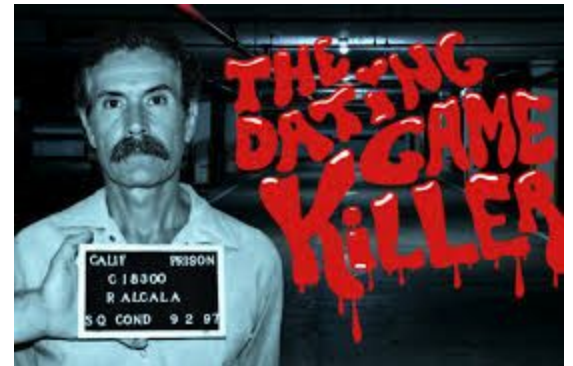
Lange introduced him as "...a successful photographer who enjoys skydiving and motorcycling." Alcalá won a date with "bachelorette" Cheryl Bradshaw, who later refused to go out with him, according to published reports, because she found him "creepy." Jed Mills, an actor who sat next to Alcalá onstage as "Bachelor #2", later described him as a "very strange guy" with "bizarre opinions." The third contestant, Armand Chiami, has never publicly commented about his interactions with Alcalá.

Not long after Alcalá's game show appearance, the body of 12-year-old Robin Samsøe was discovered in the Los Angeles foothills. Friends of the young girl said they'd been approached by a man, who fit Rodney's description through a composite sketch, and who'd asked to take the group's photograph. Alcalá was sought by police, arrested, and brought to trial—and received death sentences—on two separate occasions. But because the jury was improperly informed about his criminal past as a sex offender, both verdicts were overturned. Alcalá was brought in a third time when his semen matched DNA samples taken from two separate unsolved crime scenes in Los Angeles. Furthermore a pair of earrings found in Alcalá's storage locker matched the DNA of a victim. This combined evidence finally proved to be his downfall. The DNA evidence eventually led to his conviction for the murders of four other female victims: Charlotte Lamb (31), Georgia Wixted (27), Jill Barcomb (18, and originally thought to be a victim of the Hillside Strangler), and Jill Parenteau (21).



Criminal profiler Pat Brown, noting that Alcalá killed his youngest victim Robin Samsøe and at least two other women after his Dating Game appearance, speculated that Cheryl Bradshaw's rejection of him after the show ended might have been a factor for his next killings. "One wonders what that rejection did in his mind," Brown said. "That is something he would not take too well. Serial killers don't understand the process of rejection. Instead they would think that something is wrong with the girl: 'She played me. She played hard to get and toyed with me.'"

Alcalá has been incarcerated since his 1979 arrest for Robin Samsøe's murder. While in prison he has written *You, the Jury*, a 1994 book in which he asserts his innocence in the Samsøe case and points to a different suspect. He has also filed two lawsuits against the California penal system for a slip-and-fall claim, and for failing to provide him a low-fat diet. Alcalá continues to maintain his innocence, and currently remains on death row at San Quentin State Prison.



In April 2010, the Huntington Beach Police Department made public 120 of Alcalá's photographs in an effort to identify some of the women and determine if any could be additional victims. Anyone willing to provide information about any of the photos was asked to call the department. In the first few weeks, approximately 20 women had come forward to identify themselves which still left 100 unidentified.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many known victims is Rodney Alcalá responsible for? Why do experts think there are more?
2. Why were Alcalá's murders deemed exceptionally cruel?

3. Why was Alcala discharged from his military service?

4. What other serial killer was active at the same time as Alcala?

5. Explain three details about how Alcala earned his nickname "The Dating Game Killer".

1 - _____

2 - _____

3 - _____

6. What murder finally led to Alcala's capture? How was he identified and caught?

7. What two New York murder cases are linked to Alcala?

1 - _____

2 - _____

8. How did Alcala use his talents to lure possible victims?

9. Why were Alcala's first trial verdicts overturned?

10. What two pieces of evidence finally helped convict Rodney Alcala?

1 - _____

2 - _____

11. Why do some experts believe Alcala's appearance on TV led to further murders?

12. Why was victim Jill Barcomb considered unique in the Alcala case?

13. In what year was Alcala arrested? Explain two details about his time in prison.

14. What took place in 2010 in connection to Rodney Alcala? What were the results?

15. Why do some experts compare Rodney James Alcala to Ted Bundy?

Week #9: Serial Killer Profile 03

INSTRUCTIONS: Use *"The I-5 Killer" Randall Woodfield* reading to answer the questions below.

**SERIAL KILLER
PROFILE**

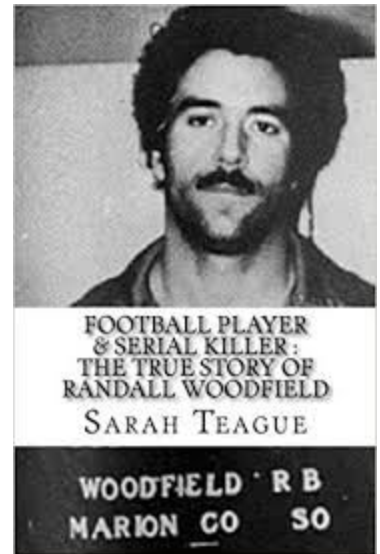
"THE I-5 Killer"
RANDALL WOODFIELD



The case of the I-5 Killer demonstrates that even on the brink of athletic fame and gifted with incredible talent sometimes there isn't enough to keep some minds psychologically invested in walking the path of legal society. Even though he was a star football player who seemed to have everything going for him, Randall Woodfield puzzled coaches, teammates and family members with his odd behavior and penchant for indecent exposure. A standout wide receiver at his high school in Newport, Oregon and later at Portland State University, Woodfield was a gifted athlete, but he was constantly being arrested for publicly exposing himself to women.

Woodfield's high school football coaches kept the story of his first arrest for indecent exposure quiet so he would not be kicked off the football team. While playing college football for the Portland State Vikings, Woodfield led a bizarre double life. On the one hand, he performed well on the field, and he was active in the Campus Crusade for Christ and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Off the field, however, Woodfield's behavior was anything but exemplary. He was arrested on a number of occasions for indecent exposure, and he was convicted twice. Despite his psychological issues and legal record, the Green Bay Packers selected Randall Woodfield in the 1974 NFL draft.

Woodfield was excited about his prospects for an NFL career, but he was ultimately cut by the Packers after his first training camp. Instead of moving straight back to Oregon, Woodfield caught on with a semi-pro football team in Wisconsin, where he played for one season before being released again. During his time in Wisconsin, Woodfield was involved in more than 10 instances of indecent exposure. Dejected and with a failed athletic career, Woodfield returned to his home state of Oregon.



In Oregon, Woodfield fell into a life of unstable jobs and, eventually, crime. Living in Portland in 1975, Woodfield's erratic behavior continued and he began accosting women with a knife and sexually assaulting them before he robbed them. Once authorities realized there was a sexual predator on the prowl, Portland police had female officers pose as regular citizens. On March 5, 1975, police apprehended a knife-wielding man who attempted to attack a female officer in a park. It was Randall Woodfield. He was convicted and served 4 years in prison. He was released in July 1979.

Once he was released from prison, Woodfield graduated from robbery and sexual assault to murder. His first victim was 29-year-old Cherie Ayers, a high school classmate of Woodfield's. She was found raped and stabbed to death in her Portland apartment on October 11, 1980. Though Woodfield was questioned in Ayers' death, he refused to take a polygraph test, and because there was no physical evidence at the crime scene tied to Woodfield, police had to let him go.



Woodfield soon struck again, shooting and killing 22-year-old Darcey Fix and 24-year-old Doug Altig. As with Cherie Ayers, Woodfield had a connection with Darcey Fix: One of his closest friends from Portland State University had dated her. During this period, Woodfield also embarked on a robbery spree throughout Oregon and Washington, donning a fake beard and robbing gas stations and other businesses. Various composite sketches were released during this crime spree. The press dubbed the robber the "I-5 Bandit" due to the proximity of the crimes to Interstate 5. In January 1981, Woodfield murdered again, this time raping and shooting two women in an office building in Salem, Oregon. However this time Woodfield made a mistake as one of the two women Woodfield shot survived the attack but was unable to identify the killer.



Randall Woodfield's compulsion to assault and murder women continued throughout the early months of 1981. In February he killed a woman and her 14-year-old daughter in Mountain Gate, California. The same day he kidnapped, robbed, and raped an 18-year-old waitress. The next day, Woodfield did it again. By this point

witnesses were all giving police similar physical descriptions of the assailant: an athletic white man who wore a band-aid or athletic tape over his nose.



Based on his past criminal record and a behavior profile, police believed that Randall Woodfield was the serial killer they were hunting, so they focused their efforts on capturing him. Woodfield certainly fit the part: he had served time for assaulting women, he knew his way up and down the I-5 corridor, and he was personally acquainted with several of the victims. Eventually, a survivor of one of Woodfield's many attacks picked him out of a lineup. With this, police were able to get a warrant to search the room Woodfield was renting in Springfield, Oregon, and they found the evidence they needed to convict him: a spent .32 caliber bullet and the same type of tape that had been used to tie up a number of the I-5 Killer's victims.

The I-5 Bandit, now the I-5 Killer, had been caught. Woodfield was found guilty of murder in Oregon in June 1981, and was sentenced to life in prison. Randall Woodfield has been linked to almost 20 murders, but he is suspected in many unsolved murders, and some investigators believe that the murder count for the I-5 Killer may be closer to 50, not including the dozens of rapes and robberies he also committed.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain three background details of Randall Woodfield before he became a criminal.

1 - _____

2 - _____

3 - _____

2. What were early behavior dangerous signs that Woodfield exhibited?

3. Explain the "double life" that Randall Woodfield led while in college?

4. In what two states did Randall Woodfield build up a criminal record?

1 - _____

2 - _____

5. How did Woodfield's criminal behavior increase? What conviction and sentence did her first serve?

6. Who was the first known murder victim of Randall Woodfield? How was she connected to him?

7. Explain two key reasons that Woodfield avoided arrest in his first known murder?

8. How was Woodfield connected to one of his next murder victims?

9. In what two states was the I-5 Bandit active?

1 - _____ 2 - _____

10. Explain how Woodfield's crimes increased as he avoided being identified.

11. What was the similar physical description that Woodfield's victims gave of the I-5 Bandit?

12. What were three key reasons that Randall Woodfield became a prime suspect for police?

1 - _____

2 - _____

3 - _____

13. What were three reasons that Woodfield was eventually successfully arrested for his crimes?

1 - _____

2 - _____

3 - _____

14. What sentence and conviction did Randall Woodfield receive?

15. How many murders was Woodfield eventually connected to? Why is he considered one of the worst serial killers of the 20th Century?