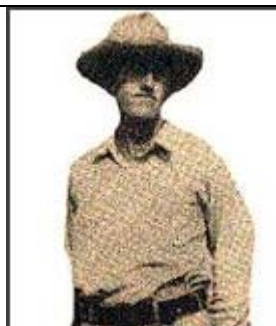


# Ray Copeland



Information summarized by  
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| Date      | Age   | Life Event   |
|-----------|-------|--|
| 1914      |       | Born in Oklahoma   |
|           |       | Moved continuously until they settled in Ozark Hills, Arkansas   |
|           |       | Dropped out of school in fourth grade to help his poor family  |
|           | 20    | Stole 2 hogs from his dad and sold them in another town  |
|           |       | Kept stealing livestock  |
| 1936      | 21-22 | Arrested in Harrison, Arkansas for forging checks  |
|           |       | Sentenced to one year in jail  |
| 1940      | 25-26 | Met his future wife Faye Della Wilson  |
| 1940-1941 | 26-27 | Married Faye six months after they met   |
| 1941      | 27    | Had first son Everett  |
| 1943      | 29    | Second son Billy Ray was born  |
| 1944      | 30-31 | Moved to Fresno County, California   |
| 1945      | 31-32 | First and only daughter Betty Lou was born   |
| 1947      | 33-34 | Third son Alvia was born   |
| 1949      | 35-36 | Accused of stealing horses from a local farmer, no charges were filed but it ruined his reputation                               |
| 1949      | 35-36 | Fourth son William Wayne was born  |
|           |       | He moved his family back to Arkansas   |
|           |       | After less than a month, Ray was arrested for cattle theft and sentenced to one year in jail                                     |
| 1950-1951 | 36-37 | Ray moved his family to Rocky Comfort, Missouri  |
| 1951      | 36-37 | Arrested for cattle theft once again and sentenced to manual labor on the Judge's farm   |
| 1953      | 38-39 | Moved his family to Illinois   |
|           |       | Moved continuously over the next eight years and in those eight years he was arrested on three separate charges of check forgery |
| 1961      | 46-47 | Ray paid for 20 cattle with a bad check and was sentenced to nine months in jail   |
|           |       | After he was released, he bought 19 more cattle at an auction with a bad check and was sentenced to another nine months in jail  |
| 1966      | 51-52 | He moved back to Missouri  |
| 1967      | 52-53 | Ray and his family bought a 40-acre farm in Mooresville, Missouri  |

|            |       |   |
|------------|-------|---|
| 1970's     | 56-65 | Started thinking of new ways to buy cattle with bad checks  |
|            |       | Developed a plan to use drifters to sign his name in their hand writing so when asked about it he could deny he knew what had happened because it was not his handwriting   |
|            |       | One drifter named Gerald Perkins was caught by the local police who already suspected Ray of being involved and found out the scam  |
|            |       | Police arrested Ray and he spent 2 years in prison for check forgery  |
| 1980's     | 65-74 | After he was released he tries to fine tune his plan by having drifters get a post office box and then having them set up their own bank accounts. He would then have them buy cattle at auctions at which point he would sell the cattle and there would be no proof of his involvement.   |
|            |       | After Ray got his use out of the drifter, he would get rid of him for good so that police could not catch up with the drifter and find out the scam.  |
| 1989       | 74-75 | Jack McCormick told police that Ray Copeland had tried to kill him after he had been employed by Ray. But then did not cooperate with local police  |
| 08/20/1989 | 74-75 | A hired worker named Jack McCormick called a hotline that gave reward money to those tips that lead to an arrest. He then called and told the hotline that he had found bones and a human skull on the Copeland farm.   |
| 10/09/1989 | 74-75 | Sheriff and around 40 officers raided the Copeland farm with a search warrant trying to find the remains of dead workers  |
| 10/17/1989 | 74-75 | Officers discover three bodies in a barn that were buried in three separate graves. The men were identified as 21-year-old Paul Jason Cowart, from Dardanelle, Arkansas; 27-year-old John W. Freeman, from Tulsa, Oklahoma; and 27-year-old Jimmie Dale Harvey, from Springfield, Missouri. |
|            |       | Wayne Warner was later found in a barn under bales of hay that were stacked up to the ceiling.  |
|            |       | Denis Murphy was the last to be found and he was found in an old well near where Wayne Warner was found. All had been shot in the back of the head with a .22 caliber rifle.  |
|            |       | In addition to the bodies found investigators also found a quilt that Faye had made out of the workers clothing and a list that had twelve names on it and all were crossed out. Five of the men on that list were the bodies that were found and the others were all missing.              |
| 11/01/1990 | 75-76 | Faye's defense was that her husband committed the murder without her knowledge and that she was a victim of battered woman's syndrome.  |
|            |       | After Faye's conviction a sheriff asked Ray what his thoughts about it were and he responded "Well, those things happen to some you know"   |
| 03/07/1991 | 76    | Copeland goes to trial for five counts of murder in the first degree  |
|            |       | Responds to conviction by saying "I'm OK"   |
| 1993       | 78    | Dies in Potosi Correctional Center  |

### General Information

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Sex                            | Male   |
| Race                           | White  |
| Number of victims              | 5 maybe more (12 names were crossed out on a list) |
| Country where killing occurred | United States                                      |
| States where killing occurred  | Missouri   |
| Type of killer                 | Organized  |
| Height                         |  |

### Childhood Information

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Date of birth      | ?-?-1914             |
| Location           | Oklahoma             |
| Birth order        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> of 5 |
| Number of siblings | Four                 |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| XYY?                                    |  |
| Raised by                               | Both parents   |
| Birth category                          | Middle   |
| Parent's marital status                 | Married  |
| Family event                            | Moved a lot, great depression caused hardships on their family               |
| Age of family event                     | Early childhood  |
| Problems in school?                     | Had to drop out in fourth grade in order to help support family              |
| Teased while in school?                 | No   |
| Physically attractive?                  | No   |
| Physical defect?                        | No   |
| Speech defect?                          | No   |
| Head injury?                            | No   |
| Physically abused?                      | Probably got beatings b/c they were common in this time period but no record |
| Psychologically abused?                 | No   |
| Sexually abused?                        | No   |
| Father's occupation                     | Farmer   |
| Age of first sexual experience          | After marriage to Faye   |
| Age when first had intercourse          | After marriage to Faye   |
| Mother's occupation                     | House mother   |
| Father abused drugs/alcohol             | No   |
| Mother abused drugs/alcohol             | No   |
| <b>Cognitive Ability</b>                |  |
| Highest grade in school                 | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Highest degree                          | None, dropped out in fourth grade  |
| Grades in school                        | Unknown  |
| IQ                                      | Unknown  |
| <b>Work History</b>                     |  |
| Served in the military?                 | No   |
| Branch                                  |  |
| Type of discharge                       |  |
| Saw combat duty                         |  |
| Killed enemy during service?            |  |
| Applied for job as a cop?               | No   |
| Worked in law enforcement?              | No   |
| Fired from jobs?                        | Yes had bad reputation for his various crimes                                |
| Types of jobs worked                    | Farming jobs   |
| Employment status during series         | self employed as a farmer, would buy and sell livestock                      |
| <b>Relationships</b>                    |  |
| Sexual preference                       | Hetero   |
| Marital status                          | Married  |
| Number of children                      | 5  |
| Lives with his children                 | Had all moved out by this time but lived near in Chillicothe, Missouri       |
| Living with                             | Spouse   |
| <b>Triad</b>                            |  |
| Animal torture                          | No   |
| Fire setting                            | No   |
| Bed wetting                             | No   |
| <b>Killer Psychological Information</b> |  |
| Abused drugs?                           | No   |

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Abused alcohol?                     | Unknown  |
| Been to a psychologist?             | No   |
| Time in forensic hospital?          | No   |
| Diagnosis                           | None   |
| <b>Killer Criminal History</b>      |  |
| Committed previous crimes?          | Yes  |
| Spend time in jail?                 | Yes  |
| Spend time in prison?               | Yes  |
| Killed prior to series? Age?        | No   |
| <b>Serial Killing</b>               |  |
| Number of victims                   | 5 that were found but twelve names all together had X's by them and others were all missing  |
| Victim type                         | Drifters or people that would not be remembered , most were drunks who would agree to stay sober for a warm bed and three square meals |
| Killer age at start of series       | Unknown when first killing was   |
| Gender of victims                   | Males  |
| Race of victims                     | White  |
| Age of victims                      | 21, 27, 27   |
| Method of killing                   | Shot victim in the back of the head with .22 rifle   |
| Type of serial killer               | Organized opportune killer   |
| How close did killer live?          | Lived at crime scene (happened on his 40 acre farm)  |
| Killing occurred in home of victim? | No   |
| Killing occurred in home of killer? | Yes  |
| Weapon                              | .22 caliber Marlin bolt-action rifle   |
| <b>Behavior During Crimes</b>       |  |
| Rape?                               | No   |
| Tortured victims?                   | No   |
| Stalked victims?                    | No   |
| Overkill?                           | No   |
| Quick & efficient?                  | Yes shot in back of the head   |
| Used blindfold?                     | No   |
| Bound the victims?                  | No   |
| <b>After Death Behavior</b>         |  |
| Sex with the body?                  | No   |
| Mutilated body?                     | No   |
| Ate part of the body?               | No   |
| Drank victim's blood?               | No   |
| Posed the body?                     | No   |
| Took totem – body part              | No   |
| Took totem – personal item          | Had their clothing (was made into a quilt)   |
| Robbed victim or location           | Would take clothing which Faye made quilt out of   |
| <b>Disposal of Body</b>             |  |
| Left at scene, no attempt to hide   | No   |
| Left at scene, hidden               | No   |
| Left at scene, buried               | Yes crime scene was his home and he would bury the bodies throughout his home  |
| Moved, no attempt to hide           | No   |
| Moved, buried                       | No   |
| Cut-up and disposed of              | No   |
| Moved, too home                     | All in separate places throughout their farm or barns that Ray was known to use  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Sentencing                    |  |
| Date killer arrested          | around late 1989                               |
| Date convicted                | March 1991                                     |
| Sentence                      | Death  |
| Killer executed?              | No died of old age before he could be executed |
| Did killer plead NGRI?        | No   |
| Was the NGRI plea successful? |  |
| Name and state of prison      | Potosi Correctional Center, MO                 |
| Killer committed suicide?     | No   |
| Killer killed in prison?      | No   |
| Date of death                 | 1993   |

**References**

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