

Danny Rolling

The “Gainesville Ripper”



Information summarized by

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Date	Age	Life Event
1953		Claudia married James Rolling when she was only 19-years old. James was a local police officer who beat his wife on occasion. Claudia was found with child two weeks into the couple’s marriage, which angered James. Throughout the pregnancy, husband James beat Claudia. Claudia left James, but returned to continue the marriage.
05/26/1954	0	Danny Rolling was born in Shreveport, Louisiana following a difficult delivery, which consisted of the use of forceps. Danny was the older of two sons. Following Danny’s birth, James was verbally abusive to Danny, because James did not want children.
Nov. 1955	1	The first incidence of physical abuse towards Danny was when Danny started crawling. James did not like the way that his son was crawling and beat him.
08/15/1955	1	Danny’s mother gave birth to a second son Kevin. James seemed to be more violent towards Danny after the birth of Danny’s brother.
1958	4	Claudia left James due to the abuse. Claudia stayed away for six

		months until she listened to James' pleas and returned home.
Dec. 1959	5	Several things took place at this point in time. Danny's father tied him up about six times in a six-month time period. In another situation, Danny tried stealing a candy bar, but was caught by his parents and made to return to the store and apologize to the owner.
		James found a puppy while at work and took the dog home. Danny became fond of the dog and was glad to have something to confide in. James constantly beat the dog, according to Danny and neighbors. James later killed the dog by repeated torture, and the dog actually died in Danny's arms.
1959		This is the first reported case of James refusing to hug or show affection to his son Danny. James believed hugging was sissy stuff and refused to hug his own son.
1962	8	Now living in Columbus, Claudia left James again because of his violent behavior. They eventually got back together and moved to Shreveport. Claudia admitted later in court that Danny was suffering physical abuse at least once or twice a week at the hands of his father. The children were not allowed to have birthdays or holidays.
12/25/1963		Because the violence was so bad, Claudia left James again with both boys. She packed the Christmas tree in the car and left, but she did not stay gone long.
1963	9	Claudia suffered from a nervous breakdown. Danny failed the third grade for repeatedly missing school due to illnesses. School counselors described Danny as "suffering from an inferiority complex, with aggressive tendencies and poor impulse control." It was recommended that Danny receive counseling, but he never did. Claudia again left with the boys, but she went back to James two weeks later. Danny began to use his artistic talent he shared with his mother to create a world of his own.
1964	10	In an attempt to teach the boys how to drive, James slapped Danny in the face and berated him for not knowing how to use the clutch. Danny failed the third grade again. During this time, Claudia left James once again, and Danny begged his mother not to return home.
1965	11	Danny walked in on his parents having an argument. His mother slit her wrists with a razor and then locked herself in the bathroom. James knocked down the door and continued to argue with Claudia. Rolling watched as his mother laid on the floor bleeding. Claudia was committed to a hospital. Danny tried to stop his father from beating his mother, and in return, was beaten for interfering. Danny began to play the guitar and would sing his prayers. He started to fantasize about sadistic violence. The fantasies became more sexually violent. Danny began to have a serious alcohol problem. He stole the alcohol or got it from friends.
Aug. 1966	12	James beat Danny for not receiving a hair cut for school. He beat

		Danny with a belt buckle and shaved his head. Kids teased him as a result and called him names such as “Sasquatch” or “Bigfoot.” Danny’s father attempted to kill his mother.
Sept. 1966		Danny’s father found him drinking with a friend. Danny was dragged home by the neck and thrown in jail for two weeks. Danny refused to talk to his mother. He grabbed a nap sack and ran away from home. Danny spent his first night in the nearby woods. He masturbated to fantasies of killing people and controlling them. He returned home when hunger overwhelmed him.
1967	13	Danny and his brother, Kevin, were handcuffed together on the floor after not cutting the grass to their father’s liking. While their father knelt on their lungs, Danny pleaded with him to stop and threatened suicide.
1968	14	Danny saw a naked girl for the first time and began peeking through a neighbor’s bathroom window and was caught twice by neighbors. Father caught Danny and beat him up on the ground. Danny was still being beat by his father and attempted suicide, but failed. Danny had dreams of people beating and torturing him with demons going through him. Danny was thrown out of his home by his father after a fight over whether he could wear jeans to church. Danny’s mother snuck him back home at night.
12/25/1969	15	Danny got a guitar for Christmas and taught himself to play and write his own songs. Danny got a job at Dairy Queen, which he had to quit after a week because his father made him after Danny’s grades dropped. Danny became more dark and aggressive.
1970	16	Danny was thrown in jail after his father caught him drinking with a neighbor.
02/17/1971		Danny hunted and killed many animals, including shooting a snake, and was arrested again for intoxication.
03/01/1971	17	Danny threatened his father that if he did not sign him up for the Navy, he would run away from home for good. He had dropped out of high school by this time, but received his high school equivalent.
06/28/1971		Danny failed the Navy enlistment test and joined the Air Force in Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. He worked Security police and Strategic Air Command at Homestead AFB, Florida. Became Airman First Class Rolling, tripped on acid over 100 times, and did other drugs.
1972	18	Danny was locked up for a drug possession charge and for disobeying orders, lost stripe, and was diagnosed by a psychiatrist as having a personality disorder. He was forced to leave under honorable discharge. Lost virginity when high off LSD and regretted it the next morning.
1973	19	After discharge, returned to Shreveport to live with grandfather and found religion at Pentecostal Church. Danny was baptized and became involved in many church activities. Met Omatha Ann Halko, who he thought God gave to him.

09/06/1974	20	Married Omatha Ann Halko, who was pregnant.
1975	21	Daughter Kiley Danielle was born, and Danny began to feel the pressure of working 2 jobs to support them. Danny began drinking and smoking marijuana again, left church and acted so irrational that Omatha became afraid of him (he would threaten her life). Danny would run off for hours or days without telling her anything.
1976	22	Danny was caught peeking in windows and returned home to his wife by an officer. Danny claimed he saw weird things (UFO, demons, Jesus, ghosts). His wife called his parents when he stopped going to work and his father came to the house and put a knife to his throat.
1977	23	Danny put a gun to his wife's head when she said she was going to leave him. He threatened to kill her and ex-boyfriend when he caught them having an affair. Beat up ex-boyfriend and Omatha after she threatened to leave him, then turned the gun on himself; she begged him to stop. Omatha filed for separation and this was devastating to him. They were divorced six months later. Danny committed his first rape on a woman who resembled Omatha. Danny got in bad car accident that resulted in a woman's death and was tormented by this incident.
1978	24	Danny became suicidal, but could not complete the act. He started to date Mary Lynn (17) and went to church with her. Danny began to commit numerous robberies, and wished he were shot while committing these crimes.
05/25/1979		He robbed a Winn Dixie supermarket in Montgomery, Alabama of \$800.00
05/31/1979		He robbed another Winn Dixie in Columbus, Georgia. Half of an hour later, he was arrested by three officers and confessed to the armed robberies in Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana.
07/31/1979	25	Danny was sentenced to two concurrent 6 year terms for armed robberies. The first time his mother saw him in prison, she described him as thin and distressed. By her second visit, he had put on weight and was bodybuilding. He seemed to have learned to cope with prison life.
08/20/1979		Danny was processed into the Georgia prison system at the Medical Classification Canter in Jackson, Georgia.
10/08/1979		He escaped from a road gang while they were chopping down tress. He surrendered about 100 yards from the prison's boundaries after an officer fired a warning shot.
05/13/1980		He was sent to Reidsville prison for about 6 months. He was almost raped there. He also tried to kill a cat that hung around the prison by throwing a rock at it.
		26

		sent him back to the Montgomery County Jail.
	26	He was caught trying to escape again and sent to the The Hole for several weeks. He spent Thanksgiving in the Hole for fighting. Next, he was sent to the St. Clair County Jail to finish up his sentence. He was a trustee there and ran off after dumping the garbage one afternoon. He made it out of Alabama, but was caught 3 days later in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Danny was immediately sent back to the Alabama Classification Center. He remained there for 3 months until being sent to the Staten Correctional Facility. He earned a good reputation there as a boxer; he never lost a fight. He saw his first and only total eclipse of the sun at Staten.
06/07/1984		Danny was released from the Alabama Prison. He returned to Shreveport to see his mother and father. He stayed there a short time until he and James got into another fight. He then stayed with his Aunt Agnes until eventually returning to his parents.
Nov 1984	30	Danny broke into a young girl's home after watching her for several hours. His intent was to rape her, but she started crying and he felt bad. He decided not to rape her. Instead, they talked, had a cup of coffee, sang songs to each other, and then engaged in consensual sex. She took him home and then he fled town in fear that she would call the police.
01/15/1985		Danny traveled to Camarillo, California to visit his aunt, uncle, and cousin. He then hitchhiked all around for about 6 or 7 months, visiting more family in Florida. He then moved in with his aunt and uncle in California for 3 months. He left abruptly, claiming he had to see his daughter back in Shreveport.
		He got in a motorcycle accident and was treated for a concussion and nerve damage to his neck. He hitch hiked a ride from Camarillo to Boulder, Colorado and stayed there for about 2 weeks. He then traveled to the Black Hills of South Dakota for approximately 2 weeks and continued on to Columbus, Georgia for another month.
07/22/1985	31	He robbed a Kroger supermarket of \$290.
07/23/1985		Danny stole the keys to the family's car and took off in it. Police arrested him the following morning.
03/20/1986		Danny Rolling pled guilty to the Kroger robbery and was sentenced to 4 years in the Jackson County Jail.
04/15/1986		He escaped from the jail by simply walking off and swimming the Snake River that ran through Jackson, Mississippi.
07/19/1988	32	Danny was paroled from the Mississippi Penitentiary under the conditions that he return to Shreveport. He did not have much success in finding a job.
11/04/1989	35	Danny was fired from work. His boss claimed that he missed three consecutive days of work and when he was confronted about it, exploded in a fit of rage and threatened to kill the manger and cook.
11/06/1989	35	The bodies of three victims were found. Julie Grissom (24), her father Tom Grissom, and her nephew, Sean (8). The medical

		examiner estimated the time of death to be two days prior-the day Danny Rolling lost his job.
12/24/1989		Danny and James Rolling were fighting. Danny left to wander the streets. He came upon a house where he had watched a woman undress before and broke in. No one was home. While waiting for her to return, he watched television, listened to her stereo, and sampled her vast collection of alcohol. She never came back so he stole about \$30 worth of dimes, a fifth of Chivas Regal, and a .38 caliber revolver.
05/18/1990		Danny got into a fight with his father. He shot James once in the stomach and again in the forehead.
06/02/1990	36	Danny broke into the home of Michael Kennedy and stole 2 handguns and the identification papers of the deceased Michael Kennedy, Jr.
06-12-1990		Danny robbed Westwood United superstore, getting away with \$1661.00 He was videotaped telling witnesses, "Thank you...God bless...please pray for me...God knows I need it."
06-30-1990		Danny returned to the Westward United Superstore and stole \$2,001.00.
07-09-1990		Danny made collect calls to Shreveport in which he described hiding in the woods and evading police. He smoked cocaine for the first time.
07-22-1990		Danny took a bus to Sarasota, Florida. It was there that he began his transition into Michael Kennedy, Jr.
08-23-1990		Danny Rolling checked in a local hotel under the assumed name, Michael Kennedy, Jr. He set up camp in a wooded area within two miles of all his crime scenes.
August 1990		He burgled the apartment of Christopher Osborne, stole his car, and drove toward Tampa, Florida. There he burgled several houses and a convenience store leaving a trail of evidence behind.
08-24-1990		Danny broke into the house of two college freshman armed with an automatic pistol and knife. He covered her mouth with duct tape and stabbed Sonja Larson (17) to death. He next taped Christina Powell's (17) mouth and bound her hands. He removed her clothes and fondled her. He forced her to perform oral sex on him and then he raped her. Next, he stabbed her 5 times, killing her. He returned to Sonja's body and raped her again. He fled their apartment throwing all evidence in a dumpster. While riding away on his bike, he began to feel ill and found one of the girl's nipples in his bag.
08-25-1990		Danny killed Christa Hoyt (18). The beheaded body sat upright at the edge of her bed. Her nipples lay beside her. Her head sat on a shelf across the room.
08-27-1990		Danny broke into the apartment of Tracy Paules (23) and Manuel Toboada (23) and killed both. No mutilations to these bodies, possibly interrupted before he could.
08-28-1990		Police began their surveillance of Edward Humphrey, the suspected

		killer. Danny narrowly escaped arrest on bank robbery charges.
		Danny shared his campsite with Tony Danzy.
		Rolling ran from police. They discovered his campsite upon pursuit. They found a number of items linking him to the murders as well as a bag of cash covered in pink dye.
08-29-1990		Danzy threatened to call the police on Rolling. Rolling made plans to flee the area.
08-30-1990		Christopher Osborne found his apartment broken into.
08-31-1990		Thousands of students left Gainesville, 700 did not return.
09-01-1990		Tampa resident Larry Lawrence and Holli Paula found their apartment broken into.
09-02-1990		A Tampa Save-n-Pack was robbed.
09-03-1990		Danny Rolling assumed the identity of Jesse Lang.
09-08-1990		Danny stole another car and headed for Ocala and attempted to rob a Winn Dixie supermarket. While forcing the manager at gunpoint to empty the office safe, the store's bookkeeper called police from a phone in the front of the store. Police arrived as he pulled out of the lot and a high-speed chase began. After crashing his car, he fled on foot to a nearby office where police arrested him.
09-12-1990		The "Gainesville Ripper" story made the front page of every news paper.
01-01-1991		Rolling ripped a toilet from its mounting and threw it across the room. His defense attorney asked for psychological tests and moved to withdraw the guilty plea on Rolling's armed robbery charges.
September October 1991	37	Convicted of three Tampa burglaries and sentenced to three life terms plus 170 years.
November 1991		DNA linked Danny to three Shreveport murders, which were linked to the Gainesville murders.
May 1992		Sentenced to life sentence plus 30 years for the First Union Bank robbery.
May 1992		Attempted suicide several times and was sent to the "psycho ward" of the Florida State Prison.
June 1992	38	Started correspondence with Sondra London from prison.
June 1992		Charged with Gainesville murders while in prison.
February 1993		Announced engagement to Sondra London.
August 1993	39	Wrote <i>Making of a Serial Killer</i> with Sondra London.
February 1994		Plead guilty to 5 murder charges.
March 1994		Jury recommended 5 death sentences.
March 1994		Danny's father beat his mother and threw her out of the house. She died shortly after.
April 1994		Danny apologized to the court for the crimes he committed.

April 1994		Sentenced to death.
March 1997	42	Danny's appeal was rejected by the Florida Supreme Court.
10-25-2006	52	Danny is executed by lethal injection
General Information		
Sex	Male	
Race	White	
Number of victims	5 in series, 3 before series	
Country where killing occurred	United States	
States where killing occurred	Florida	
Childhood Information		
Date of birth	May 26, 1954	
Location	Shreveport, Louisiana	
Birth order	1 st of 2	
Number of siblings	1 younger brother, Kevin	
XYY?	No	
Raised by	Both parents	
Birth category	Oldest	
Parent's marital status	Married	
Family event	Mother hospitalized for nervous breakdown	
Age of family event	3 rd grade	
Problems in school?	Nervousness, personality problems, frequent absences	
Teased while in school?	Yes	
Physically attractive?	Yes	
Physical defect?	No	
Speech defect?	No	
Head injury?	6 mo- father kicked into wall, 13- father punched in face, 31- motorcycle accident results in concussion and nerve damage, 35- father punched in head	
Physically abused?	Yes, beating 2 x week, father tied Danny and brother together outside	
Psychologically abused?	Yes, father never accepted Danny, nothing Danny did was every right, ridicule, father would show gun to Danny and threaten to kill him	
Sexually abused?	No evidence	
Father's occupation	Police officer	
Age of first sexual experience	17	
Age when first had intercourse	17	
Mother's occupation	Homemaker	
Father abused drugs/alcohol	No evidence	
Mother abused drugs/alcohol	No evidence	
Cognitive Ability		
Highest grade in school	10	
Highest degree	GED	
Grades in school	A student until 3 rd grade, then D's and F's	
IQ	89	
Work History		
Served in the military?	Yes	
Branch	Air Force	
Type of discharge	Dismissed for drug and alcohol abuse and antisocial tendencies	
Saw combat duty	No	

Killed enemy during service?	No
Applied for job as a cop?	No
Worked in law enforcement?	No
Fired from jobs?	Yes
Types of jobs worked	Retail and food service
Employment status during series	Unemployed drifter
Relationships	
Sexual preference	Heterosexual
Marital status	Divorced
Number of children	1
Lives with his children	No
Living with	Self
Triad	
Animal torture	Yes, stoned a cat to death in prison
Fire setting	No evidence
Bed wetting	No evidence
Killer Psychological Information	
Abused drugs?	Yes, marijuana and LSD
Abused alcohol?	Yes, severe alcoholic
Been to a psychologist?	Yes
Time in forensic hospital?	Yes
Diagnosis	Severe personality disorder
Killer Criminal History	
Committed previous crimes?	Yes, arrest for voyeurism, 8 yrs for robbery
Spend time in jail?	Yes
Spend time in prison?	Yes
Killed prior to series? Age?	No
Serial Killing	
Number of victims	5
Victim type	Young women (Note: Rolling did kill 1 male during his series but simply because he was an obstacle to his primary target)
Killer age at start of series	38
Gender of victims	3 men, 5 women
Race of victims	White
Age of victims	8, 17, 18(2), 23(2), 24, 55
Method of killing	Stabbing
Type of serial killer	Disorganized lust
How close did killer live?	Within walking distance
Killing occurred in home of victim?	Yes
Killing occurred in home of killer?	No
Weapon	Killer brought with him
Behavior During Crimes	
Rape?	Yes, only female victims
Tortured victims?	Yes
Stalked victims?	Sometimes
Overkill?	Yes
Quick & efficient?	No
Used blindfold?	Sometimes
Bound the victims?	Yes
After Death Behavior	

Sex with the body?	Sometimes
Mutilated body?	Yes
Ate part of the body?	No
Drank victim's blood?	No
Posed the body?	Yes
Took totem – body part	No
Took totem – personal item	No
Robbed victim or location	No
Disposal of Body	
Left at scene, no attempt to hide	Yes
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, too home	No
Sentencing	
Date killer arrested	September 8, 1990
Date convicted	February 13, 1994, pled guilty
Sentence	Death
Killer executed?	Yes
Name and state of prison	Florida State Prison
Killer committed suicide?	Attempted
Killer killed in prison?	No
Date of death	October 25, 2006

Books

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- Miller, C. & Arndorer. (Sunday, August 27, 2000). "The student murders: 10 years later." *The Gainesville Sun*.

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www.gmspider.com/shreveport_murders.htm

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