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[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



David Richard Berkowitz, also known as The Son of Sam, is an American serial killer who terrorized New York City in the mid-1970's with a murder spree that claimed the lives of six people, and injured eight.

Arrested in 1977, he is now known as one of the most notorious serial killers New York City has ever seen. Berkowitz's parents, Elizabeth Broder and Tony Falco, were impoverished Jewish couple living in New York City. Tony unfortunately left Elizabeth and their daughter Roslyn, several years into their marriage for another woman, and Elizabeth began having an affair with Joseph Klineman. Klineman was a married man with three children, so when Elizabeth told him she was pregnant, he threatened to leave her unless she put the child up for adoption. Berkowitz was born Richard David Falco on June 1, 1953. When he was 3 days old, he was adopted by Pearl and Nathan Berkowitz, and renamed David Richard Berkowitz. Pearl and Nathan doted on their only child, and tried to create a nice life for him, despite making a modest income through a hardware store in the Bronx. When he was very young, his parents told him at the advice of the social services worker, that Berkowitz's biological mother had died giving birth to him.

Although well-intentioned on the part of his parents, Berkowitz later harbored a great amount of guilt and anger on the subject. RESEARCH ON ADOPTION. Unfortunately, Berkowitz's mother died of breast cancer when he was fourteen, which resulted in a bout of depression, as well as frustrations associated with his new step-mother. RESEARCH ON MATERNAL DEATH. In an attempt to gain some distance from his disrupted family life, Berkowitz joined the United States Army, where he served in South Korea as an expert

marksman. Following four years of service and an honorable discharge in 1974, Berkowitz attempted to locate his birth mother.

Upon locating her, the two met after nearly 21 years of separation in May of 1975. Their meeting did not meet Berkowitz's high expectations, and he left feeling disappointed and upset. His mother had told him that he was a product of an affair, and was essentially put up for adoption because he was unwanted by his father, and was essentially an accident. So, at a time when he should have been replacing those feelings of guilt for supposedly being the reason for his mother's death, those feelings were replaced with anger.

This event could have caused a great internal crisis for Berkowitz, as he could have been feeling dejected by his birth father, abandoned by his birth mother, mourning over the loss of his adopted mother, and replaced in his adopted father's eyes by his new wife. Overall, Berkowitz could have been experiencing a lack of a sense of place, and a loss of his skewed sense of identity. Berkowitz attempted to maintain a relationship with his birth mother, as well as his half-sister Roslyn, but he eventually found it to be overwhelming and cut off contact.

On Christmas Eve in 1975, about seven months after first meeting his mother, Berkowitz attempted to kill two women, Michelle Forman and another who was never identified, by stabbing them with a hunting knife; although wounded, both women survived. Realizing that the weapon he chose was ineffective at achieving the goal of murder, he switched to using a .44 caliber Bulldog revolver. Berkowitz moved from his house in New Rochelle to an apartment in Yonkers, next door to his neighbor, Sam Carr. The following

year, on July 29, 1976, Berkowitz shot Donna Lauria and Jody Valenti in their carparked in the Bronx.

Lauria was killed instantly, and Valenti survived a bullet wound in her thigh. Valenti recalled that she did not know the shooter, but gave the police a description. Later that year, on October 23, 1976, Berkowitz shot Carl Denaro and Rosemary Keenan as they sat in their parked car in Flushing, Queens. Although Denaro was shot in the head, he survived and now has a metal plate in his skull.

Keenan escaped with only superficial injuries. The bullet inside Denaro's head was too damaged to analyze and successfully link to a specific weapon. That, plus the different jurisdictions in which the first two shootings occurred, resulted in the police failing to connect the two incidents. The following month on November 27, 1976, Donna DeMasi and Joanne Lomino were shot in Bellerose, Queens on their front porch.

DeMasi was only wounded, and Lomino was shot in the back which eventually rendered her paralyzed from the waist down. Two months later on January 30, 1977, Christine Freund and John Diel were shot in their car in Queens. Although Diel survived, Freund died later in the hospital. It was in this case that the police began to see a pattern emerging, and a possible link to other cases. A few months later on March 8, 1977, Virginia Voskerichian was shot walking home from school, a block away from where Christine Freund was killed.

Virginia attempted to shield herself with books, but the bullet passed through them and struck her in the head, which killed her instantly. Two days later, the NYPD announced that the same .44 caliber Bulldog revolver had fired the shots that killed Lauria and Voskerichian, and that they suspected that the same gun had been used in other shootings. By this point, the shootings were all over the news and papers, and fear was spreading throughout the city.

One month later, on April 17, 1977, Berkowitz shot Alexander Esau and Valentina Suriani in their parked car in the Bronx, only a few blocks away from where Lauria and Calenti were shot. Sadly, Suriani died in the car, and Esau died in the hospital. In this instance, Berkowitz left a letter addressed to NYPD Captain Joseph Borrelli. In this letter, written in uppercase letters, Berkowitz named himself the "Son of Sam" for the first time. In summary, the letter addressed the police's inability to catch him, further taunts toward the police and their efforts, as well as his motivation from someone called Sam to kill all the victims, and many more in the future.

Numerous psychologists and journalists speculated that numerous serial killers leave notes to the police at the scenes of their crimes, and retain some gratification in the knowledge that they "outsmarted" them or eluded their grasp. Following the analysis of this note, psychiatrists released a psychological profile of the suspect in which he was described as neurotic, and possibly a paranoid schizophrenic, as well as suffering from demonic possession. A month later on May 30, 1977, Jimmy Breslin, a writer for the Daily News, received a similar handwritten note. In the note, the author

mentioned Lauria, Captain Borrelli, and showed his support for the officers working the case by “wishing them luck.” The Daily News then published an article urging the killer to surrender to the police. Again, a month later, on June 26, 1977, Berkowitz shot Sal Lupo and Judy Placido as they sat in their parked car in Queens. Both people were injured, but not killed. Then, on July 31, 1977, two days after the one-year anniversary of the first shooting, Stacy Moskowitz and Robert Violante were shot in their parked car in Bath Beach.

Moskowitz sadly died later in the hospital, and Violante lost vision in one eye, and partial vision in the other. This crime produced the most witnesses, one of which recalled a patrol officer ticketing cars near the scene.

Berkowitz's yellow Ford Galaxie was one of the cars in the area that was ticketed, and he was investigated as a suspect. During their investigation, the police noticed that Sam Carr was Berkowitz's neighbor. In fact, Carr had several complaints listed against Berkowitz for harassment, and suspicion of killing his dog, Harvey.

When Berkowitz initially moved to Yonkers, it was in an attempt to get away from the overly noisy dogs near his previous house in New Rochelle. Much to his misfortune, Sam Carr's dog was much the same as those he tried to escape from, and Berkowitz had sent numerous letters to Carr asking him to do something about his dog, or he would take action. On August 10, 1977, the police located Berkowitz's car outside his apartment in Yonkers, with incriminating evidence inside. This evidence included things like a rifle, a bag full of ammunition, maps of the crime scenes, and a letter addressed to someone on the task force assigned to the case. The police decided to wait

for Berkowitz to exit his apartment, since they did not have a warrant to do so. Berkowitz eventually exited the apartment, and got into his car, placed a brown paper bag with the .44 caliber Bulldog on the passenger's seat, and the NYPD detectives promptly surrounded the car.

According to reports, Berkowitz supposedly said, "Well, you've got me," to which the detective asked, "Who have I got?" Berkowitz replied, "The Son of Sam." Detective John Falotico was credited with his arrest.

Following his arrest, Berkowitz was interrogated for only thirty minutes, during which time he confessed to all of the shootings, credited his neighbor's dog for inspiring him to kill, as the dog was possessed by a demon instructing Berkowitz to kill. Due to this confession, Berkowitz was examined by three different psychologists, and found competent to stand trial, and subsequently plead guilty to the shootings. Berkowitz caused quite a scene at the sentencing hearing, when he got into a screaming match with Stacy Moskowitz's mother, and attempted to jump out of the window in the courtroom.

The judge sentenced Berkowitz to 25-years-to-life for each murder, served consecutively at Attica Correctional Facility on June 12, 1978. While in Attica, he was a victim of a brutal knife attack, which left him with a large gash in his neck from the front to back, which required upwards of fifty stitches to close. Then, Berkowitz was moved to Sullivan Correctional Facility, and then again to Shawangunk Correctional Facility where he still is today. This entire case is interesting for numerous reasons. Firstly, it is notoriously remembered in the minds of New Yorkers, who recall widespread

panic covering the city at night. Most women even took it upon themselves to change their haircut and color, or even by a wig, so as to increase the chances of being targeted by the Son of Sam.

In hindsight, it is easy to see that Berkowitz did have a pattern of victims he targeted. They all, apart from Virginia Voskerichian, were attacked in pairs, and more often than not, involved a woman with long, dark hair.

Additionally, the attacks also often involved couples seated in a parked car at night, which could have been Berkowitz's way to approach them without being seen. While in prison, Berkowitz told a fellow inmate that he attacked women kissing in cars in order to prevent other illegitimate children from being born to suffer the way he did.

Surprisingly, a year later, Berkowitz announced that his confessions of being possessed by a demon were false, and that he had committed these crimes of his own accord. Then, to add more confusion to the pot, Berkowitz later claimed that he had carried out only three of the murders of the Son of Sam, and that the other killings were done by other members of a satanic cult, that he had joined prior to his arrest. Specifically, he named two cult members, John and Michael Carr, who were sons of his neighbor, Sam Carr, but both sons had recently died. Years later, the case was reopened due to speculation that Berkowitz had not acted alone in all of the shootings, but the case remains suspended and unclosed to this day.

Numerous factors influenced the grim outcome of David Berkowitz, which might not have as great of an effect as they did in combination with each other. To begin, Berkowitz was adopted. Numerous studies have shown that



there really aren't visible differences in the development of children who are adopted versus those who are not (ARTICLE), so this alone was not the only driving force behind his actions. What made his adoption so influential in his life is the fact that he was put up for adoption as a result of being an accidental pregnancy of his mother and her lover, Joseph Klineman. From the beginning, Berkowitz could have felt that he was unwanted by both of his birth parents.

This should have balanced out with his adoptive parents filling the void in his life, but unfortunately his adoptive mother passed away when he was only fourteen. As discussed earlier, maternal death can have \_\_\_\_\_ (ARTICLE). He could have been left feeling abandoned by both his mothers, which could have influenced his perception of women in general, and impacted his motivation for killing.

To go further, there was really no mention of any romantic relationships in Berkowitz's life, which could have been a result of his warped view of women from childhood, and also exacerbated his anger in that he was not able to be successful in any form of relationship with any woman. Essentially, it is quite possible that Berkowitz was feeling invisible and insignificant to the world and his family, which could have prompted him to act in ways that would force people to focus on him. For example, following his arrest, the police found diary entries noting the time and place of hundreds of fires he started throughout New York City prior to his first murder. FIRE STARTING ARTICLE. It is important to note that while he has been in prison,

Berkowitz has converted to Christianity, and has expressed wishes to be called the Son of Hope, rather than the Son of Sam.

He has also not been involved in any violent incidents, aside from the knife attack on him in Attica, and has been described as a model prisoner. He even helps to counsel troubled inmates through the prison ministry, and has continued his education and graduated with honors from Sullivan Community College. After his arrest, the New York State legislature enacted "Son of Sam laws" which prohibit any criminal from financially benefitting from the publicity of their crimes, as numerous books and biographies about David Berkowitz were written in response to his arrest.

Berkowitz has written his memoirs while in prison, as well as a book titled Son of Hope: The Prison Journals of David Berkowitz in 2006, for which he does not receive profit from.