

Christopher Wilder

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Christopher Bernard Wilder (13 March 1945 – 13 April 1984) was a serial killer who abducted and raped at least 10 women and killed at least seven of them during a spree across the United States in early 1984. His rampage began in Florida and continued across the country through Texas, Oklahoma, Nevada, California and New York before he committed suicide during a struggle with police in New Hampshire on 13 April.^[1] He is also believed to have raped girls aged 10 and 12 in Florida during 1983. For many years since his death, Wilder has also been considered the prime suspect in the unsolved Wanda Beach murder of two teenage girls in Sydney, Australia in 1965.^[2]

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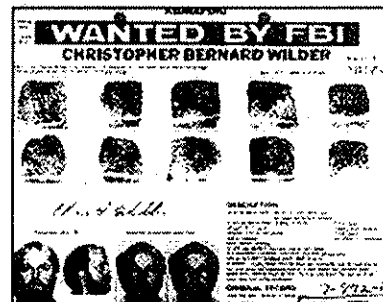
Biography

Early life

Wilder was born in Australia. His father was an American naval officer and his mother an Australian. He almost died at birth, but recovered, only to almost drown in a swimming pool at age two.^[3] In 1962 or 1963, he pleaded guilty in the case of a gang-rape at a beach in Sydney and was put on probation, during which time he also received electroshock therapy. There is some evidence to suggest that this course of treatment only exacerbated his violent sexual tendencies.^[4] It is known that he had virtually memorized the text of the 1963 novel *The Collector* by John Fowles, in which a man keeps a woman in his basement against her will until she dies. A copy of the novel was found among his possessions after his death.

In 1968 he married, but his wife left after only a week. Wilder emigrated to the United States in 1969.

Christopher Wilder



Wilder's FBI Wanted poster

Background information

Birth name:	Christopher Bernard Wilder
Alias(es):	The Beauty Queen Killer
Born:	13 March 1945 Sydney, Australia
Died:	13 April 1984 (aged 39) Colebrook, New Hampshire, USA,
Cause of death:	Suicide (though could be seen as an accidental gunshot death)
Killings	
Number of victims:	8 confirmed, possibly more
Span of killings:	February–April 1984
Country:	United States
State(s):	Florida, California, Texas, Oklahoma, Nevada, New York, Utah

He lived in Boynton Beach, Florida in a mansion on Mission Hill Rd and made a small fortune in real estate while developing an interest in photography. Over the next few years, however, between about 1971 and 1975, he was in and out of court facing various charges related to sexual misconduct. He eventually raped a young woman he had lured into his truck on the pretense of photographing her for a modelling contract. This would become part of his modus operandi during his later rape and murder spree. Despite several convictions, Wilder was never jailed for any of these crimes.

Murder spree and death

While in Australia on a visit to his parents in 1982, Wilder was charged with sexual offenses against two 15-year-old girls whom he had forced to pose nude. His parents posted bail and he was allowed to return to Florida to await trial, but court delays prevented his case from being heard. The initial hearing date was finally set for April 1984, by which time he was dead.

The first murder attributed to Wilder was that of Rosario Gonzalez, last seen on 26 February 1984 at the Miami Grand Prix, where she was employed as a model and where Wilder was racing in the IMSA GTU class in a Porsche 911. Soon after, on 5 March, Wilder's former girlfriend, Miss Florida finalist Elizabeth Kenyon, went missing. Neither woman was ever found. Wilder was known to both of them, and police were able to link him to them after initial enquiries by a private investigator who had been hired to find information about Kenyon by her parents. On 15 March, Wilder went on the run.

On 18 March, he lured 21-year old Terry Ferguson away from a shopping center in Satellite Beach and murdered her, dumping her body at Canaveral Groves where it was discovered on the 23rd March. His next victim was a 19-year old woman who he abducted and transported to Bainbridge, Georgia on the 20th March. When she declined his offer to photograph her for a modelling agency, he assaulted her, wrapped her in a blanket and put her into the trunk of his car after binding her hands. In a motel room that night, he raped her then glued her eyes closed and tortured her by applying copper wires to her feet and passing an electric current through them. When she tried to escape he threatened to kill her, and a fight ensued where she was beaten and bleeding. He fled after she locked herself in the bathroom, and started pounding on the walls. Wilder fled in his car, taking all of her belongings with him. Finally she had to search for help by opening the door of the bathroom. Hotel guests and owners thought the incident was a case of domestic abuse, and her screams for help were ignored.

The next day (21 March) he approached 24-year old Terry Walden in Beaumont, Texas about posing as a model. She turned him down but, on 23 March, disappeared. Wilder transferred his stolen license plates to her Mercury Cougar and dumped her body in a canal, where she was found on 26 March. That day, the body of 21-year old Suzanne Logan was found in Oklahoma City. She had disappeared the day before. Logan had been raped and tortured before being stabbed to death.

Wilder then took 18-year old Sheryl Bonaventura captive in Colorado on 29 March. They were seen together at a diner in Silverton where they told staff they were heading for Las Vegas. Bonaventura was shot and stabbed to death around 31 March in Utah but not found until 5 May. Wilder also killed 17-year old Michelle Korfman, an aspiring model who disappeared from Las Vegas on 1 April. She remained undiscovered until 13 May.

Near Torrance, California, Wilder photographed 16-year old Tina Marie Risico before abducting her and driving her to El Centro where she was assaulted. Wilder apparently believed Risico would be "robotic enough" to help him lure other victims,^[5] so he kept her alive and took her with him to Taos, New

Mexico. Wilder had been on the FBI ten most wanted fugitives list now for some time and while he was now close to Mexico for some reason which has never been explained he and Risico now went to Gary, Indiana where she helped him abduct 16-year old Dawnette Wilt. Wilt was raped several times as Risico drove to New York. Near Rochester, he took Wilt into the woods and attempted to suffocate her before stabbing her twice and leaving her. Wilt survived, and told police Wilder was heading for Canada. In Victor, Risico persuaded 33-year old Beth Dodge to approach them. Wilder forced Dodge into his car and had Risico follow him in Dodge's Trans-Am. After a short drive, Wilder shot Dodge and dumped her in a gravel pit. He and Risico then drove the Trans Am to Logan Airport in Boston, where he bought her a ticket to Los Angeles.

On 13 April, he attempted to abduct another young woman, but she escaped. Wilder's vehicle description was broadcast out to law enforcement officials. When Wilder stopped at a gas station in Colebrook, New Hampshire it was noticed by two New Hampshire state troopers, Leo Jellison and Wayne Fortier. When the troopers approached Wilder, he retreated to car to arm himself with a .357 Magnum. Trooper Jellison grabbed Wilder from behind and subdued his arms. In the scuffle, Wilder fired into his own chest, but the bullet passed through his body into Jellison's. Wilder died and Jellison was seriously wounded, but recovered and returned to full duty.

Aftermath

Wilder was cremated in Florida, leaving a personal estate worth almost \$2 million. Along with the eight known victims he killed during February to April 1984, he has been linked to the murders and disappearances of many other women, including some whose remains were found around Florida in areas he was known to frequent. Australia's unsolved Wanda Beach Murders have also been linked to him. The bodies of Elizabeth Kenyon and Rosario Gonzalez have never been found.

References

- ↑ Crimelibrary.com (http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/wilder/index.html)
- ↑ Whiticker, Alan *Twelve Crimes That Shocked The Nation* (2005)
- ↑ Newton, Michael *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers* (2000)
- ↑ Gibney, Bruce *The Beauty Queen Killer* (1984)
- ↑ Cartel, Michael *Disguise of Sanity: Serial Mass Murderers* (1985)

External links

- Profile from Crimelibrary (http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/predators/wilder/7.html)
- Episode list of *The FBI files* including *Model killer* about Christopher Wilder (<http://times.discovery.com/tv-schedules/series.html?paid=141.13743.21141.3538.x>)
- Article from Hua Hin Observer (<http://www.observergroup.net/ob84back/stories.htm>)
- Mugshot (http://www.michaelconnelly.com/MC-CB-Christopher_Wilder_mugshot__c._1980s_.jpg)

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Categories: 1945 births | 1984 deaths | American serial killers | Australian serial killers | American rapists | FBI Top Ten Most Wanted Fugitives | People from Sydney | People from Florida | Australian Americans | Serial killers who committed suicide | Suicides by firearm in New Hampshire

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