

# Man Admits 48 Murders in Green River Case

-- Ridgway, 54, pleaded guilty to being the Green River killer, who over decades strangled women on the edges of society. --

## **BACKGROUND:**

On July 15, 1982, the body of Wendy Lee Coffield was found in the Green River in a rural area of the City of Kent in King County, Washington. Another body was found in the river within a month and Detective Dave Reichert was assigned as the lead homicide investigator. However, within a few days Reichert was again at the banks of the river investigating more deaths.

While surveying the riverbank near two bodies on August 15th, he and Detective Sue Peters discovered another body. With the murders of Debra Lynn Bonner, Marcia Faye Chapman, Opal Charmaine Mills and Cynthia Jean Hinds added to that of Coffield, it was clear that the community was not dealing with an isolated crime. Meeting in the homicide and robbery unit of the King County Sheriff's Office, a team was formed to investigate these series of seemingly linked crimes.

Thus began one of the longest and largest serial murder investigations in United States history. Eventually, the deaths of at least 48 women would be linked to the Green River killer.

Through September and October of 1982, no more bodies were found and by mid-November the investigators who had worked these initial cases with Reichert were re-assigned back to their duties. Detective Reichert remained the lead and only detective on these cases until March of 1983 when he was joined by Detective Fae Brooks. In August 1983, Larry Gross, Ben Colwell, Pat Ferguson and Liz Druin were brought together to

assist Reichert and Brooks in the investigation. By this time, the investigation was spanning the country, following leads and actively pursuing suspects.

On January 16, 1984, the King County Sheriff's Office formally created an enhanced Green River Task Force to investigate the deaths. Local law enforcement agencies including the Port of Seattle Police Department, Seattle Police Department, Pierce County Sheriff's Office, Washington State Patrol, the FBI and the Washington State Attorney General's Office all contributed detectives to assist. It was also at this time that Detective Tom Jensen was assigned to the case.

In addition to the traditional tasks of compiling a paper trail on suspects, detectives went to extraordinary lengths searching for any trace physical evidence. They collected birds' nests and animal feces, searched on hands and knees with magnifying glasses and tweezers. They knew that the entire case might hinge on a microscopic fragment that could be easily overlooked.

In 1987, George Johnston of the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab gathered what would become a key piece of evidence. After receiving a search warrant to collect a saliva sample from the key suspect, Johnston had the suspect bite down on a piece of gauze. Even though DNA identification techniques were not yet fully developed for criminal justice purposes, this gauze would prove invaluable.

In 1988, detectives began looking more closely at the DNA evidence in the case. They submitted evidence to multiple labs. However, the quality and quantity of the samples made identification impossible without destroying the evidence. For the ensuing years, Detective Jensen closely monitored developments in DNA analysis.

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By April of 1990, there were only five detectives left on the Task Force. Detective Reichert was promoted to Sergeant and was assigned to other duties in the King County Sheriff's Office. By the end of 1990, only Detective Jensen was assigned full-time to the case with Detective Doyon assisting him in a part-time capacity. He then began a long-term process of correlating evidence and managing tips, as well as continuing the investigation.

In 1997, a key suspect's saliva sample was submitted to the State Crime Lab. In February 1998, the Sheriff's Office received a report that the sample was too degraded for the most sensitive (RFLP) profile.

In April of 2001, Dave Reichert, who was elected Sheriff of King County in 1997, brought together an evidence review team to jump-start the investigation.

In September of 2001, Detective Jensen informed Sheriff Dave Reichert that the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab had matched DNA evidence to suspect Gary Leon Ridgway. The patience of investigators succeeded in definitively tying the physical evidence to a single suspect. Had they tested and thereby destroyed the genetic samples any sooner, the case might never have reached its conclusion.

At the same time, King County Prosecuting Attorney Norm Maleng assigned Senior District Prosecutor Jeff Baird to the case. On November 30, 2001, Gary Leon Ridgway was arrested and subsequently charged with the murders of Cynthia Jean Hinds, Marcia Faye Chapman, Opal Charmaine Mills and Carol Ann Christiansen.

In December of 2001, Sheriff Reichert directed the formation of the Green River Homicides Investigation Team, comprised of one Captain, one Sergeant, twelve detectives from the King County Sheriff's Office, one detective from the Port of Seattle Police Department, one detective from the Seattle Police Department and one detective from the Bainbridge Police Department. There are two Administrative

Specialists, one Evidence Specialist and one Information Technology support person. In addition to working the charged cases, the remaining cases were assigned to detectives for review.

Prosecutor Norm Maleng formed his prosecution team comprised of five deputy prosecutors, one investigator and four support staff. The Green River Homicides Team and the prosecution team (also known as the Green River Task Force) moved into their shared office space in January of 2002.

Following the formation of the Green River Homicides Team, one of the largest projects was providing discovery to the Ridgway defense. This included:

- Approximately 400,000 pages of documents.
- Approximately 15,000 photographs.
- Approximately 500 audiotapes.
- Approximately 170 videotapes.

These numbers increased as the detectives began their reviews of each of the cases. In April of 2003, many years of tenacious investigative and scientific work paid off when the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office charged Gary Leon Ridgway with three additional murders (Wendy Lee Coffield, Debra Lynn Bonner and Debra Estes). These charges were possible because of advances in the ability of scientists to identify paint samples on the molecular level. Once again, science and determined investigative work advanced the case.

On June 13, 2003, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and Gary Leon Ridgway entered into an agreement. In exchange for the Prosecutor not seeking the death penalty, Ridgway agreed to plead guilty to all murders that he committed in King County. He agreed to provide complete, truthful and candid information concerning the crimes that he had committed in King County and answer all questions during interviews conducted by the



detectives or the prosecuting attorney. Ridgway agreed to disclose the existence and precise location of all undiscovered remains of victims.

Over the next several months, detectives of the Green River Task Force interviewed Ridgway extensively. During each interview, members of the King County prosecution team and lawyers from the Ridgway defense team were present. The Task Force transported Ridgway throughout King County for the purpose of identifying the key locations where he disposed of victims' remains. Ridgway directed investigators to numerous sites where he remembered placing a victim. On each of the excursions, members of the Green River Task Force, the Security Detail (comprised of King County Sheriff's Office Special Operations members and Criminal Intelligence Unit detectives) as well as representatives from the prosecution and defense teams accompanied Ridgway. Because of this investigative tactic, four sets of human remains were found and tied to three suspected victims.

### **STORY:**

*AP* - It took almost eight minutes for the names of 48 women to be read aloud. Each time, Gary Leon Ridgway calmly said "guilty," admitting to being the nation's most prolific serial killer as part of a plea deal that keeps him off the state's death row.

"In most cases, when I killed these women, I did not know their names," Ridgway said in a statement read in court. "Most of the time I killed them the first time I met them, and I do not have a good memory of their faces."

Ridgway, 54, a short figure with glasses, thinning hair and a sandy mustache, pleaded guilty Wednesday to being the Green River killer, who over decades strangled women on the edges of society.

"Choking is what I did and I was pretty good at it," he wrote in his statement, adding that he killed "so many women I have a hard time keeping them straight."

Relatives who packed the courtroom hoped to emphasize that Ridgway's victims were more

than numbers on a gruesome list. Some held their slain relatives' photographs; others wore buttons with their likenesses.

"It's very important to us the world know she was a person," said Kandice Watt, whose sister, Roberta Hayes, was 21 when she was last seen alive in 1987. "First and foremost, she was my sister, my brother's sister, and she was important to us."

Beginning in 1982, Ridgway picked up prostitutes, strangling them and molesting their bodies, which he left in the Green River and other inconspicuous dump sites around Seattle. Nearly 20 years passed before DNA evidence linked him to the crimes.

For a half-hour Wednesday, he listened in court with an utter lack of expression as his own accounting of how he picked up each victim and where he dumped the body was read aloud. In the most matter-of-fact way, he confirmed the details, responding "yes" over and over in a clear but subdued voice.

At a later news conference, King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng said his first reaction to striking a deal that would take the death penalty off the table was no: "If any case screams out for the death penalty, this was it."

But he said he finally agreed to bring a resolution to dozens of unsolved cases. Investigators had evidence to pursue charges in seven cases but had exhausted their leads in the others, and the victims' families — including those whose loved ones had never even been found — deserved answers, Maleng said.

Some family members disagreed. "He don't deserve to live another day," said Debra York of Seattle, whose 17-year-old niece Cynthia Jean Hinds was killed in 1982, her body left on the bank of the Green River.

As part of the agreement, Ridgway must lead task force detectives to evidence, answer all their questions and submit to lie-detector tests. He led them to the bodies of four women in recent months.

"The Green River nightmare is over," Maleng said after the proceeding.

But Sheriff Dave Reichert said the investigation continues and that charges in more cases were possible. Under the plea bargain, Ridgway is not protected from the death penalty in other jurisdictions. He has not been charged elsewhere, but admitted dumping victims outside the county and in Oregon.

Ridgway's statement opened an extraordinary window on the twisted mind of a serial killer. "I wanted to kill as many women as I thought were prostitutes as I possibly could," he wrote.

He wrote he strangled many of the women, mainly runaways and prostitutes, during sex, and that he left some bodies in "clusters" and enjoyed driving by the sites afterward, thinking about what he had done. He said he sometimes stopped to have sex with the bodies "for two or three days ... till the flies came."

Victims' relatives wept quietly in the courtroom. "It was hard to sit there and see him not show any feeling and not show any remorse," said Kathy Mills, whose daughter Opal was 16 when she turned up in the Green River in 1982. Other serial killers have bragged of murdering many dozens of victims, but Ridgway's plea agreement, signed June 13, puts more murders on his record than any other serial killer in U.S. history.

Ridgway's lawyers said he was sorry and will express that to the families at his sentencing, which will be held within six months. Defense attorney Tony Savage said Ridgway's emotions came "in private, in emotional ways, in tears and in words. ... He feels terrible remorse." Ridgway has been married three times and has a son, but none of his family members attended the hearing.

The Green River Killer's murderous frenzy seemed to stop as suddenly as it started, with investigators saying the last victim had disappeared in 1984. But one killing Ridgway admitted to was in 1990, and another was in 1998.

"I picked prostitutes as my victims because I hate most prostitutes and I did not want to pay them for sex," he said. "I also picked prostitutes as victims because they were easy to pick up without being noticed. I knew they would not be reported missing right away and might never be reported missing."

In questioning Ridgway last summer, one detective asked him to rate himself one to five on a scale of evil.

"I'd say a three," Ridgway replied.

"Three?" the detective said.

Ridgway answered: "For one thing is, ah, I killed 'em, I didn't torture 'em. They went fast."

### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

Motivations are behind every action. Criminals leave psychological clues behind. Experts say the motives in serial killers are personal. They enjoy being elusive and the celebrity status. Their egos and desire for attention, encourage them to exaggerate or confess to killings they did not commit. Some want to be known as notorious killers and resent being upstaged.

"With all of them, their motives tend to be total, deep and personal," said Mike Rustigan, professor of criminology at San Francisco State University. "They feel no guilt, no remorse and have an attitude of total disdain towards their victims. ... There's a self-importance that runs in all of them. With the Unabomber, for example, he demanded that The Washington Post and The New York Times publish his manifesto. You get the feeling that if he had just laid low, he may have remained on the loose to this day. His own brother saw the manifesto in his home and he then contacted authorities. I feel he felt upstaged by the Oklahoma City bombing, which made everything he had done up to that point seem like nothing." According to Rustigan: "Typically, [serial killers keep on killing](#) until they're caught. Serial murder is an addiction to these guys. It starts out as an urge, then it becomes a compulsion, and eventually it becomes an addiction."

## BIOGRAPHY:

**Grace Kelly**

The extraordinary events of Grace Kelly's life dovetailed seamlessly into the tragic circumstances of her death. An Irish-American princess from Philadelphia's Main Line who became a real princess in Monaco; a thrilling ride with Cary Grant in the film **To Catch**

**a Thief** (1955) on a snaking road that would later be the real-life setting of her fatal car crash.

With Grace Kelly, the line between fact and fiction often blended. What always stood out, however, was her breathtaking beauty and undeniable talent.

Grace Patricia Kelly was born November 12, 1929, in Philadelphia. Her father was a famous local sculls champion in a city that revered rowers. Though he eventually achieved great wealth and power as one of the city's biggest contractors, his humble beginnings as a bricklayer prohibited him from participating as a young man in the prestigious English Diamond Sculls at the Henley Regatta. Grace's brother, Jack, avenged this slight, becoming a rowing champion and twice winning the race to which his father had been denied entry.

While Jack turned his attention to athletics, Grace focused on acting. She received family support in this endeavor, as two of her uncles were in show business: Walter C. Kelly, a famous vaudevillian; and George Kelly, a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. In fact, after graduating from the American Academy of Dramatic Art in New York, Grace made her professional debut in July 1949 in a revival of her uncle George's comedy, "The Torch Bearers."

Grace's beauty and talent soon landed her work on such early TV shows as "Studio One" and "The Hallmark Hall of Fame." Hollywood couldn't help but notice her and she made her film debut with a small part in **Fourteen Hours** (1951). Her next film, **High Noon** (1952), in which she

appeared opposite Gary Cooper, made her a star. Next came **Mogambo** (1953), in which she held her own against Hollywood heavyweights Clark Gable and Ava Gardner. Alfred Hitchcock, smitten by Grace's cool blond beauty, tapped her for the thriller **Dial M for Murder** (1954). The film soared and so did Grace's career. Hitchcock used her again opposite Jimmy Stewart in the classic thriller **Rear Window** (1954) and Grace established herself as the archetype of the director's detached but sensual feminine ideal. Curiously, however, she won the Academy Award for playing against type in **Country Girl** (1954).

Grace made other notable films, including **High Society** (1956), but it was her appearance with Cary Grant in Hitchcock's **To Catch a Thief** that sealed her legend. The two mega-stars displayed obvious chemistry as they cavorted above Monte Carlo. The next year, Grace would meet and marry the leader of that country, Prince Ranier III, effectively retiring from acting. She would devote the rest of her life to her royal duties, her family (she and Ranier had three children together) and good works on behalf of various charities. But the fairy tale had a tragic ending with Grace's death at fifty-two from injuries suffered in her fatal car crash in the very hills in which her career reached its zenith.

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:

November 12, 1929

*Grace Kelly Born*

Actress Grace Kelly is born in Philadelphia. The daughter of a former model and a wealthy industrialist, Kelly began acting as a child. After high school, she attended the American Academy for Dramatic Arts in New York. While she auditioned for Broadway plays, she supported herself by modeling and appearing in TV commercials. Her big break came in 1952, when she starred as Gary Cooper's wife in *High Noon*.

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## ENTERTAINMENT:

# 'Honey-mooners' Icon Art Carney Dies at 85



*AP.* - Art Carney, who played Jackie Gleason's sewer worker pal Ed Norton in the TV classic "The Honeymooners" and went on to win the 1974 Oscar for best actor in "Harry and Tonto," has died at 85. Carney died in Chester, Conn., on Sunday and was buried on Tuesday after a small, private funeral. He had been ill for some time.

The comic actor would be forever identified as Norton, Ralph Kramden's bowling buddy and not-too-bright upstairs neighbor on "The Honeymooners." The characters appeared in various forms from 1951 to 1956, and the show was revived briefly in 1971. The shows can still be seen on cable.

In one episode, Norton and Ralph learn to golf from an instruction book. Told to "address the ball," Norton gives a wave of the hand and says, "Hellooooo, ball!" In another episode, Norton inadvertently wins the award for best costume at a Raccoon Lodge party by showing up in his sewer worker's gear. Another time, the loose-limbed Norton teaches Ralph a finger-popping new dance called the Hucklebuck.

After "The Honeymooners," Carney battled a drinking problem for several years. His behavior became erratic while co-starring with

Walter Matthau in the Broadway run of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" in the 1960s. He dropped out of the show and spent nearly half a year in a sanitarium. His career resumed, and in 1974 he was cast in Paul Mazurksy's "Harry and Tonto" as a 72-year-old widower who travels from New York to Chicago with his pet cat. He stopped drinking during the making of the film.

When it won him his Oscar, Carney wisecracked: "You're looking at an actor whose price has just doubled."

Carney was born into an Irish-Catholic family in Mount Vernon, N.Y., on Nov. 4, 1918, and baptized Arthur William Matthew Carney. His father was a newspaperman and publicist. After appearing in amateur theatricals and imitating radio personalities, Carney won a job in 1937 traveling with Horace Heidt's dance band, doing his impressions and singing novelty songs. Later he won a job at \$225 a week imitating Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and other world leaders on a radio show, "Report to the Nation."

He was drafted into the Army in 1944 and took part in the D-Day landing at Normandy. A piece of shrapnel shattered his right leg. He was left with a leg three-quarters of an inch shorter than the other and a lifelong limp. Carney returned to radio as second banana on comedy shows, then ventured into television on "The Morey Amsterdam Show" in 1948. That brought him to the attention of Gleason.

Among his movie credits: "W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings," "The Late Show," "House Calls," "Movie Movie," "Sunburn," "Going in Style," "Roadie," "Firestarter," "The Muppets Take Manhattan" and "Last Action Hero."

Carney married his high school sweetheart, Jean Myers, in 1940. After the marriage broke up, Carney married Barbara Isaac in 1966. They divorced 10 years later, and in 1980 he and his first wife remarried.

## FEATURE:

# look rich but live cheap

One thing masters of the Live Cheap, Look Rich lifestyle will tell you is that wealth is just as much about your mindset as it is about your bank account. So learning to live a richer life may require you to start by thinking differently.

**Buy classics.** At first this sounds like an expensive move; classics always cost more. But for certain purchases, spending more may be a better investment in the long run. Cashmere: it's ridiculously expensive. But they not only look smashing, but they will last long after that GAP wool-blend sweater falls apart. Same with cars.

**Travel creatively.** As I learned at my upscale women's liberal arts college, wealthy people are always just coming back from somewhere fabulous and far away. And you can too, with a little ingenuity. If you can travel at the last-minute, remaindered airline seats are sold for cheap on the [Smarter Living](#) Web site.

**Vicarious wealth by volunteering.** Major charities always need volunteers, and they often hold a yearly bash where you can meet and mingle with the rich and famous. Or you can volunteer at a local theater or arts organization and gain access to pricey cultural events without paying a dime. Black-tie events are not only for those who can afford the \$500 door ticket. It's for those who hold the doors, too.

**Giving the appearance of wealth.** It's far easier to acquire the kind of manners and good breeding that come along with a wealthy upbringing than it is to go back and change the way you were raised.

- Always be well-groomed. Pay attention to your hair, nails and shoes.
- Be gracious. To everyone. Speak calmly and kindly.

- Don't discuss money. People with money don't need to mention what things cost, nor do they appear to care.

**Purge the poverty from your life.**

Cleaning out the clutter in your life, moving the furniture so that it feels more harmonious, not only feels good, it forces you to admit that the end table is broken and the lamp shade needs replacing and yes, it's time to buy a new refrigerator. In other words, pay attention to all the ways that poverty has crept into your home -- and make a point of fixing or upgrading each one.

**Never pay retail.** Given how many discount stores and Web sites there are, it's ridiculous to pay full price for anything. You can dress like a Vogue editor, just by shopping at Target, which features the super-cheap and trendy.

Other ways to enrich your wardrobe: shop at consignment (aka "secondhand") stores, but only in tony areas. Go straight to the "clearance" section of retailers online. And learn to time your purchases. National retail chains like Banana Republic, Ann Taylor and others have a merchandise cycle of about 6 to 8 weeks. After about four weeks of being out on the floor, the chain then rotates items to discounted tables.

**Make a bid for luxury items.** Even upscale auction houses like Christie's or Sotheby's may offer good deals on unique items for your home, and most are free and open to the public for previewing merchandise. You'll want to skip the Italian Renaissance footstools. But sometimes a group of worthwhile items from an estate sale will be sold as a lot, with bids starting as low as \$700.

**Get married, but don't have kids.**

According to Andrew Oswald, an economist at the University of Warwick in England and something of an expert on the intersection of money and happiness, getting married adds a happiness factor that's equivalent to having \$100,000 added to your household income. This is not true of having children, Oswald says. His surveys have found that adding kids to your life (or not having them at all) didn't seem to change people's happiness one way or the other.

*Quote of the Week:*

The only way to have a friend is to be one.  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Word of the Week :*

Elysian Fields *n.* A beautiful meadow in Homer where the favored of Zeus enjoy perfect happiness. By the time of Vergil, the Elysian Fields had been located in the Underworld as the home of the dead who were judged worthy. In the *Aeneid*, those blessed dead compose poetry, sing, dance, and tend to their chariots.

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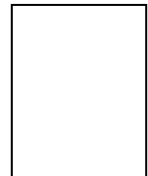
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