

Richard Francis Cottingham
“The Torso Killer”



Information researched and summarized by
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Date	Age	Life Event
11/25/1946	0	Born in Bronx, NY
1958	12	Family settled in River Vale, NJ when Richard was still a youngster
1958	12	Entered in the seventh grade at St. Andrews, a parochial school for boys and girls—had trouble making friends, took an interest in homing pigeons and tinkering around the house and yard with his mother
1960	14	Entered Pascack Valley High School in Hillsdale—became more accepted by peers, but he was never a star, he just blended in with the crowd.
1960-1964	14-18	Joined cross country and track team—he picked the event that suited his personality; he chose the solitude and loneliness of the long distance runner.
1964	18	Graduated from Pascack Valley High School
1964-1966	18-20	Worked for father’s insurance company Metropolitan Life as a computer operator and took courses to learn more about computers.
1966	20	Joined Blue Cross Blue Shield of Greater New York as a computer operator
1967	21	Strangled to death Nancy Schiava Vogel (WF, 29)
10/03/1969	22	Charged and convicted of intoxicated driving (New York City): 10 days jail & \$50 fine
05/03/1970	23	Married Janet at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Queens Village, NY
1970-1974	23-28	Lived at the apartments called Ledgewood Terrace in Little Ferry, the site where his first victim Maryann Carr, was later found dead.
08/21/1972	25	Charged and convicted of shoplifting at Stern’s Department Store in Paramus, NJ. Received a \$50 fine
09/04/1973	26	New York City: Charged with robbery, sodomy, sexual assault, but case was dismissed
10/15/1973	26	First child, Blair, was born
02/12/1974	27	New York City: Charged with unlawful imprisonment, robbery, but case was dismissed
February 1975	28	Moved into new rented three-bedroom home at 29 Vreeland Street in Lodi, NJ
03/28/1975	28	Second child, Scott, was born
10/13/1976	29	Last child, Jenny, was born
12/16/1977	31	First victim’s body, Maryann Carr (WF, 26), was found, bound at the hands and feet and strangled with a ligature around her neck.
1977-1980	31-34	Had extramarital affair with Barbara Lucas

09/23/1978	31	Abducted Karen Schilt in New York City, drugged, and sexually assaulted her, and dumped her in a sewer at the apartment complex in Little Ferry, NJ.
10/13/1978	31	Picked up a pregnant prostitute named Susan Geiger. Drugged, beat, and raped her and left her in a motel room in South Hackensack, NJ.
April 1979	32	Wife Janet filed for divorce
12/02/1979	33	Second victim Deedeh Goodarzi's (WF, 23) body and third victim "Jane Doe's" (WF) body were found with the hands and heads removed. The mutilated bodies were found in a burned room at the Travel Inn Motor Hotel at 515 West 42d Street
1980	33	Had extramarital affair with Jean Connelly from early 1980 to just before his arrest in May 1980.
05/04/1980	33	Body of fourth victim, Valerie Ann Street (WF, 19), was found naked, beaten, and bleeding from one of her breasts, at the Quality Inn Motel in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ
05/12/1980	33	Drugged, beat, and savagely bit Pamela Weisenfeld and dumped her in a parking lot in Teaneck, NJ.
05/15/1980	33	Body of fifth victim, Jean Reyner (WF, 25) was found stabbed, mutilated, and strangled in the Hotel Seville at 22 East 29th Street, near Fifth Avenue
05/22/1980	33	Assaulted, raped, and attempted to kill 18 year-old prostitute Leslie O'Dell in a motel room in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ. Arrested while attempting to flee a Hasbrouck Heights, NJ motel, with Leslie Ann O'Dell inside, badly beaten.
June 1980	33	Wife withdrew divorce and moved to Poughkeepsie, New York with her three children.
08/14/1980	33	New York City: Charged with triple homicide-Mary Ann Jean Reyner (May 15, 1980); Deedeh Goodarzi and "Jane Doe" (December 2, 1979): pending trial
09/15/1980	33	Identified in police lineup by victims Susan Geiger and Karen Schilt
09/17/1980	33	Bergen County: 21-count indictment
06//06/1981	34	Testified in his own defense at his murder trial. Included details of his fascination with bondage ever since he was a child, but denied that he was into hurting others. Denied that he knew any of the women who claimed to be his victims except for Leslie O'Dell, for which he was caught.
06/11/1981	34	Bergen County: convicted of 15 of 20 counts
06/14/1981	34	Attempted suicide by drinking six ounces of a liquid antidepressant in his cell at the Bergen County jail
07/25/1981	34	Sentenced to 173-197 years in state prison; prison term after applying concurrent terms for multiple kidnap and assault convictions is 60-95 years for 1981 sentence; also fined \$2,350.
02/25/1982	35	Collapsed while being escorted to jail cell while awaiting Maryann Carr trial and was diagnosed with a duodenal ulcer. This resulted in a mistrial for the Carr case.
10/04/1982	35	Attempted to escape during Carr trial, but was quickly recaptured by authorities.
10/12/1982	35	Convicted of second degree murder of Maryann Carr in a nonjury trial in Bergen County, NJ.
10/15/1982	35	Sentenced to 25 years to life for the Carr murder, with a minimum term of 30 years to be served consecutively with the 1980 sentence.
03/30/1983	36	Removed from maximum security state prison in Trenton and transferred to the men's house of detention in Manhattan, NY for trial on the August 1980 charges of murdering Deedeh Goodarzi, "Jane Doe," and Jean Reyner.
07/05/1984	37	Attempted suicide by slashing his left forearm with a razor before startled jurors
07/09/1984	37	Convicted in New York for the August 1980 charges of murdering Goodarzi, "Jane Doe," and Reyner.
08/28/1984	37	Sentenced in Manhattan to an additional 75 years to life for the murders of Goodarzi, "Jane Doe," and Reyner.

09/18/2010	63	Cottingham pleads guilty to the 1967 murder of Nancy Schiava Vogel (WF, 29)
General Information		
Sex	Male	
Race	White	
Number of victims	Suspected and convicted of 6, confessed to one (Nancy Vogel)	
Country where killing occurred	United States	
States where killing occurred	New York & New Jersey	
Cities where killing occurred	New York City & Hasbrouck Heights	
Type of killer	Mixed lust	
Height	5'10"	
Childhood Information		
Date of birth	November 25, 1946	
Location	Bronx, NY	
Birth order	1 st of 3	
Number of siblings	2	
XYY?		
Raised by	Both parents	
Birth category	Oldest	
Parent's marital status	Married	
Family event	None	
Age of family event	N/A	
Problems in school?	Had trouble making friends at St. Andrews because he was new to the area and because he was a commuting school child. He also did not get to know many other kids in his neighborhood around the family's home in Cleveland Avenue in River Vale. Not an athletic child and his poor eyesight made sports difficult, but he did join the track team in high school.	
Teased while in school?	No	
Physically attractive?	He was a handsome boy and an average looking adult	
Physical defect?	No	
Speech defect?	No	
Head injury?	No	
Physically abused?	No	
Psychologically abused?	No	
Sexually abused?	No	
Father's occupation	Executive at Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in NY	
Age of first sexual experience		
Age when first had intercourse		
Mother's occupation	Housewife	
Father abused drugs/alcohol	No	
Mother abused drugs/alcohol	No	
Cognitive Ability		
Highest grade in school	12, Graduated from high school	
Highest degree	High School Diploma	
Grades in school	Average	
IQ	Average	
Source of IQ information	Leith (1983, page 67)	
Work History		
Served in the military?	No	
Branch	N/A	
Type of discharge	N/A	

Saw combat duty	N/A
Killed enemy during service?	N/A
Applied for job as a cop?	No
Worked in law enforcement?	No
Fired from jobs?	No
Types of jobs worked	Worked as computer operator at father's insurance company, Metropolitan Life, and then worked as a computer operator at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Greater New York
Employment status during series	Employed as a computer operator
Relationships	
Sexual preference	Heterosexual
Marital status	Married
Number of children	3
Lives with his children	Yes
Living with	Spouse (Janet) & three children (Blair, Scott, & Jenny)
Triad	
Animal torture	No
Fire setting	No
Bed wetting	No
Killer Psychological Information	
Abused drugs?	No
Abused alcohol?	No
Been to a psychologist?	No
Time in forensic hospital?	No
Diagnosis	No
Killer Criminal History	
Committed previous crimes?	Yes
Spend time in jail?	Yes
Spend time in prison?	No
Killed prior to series? Age?	No
Serial Killing	
Number of victims	6
Victim type	Four prostitutes and one medical technician
Killer age at start of series	21
Date of first kill in series	1967
Date of final kill in series	May 15, 1980
Gender of victims	Female
Race of victims	Five were White and one was Kuwaiti
Age of victims	19, 23, 25, 26, 29
Type of victim	Four prostitutes and one medical technician
Method of killing	Strangulation
Weapon	Used knife to torture the victims, and to mutilate the bodies after the killing
Was gun used?	No
Type	N/A
Did killer have a partner?	No
Name of partner	N/A
Sex of partner	N/A
Type of serial killer	Mixed lust
How close did killer live?	Drove to crime

Location of first contact	Maryann Carr = her apartment; Prostitutes = street or bar
Location of killing	Maryann Carr = parking lot of motel; Prostitutes = motel room
Killing occurred in home of victim?	No
Killing occurred in home of killer?	No
Victim abducted or killed at contact?	Abducted and drugged
Behavior During Crimes	
Rape?	Yes
Tortured victims?	Yes
Stalked victims?	Yes in the case of Maryann Carr, but no in the cases of the prostitutes
Overkill?	Yes
Quick & efficient?	No
Used blindfold?	No
Bound the victims?	Yes
After Death Behavior	
Sex with the body?	No
Mutilated body?	Yes
Ate part of the body?	No
Drank victim's blood?	No
Posed the body?	No
Took totem – body part	No
Took totem – personal item	Yes
Robbed victim or location	No
Disposal of Body	
Left at scene, no attempt to hide	Yes; attempted to set fire to two of victims
Left at scene, hidden	No
Left at scene, buried	No
Moved, no attempt to hide	No
Moved, buried	No
Cut-up and disposed of	No
Moved, to home	No
Sentencing	
Date killer arrested	May 22, 1980
Date convicted	*June 11, 1981 for murder of Valorie Street and assault of Karen Schilt, Susan Geiger, and Leslie O'Dell *October 12, 1982 for murder of Maryann Carr *July 9, 1984 for murder of Deedeh Goodarzi, "Jane Doe," and Jean Reyner
Sentence	*173-197 years for June 11 th conviction *25 years to life, with a minimum term of 30 years to be served consecutively with June 11 th conviction for October 12 th conviction *75 years to life for July 9 th conviction
Killer executed?	No
Did killer plead NGRI?	No
Was the NGRI plea successful?	N/A
Name and state of prison	Trenton State Prison in New Jersey
Killer committed suicide?	Attempted twice
Killer killed in prison?	
Date of death	

References

Leith, R. (1993). *The torso killer*. New York, NY: Pinnacle Books.

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