

BERKOWITZ

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In the year since the Queens probe began, investigators have sifted thousands of pages of documents, conducted more than a hundred interviews and followed possible leads to such backwater stops as Minot, N.D. and Beaumont, Texas.

That Berkowitz acted alone in each of the slayings has not been proven. That he was not alone has not been proven either.

But the leads that have been developed by Gannett, Queens and other investigators — including the suspected involvement of a Satanic cult in the killing, the possibility that Berkowitz was "set up" by potential accomplices, the mysterious deaths of several persons tied to the probe and the development of at least 10 possible accomplices — continue to point to the existence of accomplices.

The possibility that there was more than one "Son of Sam" was not even considered three years ago when Berkowitz walked quietly out of his apartment building in northwest Yonkers, bounded easily up the front steps to street level and entered into one of the most bizarre and intriguing chapters in American criminal history.

Moments before, he was an anonymous, middle-class civil servant, a former security guard, construction worker, cab driver, Army veteran, uncle, adopted son, stepbrother. A guy who, just months earlier, read about an apartment fire in south Yonkers and sent the burned-out tenant, whom he didn't know, a letter of condolence and a check for \$10 to help him out.

And then, as he walked into the arms of waiting detectives, David Berkowitz faded into the night and the portly, unassuming figure in jeans and a short-sleeved dress shirt was transformed into that of "Son of Sam," the ".44-Caliber Killer."

The murderous spree had begun on July 29, 1976. Before it was stilled one year and eight attacks later, the largest and most expensive manhunt in New York history — at times involving more than 300 police officers and costing more than \$1 million — struggled for months in what insiders now acknowledge was a poorly coordinated effort to halt the ever-increasing flow of innocent blood.

The elite of the police department, taunted throughout their investigation by the killer, had come up empty, but a Brooklyn widow's recollection of a parking ticket near a shooting scene had led back to Yonkers and suddenly David Berkowitz wasn't anonymous any longer.

Berkowitz became known as the "Son of Sam" for two reasons:

— Most importantly, he said he was. "You got me," he told New York City detectives when he was arrested. Within hours of that arrest he had recited a full confession to all the murders.

— And, in a brown paper bag he carried as he left 35 Pine St. in Yonkers for the last time that hot night in August of 1977 was a gun — a .44-caliber Charter Arms Bulldog revolver, serial number 212927. It was the trademark weapon of the Son of Sam. And although it couldn't be matched to all the killings, it was deemed enough, especially when coupled with Berkowitz's explanation for the killings.

The murders had apparently been the work of a madman and Berkowitz's irrational explanation of his motive furthered the perception of him as a demented lunatic.

He said demons and the barking dog of an elderly neighbor, Sam Carr, ordered him to kill. He said Carr's dog was really the spirit of a 6,000-year-old man. He said the demons demanded young blood. He said he did it all and that he did it alone. He said a lot of things, but in time not all of them would prove to be true.

Perpetrator caught. Confession in hand. Promotions secure. Case closed. There was now nothing left to do, but bang the gavel and get him out of sight — quickly.

It didn't take long. Within a year of his arrest, Berkowitz stood in a tightly guarded Brooklyn courtroom. Ignoring the advice of his two attorneys, who had urged him to plead not guilty by reason of insanity, he confessed to all six "Son of Sam" murders and was sentenced to serve six consecutive life terms in state prison.

"Berkowitz was definitely involved," says an assistant district attorney who was involved in the case. "But was he alone? That's the big question. It was easy to believe he was because that's what everyone wanted to believe. Now, it looks different. Or rather, it really always looked different, but no one wanted to pay attention."

As the probe of the "Son of Sam" case continues, there are four primary areas that suggest the involvement of accomplices:

The sketches: Eyebrows were first raised when Berkowitz was arrested and resembled only one of the police composites of the killer, but police said such discrepancies were not unusual given the fact that witnesses often provided unreliable physical details of a suspect's features.

The fact remains, however, that during the murder spree, witnesses and surviving victims had described assailants whose descriptions were so markedly different that The New York Times, before Berkowitz's arrest, had written: "The descriptions vary so widely that police are considering that the killer might have gained weight and altered his appearance through the use of various disguises, including wigs and mustaches."

But what has most aroused investigators' suspicions is that at least two of the composites bear striking resemblances to persons that have been connected either directly to Berkowitz or to persons who have been the subject of the renewed "Son of Sam" investigation.

John Carr: The name of John Carr repeatedly turns up in the renewed probe and has become a key element, which some investigators believe could resolve many lingering doubts. He was the son of Sam Carr — Berkowitz's neighbor and so-called imaginary "master."

John Carr's nickname was "Wheaties" the same as an alias of the killer in a Son of Sam letter — "John 'Wheaties' rapist and suffocater of young girls." Carr also closely resembled the police sketches of "Son of Sam" that depicted the killer with long, straight hair, totally unlike Berkowitz. And, authorities have detailed Carr's travels to and from New York, finding that his visits here corresponded with some of the "Son of Sam" slayings.

But most importantly, police have been told by Carr's therapist and others that Carr spoke about the "Son of Sam" killings even before Berkowitz was arrested and demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the shootings. And shortly after Berkowitz's arrest, Carr told his girlfriend the police were looking for him in connection with the "Son of Sam" case. Carr's friends told police he feared he would be "fried in the electric chair" if New York authorities caught up with him.

Carr died before police ever got to question him. His death in North Dakota, where he was living after serving a 12-year hitch there in the U.S. Air Force, was initially termed a suicide. However, it is now being probed as a possible murder. "We have a motive for both murder and suicide," says Ward County (N.D.) police lieutenant Terry Gardner. "Murder to silence



Detectives escort David Berkowitz on the day of his arrest

him and suicide because he knew he was wanted for questioning in the Son of Sam case."

The Moscowitz shooting: The July 31, 1977 murder of Stacy Moscowitz and blinding of Robert Violante in Brooklyn — the final "Son of Sam" attack and the one that led to Berkowitz's arrest — has produced some of the most damaging evidence against the "Berkowitz alone" position.

In brief, these newspapers were able to frame the scenario with the time on a parking ticket Berkowitz received before the shots rang out and the time the police 911 computer was notified of the shooting. Additionally, an eyewitness who had seen Berkowitz and checked the time on his watch provided corroborating information.

Through the analysis of the time, and interviews with witnesses, it was established that Berkowitz was blocks away from the shooting scene at the same time as he said he was stalking his victims in a playground

adjacent to the shooting location.

Further, eyewitnesses interviewed by Gannett revealed critical details — withheld by authorities — which demonstrated Berkowitz lied in his confession and apparently acted as a lookout for a long-haired killer who fled the scene in a yellow Volkswagen.

The VW was chased by a witness for some nine blocks before it escaped. The Volkswagen driver's description matched that of the gunman which was provided by the key witness to the shooting itself. The description of the killer and VW driver, both in physical appearance and clothing, was totally at odds with that of Berkowitz.

Another suppressed report was that of a witness who positively identified Berkowitz as driving his own Ford Galaxie away from the scene to follow a police car shortly before the shots were fired. That report effectively put Berkowitz in two places at the same time.

Cult connection: From the outset, the "Son of Sam" case has been peppered with occult references, beginning with the letter to columnist Jimmy Breslin in which "Son of Sam" bestowed greetings "from the gutters of NYC which are filled with dog manure, vomit, stale wine, urine and blood." The statement apparently refers to a satanic "Black Mass," in which the host is frequently smeared with excrement, blood is drunk, participants may also vomit on the altar and drink urine or stale wine as a substitute for sacramental wine.

After Berkowitz was captured and began serving his sentence, he told reporters that there was a cult active near his home in Yonkers — but stopped short of saying he was a member of it.

Berkowitz said that John Carr was "a devil worshipper," a statement that was later confirmed by Carr, his friends and therapist in North Dakota, who said he was a member of satanic cults in Yonkers and in North Dakota.

The cult's turf, a section of Untermyer Park in Yonkers, just blocks from Carr's and Berkowitz's homes, was located in early 1979 by Gannett after interviews with area residents and workers who described strange caped figures chanting and burning torches at night.

Throughout Berkowitz's Pine Street neighborhood authorities found dead German shepherds, commonly used as occult sacrifices, both before and after his arrest.

In addition, an animal placement worker in the Bronx said she received a call from a person who identified himself as David Berkowitz two days before Berkowitz was arrested. The caller wanted to adopt a German shepherd. The call further suggests links between Berkowitz and satanic cults.

In North Dakota, members of a cult Carr belonged to were known to use German shepherds as sacrifices.

Monday in this newspaper and TODAY: Prior to Berkowitz pleading guilty to being the lone "Son of Sam," prosecutors in Brooklyn apparently chose to disregard evidence indicating others played a role in the case. Had they investigated they would have found convincing evidence of an accomplice.

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