

Suspect Is Emerging as a Study In Extreme and Varied Contrast

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

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The world of David Richard Berkowitz has been Jewish and Christian, militaristic and dovish, full of rigidities yet strangely formless, outwardly friendly but cryptically hostile. It has been touched by drugs and loneliness, love and tragedy.

Some people have known him to be thoughtful and gentle, though shy and seemingly troubled. But according to the police, he is the "Son of Sam," whose reign of terror in New York City claimed the lives of six young people and left others paralyzed, blind and otherwise scarred for life.

As the details of the enigmatic life of the 24-year-old postal clerk emerged, there appeared to have been no single incident or trauma that might explain his abrupt transformation little more than a year ago from the quiet suburbanite that he was to the murderous night stalker that the police say that he became.

From friends, former Army buddies, neighbors, former teachers and others who have known him, the descriptions seem to suit no theme—he was "sul-len," "friendly," "average," "extreme,"

"sweet," "a loner," "a team player"—all pieces that seem to come from many jigsaw puzzles, not one.

During the hunt for the .44-caliber killer, the police issued a probable profile that suggested there were "religious aspects" in his thinking and hints of "demonic possession and compulsion," and that characterized him as shy, odd, troubled in relationships with young women, probably Christian and fairly well-educated.

In retrospect, the assessment came close. Religious cross-currents have played a major role in shaping the suspect's personality; there are references to **Satan** and demons in anonymous notes allegedly written by him, and, in recent years, he has been a loner. He graduated from Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx and attended Bronx Community College for a semester. But these elements only begin to touch on the complexities.

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Suspect Emerging as a Study in Sharp Contrasts

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He was raised in a Jewish household and was bar mitzvahed at the age of 13 years at Temple Adath Israel on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. He attended Public School 77, where he was known as a prankster.

The elder Mr. Berkowitz ran a hardware store, and, although the family lived modestly in a small apartment, the adoptive parents were said by acquaintances to have been loving toward and sensitive about the needs of young David. Some said David Berkowitz was severely affected by the death of Mrs. Berkowitz on Oct. 5, 1967. He was 14 at the time.

'He Liked Uniforms'

His high school years were undistinguished scholastically, though he was said to have enjoyed and excelled in gymnasium classes and in baseball. In 1969, while he was still in high school, he and his father moved to Co-op City, the sprawling development in the northeastern Bronx. There, they lived in a four-and-a-half-room apartment on the 17th floor of 170 Dreiser Loop.

Bruce Handler, who lived on the floor below, recalled that he and David and two other youths organized a volunteer fire company in Co-op City in 1970, when the Fire Department had had no on-site facility. The youths put out brush fires and turned in alarms, occasionally helping at the scene of apartment fires before regular firemen arrived.

"He was dedicated," Mr. Handler said. "Once in 1970, he ran up 16 flights because he thought someone was still up there during a fire. . . . He liked uniforms."

During this time, Mr. Berkowitz often expressed an ambition that he could some day be a fireman, Mr. Handler said.

In October 1970, in a similar vein, Mr. Berkowitz joined an auxiliary police unit as a trainee, and he accompanied mem-



Associated Press

Billy Dan Parker, right, with one of his attorneys at a news conference in Houston yesterday. Federal agents say that Mr. Parker, who knew David R. Berkowitz in the Army, purchased the .44-caliber revolver allegedly used by Mr. Berkowitz. Mr. Parker refused to comment on the charges.

bers on unarmed patrols in his neighborhood.

His father wanted him to go to college after his high school graduation in June 1971, but Mr. Berkowitz instead enlisted in the Army for three years—a step that was to bring dramatic changes in his outlook and his personality.

He enlisted on June 23, 1971, took basic training at Fort Dix, N. J., advanced infantry training at Fort Polk, La., and then served a year in South Korea. His final 18 months of a three-year hitch was spent at Fort Knox, Ky.

Gary Corrigan, an engineer with WNEW-TV, had been with Mr. Berkowitz at Fort Dix and recalled that Mr. Berkowitz went absent without leave on the first weekend of basic training, but later came back dejected.

"I had the impression that he had had some type of disappointment with his girlfriend or something," Mr. Corrigan said. After that incident, Mr. Berkowitz took no more leave, and, when other did, "Berk just stayed in the barracks and spit-shined his combat boots," Mr. Corrigan said.

Mr. Corrigan said that, inexplicably, Mr. Berkowitz "didn't seem to be the gung-ho type" and "by and large, he was a dove," but at one point signed up for tough airborne training [he failed to get the assignment] and liked to garnish his uniform with optional insignia purchased from the post exchange. He was what soldiers call a "P. X. hero," Mr. Corrigan said.

Mr. Berkowitz received firearms training, but achieved no high rating for marksmanship and no training in sidearms, according to Army records.

From Korea, where he had been sent as a Specialist 4, Mr. Berkowitz sent letters home to friends that suggested his conservative views were turning liberal. There are no Army records indicating that he had used drugs in Korea, but two friends—one an Army buddy and the second a friend from the Bronx—said later that he had bragged about using stimulant and depressant pills and, on occasion, LSD, a hallucinogen.

During his Korean service, he was reduced in rank to private first class after he missed a convoy, but he later regained his specialist rating.

At Fort Knox, where Mr. Berkowitz was stationed upon returning from Korea, a buddy, Paul Billow, now a 25-year-old security guard in Saginaw, Mich., said Mr. Berkowitz had bragged about using

pills, but not LSD, in Korea. He added that Mr. Berkowitz "seemed like he had been completely recovered from all that when I met him, though."

Mr. Billow said Mr. Berkowitz seemed to change drastically in other ways—from gregarious to reclusive, and toward a revivalist form of the Baptist religion. He was baptized, went to revival meetings and, according to Mr. Billow, "tried to convert others."

Complained About Dog

"He told me that if I did not take Jesus Christ as my personal savior, I'd be damned," Mr. Billow recalled. But two months before leaving Fort Knox, Mr. Berkowitz underwent still another personality change, Mr. Billow said. "He started to swear," he suggested. "Maybe he went back to drugs . . . because somebody doesn't change like that overnight."

Mr. Berkowitz, after being discharged, returned to New York City, took a job as an unarmed guard with I.B.I. Security Services Agency, and moved back for a while with his father at Co-op City. "The Army changed him," said his old Co-op City friend, Mr. Handler. "When he came back he was completely introverted . . . he looked glassy-eyed, as if he was in a world of his own."

In 1975, when his father retired and moved to Florida, David Berkowitz moved into a studio apartment at 2161 Barnes Avenue in the Bronx for about six months. During that time, he apparently grew more introspective. Neighbors barely remembered him, but a friend said: "He used to laugh a lot by himself. . . . He'd roar and couldn't stop, but he wouldn't tell you anything about it."

In February 1976, he took an apartment in a home at 171 Coligni Avenue in New Rochelle, N.Y., but moved out a few months later after complaining bitterly about the barking of his landlady's dog. She later got a vaguely threatening letter, apparently, she believes, from Mr. Berkowitz.

About 16 months ago, Mr. Berkowitz rented the \$230-a-month studio at 35 Pine Street in Yonkers, where he was arrested Wednesday night. His life there is largely a mystery, separated into what authorities now say were divergently inward and outward aspects.

He became a postal clerk last March, and co-workers say he appeared regularly and seemed genial, if quiet. But behind his locked apartment door, in the streets at night and in his mind, the authorities say, another personality was operating.



Photograph of David Berkowitz taken at a picnic in the early 70's.