

**Earle Leonard Nelson**  
*“The Gorilla Killer” and “The Dark Strangler”*



Information researched and summarized by

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Date	Age	Life Event
May 12 1897	0	Born in San Francisco, California
	9- months	Mother, Frances Nelson, died of syphilis
	15- months	Father died of syphilis. Nelson is sent to live with his very religious grandparents, Jennie and Lars, on his mother's sides
1904	7	Expelled from grade school because of his extremely bad behavior
1908	11	-Is hit by a train and suffers a horrible skull injury leaving a hole in his head. He is in a coma for 6 days. Doctors thought he would never recover -His grandmother dies and he is sent to live with his aunt, Lillian Fiban
	15	He admits that he is visiting prostitutes and would go on alcohol binges
07/25/1915	18	Was sentenced to San Quentin state prison for two years for robbery in Plymouth County
09/06/1916	19	Was paroled and released from jail
03/09/1917	19	Was arrested under the name Clark for petit larceny and sentenced to jail for 6 months
03/23/1919	21	Was arrested under the name Farrell in Los Angeles for burglary and escaped from the LA County Jail after 5 months
1919	21	Joined military on three separate occasions (Army and Navy), but due to his disappearing acts, was discharged and not searched for. (Was thought to have exhibited traits characteristic to mental illness).
1919	21	Married Mary Martin
1919	21	Suffered severe migraines which were not able to be cured medicinally. Fell from a ladder at work from a fainting episode. Hospitalized for severe head wounds. Escaped hospital with a bandaged head. (Seeing visions and hearing voices soon started).

1919	21	Nelson began engaging in sexual crimes
1921	22	Attempted molestation of 12-year-old Mary Summers – failed when brother heard screams of distress from Mary
1921	24	Nelson was again committed to the Napa State Mental Hospital where he escaped and attempted to escape multiple times
03/10/1925	27	Released from Napa “in absentia”
10/18/1925	28	He strangled Olla McCoy in Philadelphia
11/06/1925	28	He strangled May Murray in Philadelphia
11/09/1925	28	Strangled Lillian Weiner in Philadelphia
02/20/1926	28	Clara Newman (62) was strangled in San Francisco and found propped on a toilet and was sexually assaulted after her death.
03/02/1926	28	Killed Laura Beal in San Jose, California
06/10/1926	29	Killed Lillian St. Mary in San Francisco, California
06/24/1926	29	Killed George Russell in Santa Barbara, California
08/16/1926	29	Killed Mary Nesbit in Oakland, California
10/19/1926	29	Killed Beata Withers in Portland, Oregon
10/20/1926	29	Killed Mabel McDonald Fluke in Portland, Oregon
10/21/1926	29	Killed Virginia A. Grant in Portland, Oregon
11/18/1926		He choked Mrs. William Edmunds in San Francisco and hid her body under the bed
11/23/1926		Strangled Florence Monks in Seattle, Washington
11/29/1926		Strangled Blanche Meyers in Portland, Oregon
12/23/1926		Killed Mrs. John Beard in Council Bluffs, IA
12/27/1926		Killed Bonnie Pace in Kansas City, Missouri
12/28/1926		Killed Germanla Harpin and her daughter in Kansas City, Missouri
04/27/1927		Killed Mary McConnell in Philadelphia
05/30/1927	30	Killed Mrs. Jennie Randolph in Buffalo, New York
06/01/1927		Killed Mrs. Maureen Atorthy (nee Oswald) in Detroit
06/01/1927		Killed Minnie May in Detroit
06/03/1927		Killed Mary Sietsma in Chicago
06/09/1927	30	Killed Lola Cowan (14) in Winnipeg
06/10/1927		Killed Emily Patterson in Winnipeg last suspected kill
06/15/1927	30	Arrested in Canada (Wakopa) for the murders of Lola Cowan and Emily Patterson.
06/15/1927	30	Escaped from jail (hopped the train carrying the Winnipeg police. Rearrested and jailed the following morning.
11/01/1927		Nelson’s murder trial begins.
11/04/1927		Nelson is found guilty and sentenced to hang.
01/13/1928		Nelson is hung at the gallows in Canada

### General Information

Sex	Male
Race	White
Number of victims	22 women & an 8 month old infant
Country where killing occurred	United States and Canada
States where killing occurred	California, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, New York, Manitoba
Cities where killing occurred	San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, Oakland, Portland,

	Seattle, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Council Bluffs, Winnipeg
Type of killer	Strangled victims
Height	
<b>Childhood Information</b>	
Date of birth	May 12, 1897
Location	San Francisco, California
Birth order	1 <sup>st</sup>
Number of siblings	0
XYY?	No
Raised by	Both grandmother and aunt
Birth category	Only child
Parent's marital status	Married, and died before he was two
Did serial killer spend time in an orphanage?	No
Did serial killer spend time in a foster home?	No
Was serial killer ever raised by a relative?	Yes
Did serial killer ever live with adopted family?	No
Did serial killer live with a step-parent?	No
Family event	Grandmother died, mother's mother
Age of family event	14
Problems in school?	Go to school in clean clothes and come back in different, dirty clothing
Teased while in school?	Yes, he had extremely large hands and would often switch his clothes with dirty ones he would find or trade with others.
Physically attractive?	No
Physical defect?	Unusually large hands
Speech defect?	No
Head injury?	Collided with street car and was unconscious for 6 days. Suffered headaches and memory loss. Fell from ladder at work. Caused vision issues, voices, and more mental problems.
Physically abused?	No
Psychologically abused?	Possibly his grandmother was a very strict Pentecostal and religion played a big part of his life. This could have lead to hate of women because he viewed women as a power figure.
Sexually abused?	No
Father's occupation	N/A
Age when first had intercourse	N/A
Mother's occupation	N/A
Father abused drugs/alcohol	N/A
Mother abused drugs/alcohol	N/A
<b>Cognitive Ability</b>	
Highest grade in school	10
Highest degree	None
Grades in school	
IQ	
Source of IQ information	
<b>Work History</b>	
Served in the military?	Yes
Branch	Army
Type of discharge	Discharged for mental state and because of leaving and returning three times (each with problems)

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-, couldn't keep a job for more than a few days
Types of jobs worked	Odd jobs depending on location. Robbery as well as involved.
Employment status during series	Odd jobs.
<b>Relationships</b>	
Sexual preference	Heterosexual
Marital status	Married Mary Martin and divorced
Number of children	0
Lives with his children	0
Living with	Himself
<b>Triad</b>	
Animal torture	No
Fire setting	No
Bed wetting	No
<b>Killer Psychological Information</b>	
Abused drugs?	No
Abused alcohol?	Yes, would go to the docks at a very young age and get drunk picking up hookers
Been to a psychologist (prior to killing)?	Yes
Time in forensic hospital (prior to killing)?	Yes
Diagnosis	Mentally insane
<b>Killer Criminal History (Prior to the series)</b>	
Committed previous crimes?	Yes
Spent time in jail?	Yes
Spent time in prison?	Yes
Killed prior to series? Age?	No
<b>Serial Killing</b>	
Number of victims (suspected of)	26
Number of victims (confessed to)	0
Number of victims (convicted of)	2
Victim type	Women, landladies (one infant)
Killer age at start of series	28
Killer age at end of series	29
Date of first kill in series	Mrs. Olla McCoy, Philadelphia, October 18, 1925
Date of final kill in series	Mrs. Emily Patterson, Winnipeg, June 10, 1927
Gender of victims	Female
Race of victims	White
Age of victims	Adult
Type of victim	Hotel landladies and cleaners
Method of killing	strangling
Weapon	no weapon
Was gun used?	No
Type	No
Did killer have a partner?	No

Name of partner	No
Sex of partner	N/A
Relationship of partner	N/A
Type of serial killer	Disorganized (thrill), no premeditation
How close did killer live?	Drove from town to town, mostly killing in hotels, leaving bodies under beds and then fleeing to next town.
Location of first contact	Hotel
Location of killing	Hotel
Killing occurred in home of victim?	Sometimes
Killing occurred in home of killer?	No
Victim abducted or killed at contact?	No
Behavior During Crimes	
Rape?	Yes
Tortured victims?	No
Stalked victims?	No
Overkill?	Yes
Quick & efficient?	Yes
Used blindfold?	No
Bound the victims?	No
After Death Behavior	
Sex with the body?	Yes
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	Yes
Disposal of Body	
Left at scene, no attempt to hide	Yes
Left at scene, hidden	Yes would sometimes hide bodies under beds or in attics
Left at scene, buried	No
Moved, no attempt to hide	Sometimes would just leave the victim in the spot where he killed them
Moved, hidden	No
Moved, buried	No
Cut-up and disposed of	Yes would on occasion use razor blades to slice up his victims
Burned body	No
Dumped body in lake, river, etc.	No
Moved, took home	No
Sentencing	
Date killer arrested	June 15 <sup>th</sup> , 1927
Date convicted	Trial began November 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1927
Sentence	Death
Killer executed?	Yes
Did killer plead NGRI?	Yes, believed acting on Gods will
Was the NGRI plea successful?	No
Did serial killer confess?	No, believed he was innocent
Name and state of prison	Winnipeg Canada
Killer committed suicide?	No
Killer killed in prison?	Yes –hanged
Date of death	January 13, 1928

## References

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