

Berkowitz Says That He Faked Tales of Demons

Gives Interview in Effort to Scuttle Book Project

By RICHARD J. MEISLIN

Special to The New York Times

ATTICA, N.Y., Feb. 22 — David R. Berkowitz said today that there were "no real demons, no talking dogs, no satanic henchmen" who ordered him to kill six people as the "Son of Sam." That story, he said, was "just invented by me in my own mind to condone what I was doing."

Mr. Berkowitz said he was disclosing that his earlier stories had been "baloney" in an effort to scuttle a possible multimillion-dollar book-and-movie deal being negotiated between Mr. Berkowitz's "former lawyers," and the conservator of his estate and the McGraw-Hill Company. He said he feared that the publication of a book or the making of a movie about his crimes could inflame somebody to "get even with me and try to hurt one of my family."

Asked why he had committed the murders, Mr. Berkowitz said: "That, I really can't say. Let's just say the whole thing was motiveless and senseless."

The man whose night forays with a .44-caliber Bulldog revolver terrorized New York City for more than a year made the remarks in his first, and he said his last, formal meeting with reporters. He remained lucid and calm throughout the hourlong interview, which was conducted at the State Correctional Facility here by reporters for The New York Times, Newsday and The Associated Press.

Wanted to Be Captured

Mr. Berkowitz said he "definitely" wanted to be captured when he was seized by police in Yonkers on Aug. 10, 1977, 11 days after claiming his last victim, Stacy Moskowitz. "I just couldn't stop," he said. But he said the urge to kill was now gone.

"Whatever it was has just worked out of me—I've mellowed," he said. "I don't know what it is that started it and I don't know what it is that caused me to lose interest. I don't know."

But Mr. Berkowitz said he did not want to leave prison, and said he "would expect to" die there at some point at the hand of "somebody who would want to make a name for themselves."

"My life I don't object to losing — it would be justified if someone took it," Mr. Berkowitz said. "I have no objection about that, you understand. I'm not fearful of it. I accept it as part of life."

Concern About Contract Cited

Mr. Berkowitz requested the interview with The Times and Newsday in a letter to the prison superintendent last week, choosing them, he said, because "they're not scandal papers." He asked for the interview because it was "time for the truth to come out," and because of his concern over the book and movie contracts.

A spokesman for the State Department of Correction said it was the department's policy to grant these types of requests from prisoners, and the department gave The Associated Press permission to join the interview as well.

Mr. Berkowitz was clearly disturbed by the possibility of the book and movie and about the way the profits would be distributed. He said "I would like the victims to get money," but he was legally powerless to effect the deal.

Under the arrangement, which was approved in part by State Supreme Court Justice Carmine A. Ventiera last month, an advance of \$250,000 would be split among the author, Lawrence Klausner; the conservator of Mr. Berkowitz's estate, Doris Johnson; and an agent, Bertha Klausner. It is unclear who would get the estate share of \$75,000, since under New York State's Crime Victims Compensation Law, the civil suits filed by the victims — of which there are 11 pending — would have a claim.

On the Advance and Percentages

Mr. Berkowitz's lawyers, Ira J. Jultak and Leon Stern, are hoping also to get at least \$75,000 from the deal. They would be entitled to 5 percent of any book royalties in excess of Mr. Klausner's advance.

Mr. Berkowitz, in the interview and in a letter to Howard W. McGraw Jr., chairman of the McGraw-Hill Company, called Mr. Jultak and Mr. Stern his "former lawyers," and said he could "not find words in the English language to express my distaste for them."

He has asked them not to pursue their appeal of his case on grounds of insanity. But Mr. Jultak said yesterday that "as far as we're concerned we're still his lawyers," and said that he and Mr. Stern had filed a notice that they intended to appeal, although they had not decided whether to do so. Mr. Berkowitz was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison after the State Supreme Court found him competent to stand trial.

While denying that demons, or the dog of his neighbor Sam Carr from whom he got the name "Son of Sam," or "legions of Satan's henchmen" had ordered him to shoot people in isolated areas of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, he reaffirmed that he had indeed committed the crimes.

As for how he would choose his victims, Mr. Berkowitz said, "it would just fall together" as he traveled around various neighborhoods. Asked how he felt after shooting someone, he hesitated and said: "I really can't say."

Mr. Berkowitz, dressed in a gray corduroy workshirt and green prison pants, was interviewed at a small table in a starkly furnished visitors' room at the prison's reception center. He is working at the western New York prison as a porter.

He said, "There's an art to doing time, and that he's learning it. He eats alone, talks little with the other prisoners, and gets few visitors except for a woman whom he met after his arrest, who visits him monthly. He receives little mail except from her and from members of his family.

"There's only two things" he misses, Mr. Berkowitz said. "One is visiting my family, playing with my nieces and things, and the other is driving my car."

He is, he said, "just existing."

"Life is a matter of routine now, he said. "I'm pretty well settled into my life. I've accepted my fate, I'm resigned.

"I wouldn't say I'm happy," he added. "I don't think I've ever been happy."

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Associated Press

David R. Berkowitz contemplating question yesterday during interview at the State Correctional Facility in Attica, N.Y.