

PRESS RELEASE



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Joseph James DeAngelo Jr. Sentenced to 11 Consecutive Life terms without the Possibility of Parole for 13 Murders, and an additional consecutive Life term for 13 Kidnappings

“Golden State Killer” also admitted to committing dozens of other uncharged crimes

SACRAMENTO, CA – Joseph James DeAngelo Jr., 74, was committed to state prison for the indeterminate term of 11 consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole for 13 felony counts of first-degree murder consecutive to the indeterminate term of life for kidnapping to commit robbery to run consecutive to the determinate term of eight years as to the weapon enhancements. The sentence was imposed for DeAngelo’s 13-year multi-county crime spree that terrorized much of California during the 1970s and 1980s.

DeAngelo was identified through Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) in 2018, more than three decades after he raped and murdered his last victim in 1986.

DeAngelo admitted committing crimes against 87 individual victims during attacks he perpetrated at 53 separate crime scenes. Charges were filed against DeAngelo for offenses he committed against 26 of his victims. DeAngelo also admitted committing crimes against 61 additional victims. Those offenses included attempted murder, kidnapping to commit robbery, rape, robbery, first-degree burglary, and false imprisonment. The uncharged crimes occurred in Alameda, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Tulare and Yolo counties.

Today’s sentencing was relocated to the Sacramento State University Ballroom to accommodate the large number of victims and their family members in attendance and to ensure social distancing in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

DeAngelo was jointly prosecuted by the district attorneys of Contra Costa, Orange, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, Tulare and Ventura counties.

The decision by prosecutors to accept DeAngelo's offer to plead guilty to the 26 charged crimes and admit the uncharged crimes was made in consultation with the victims and their family members. The totality of the circumstances, including the age of the victims, the age of witnesses and the death of other key witnesses, and the age of the defendant, were taken into consideration.

The massive scope of this case, which involved more than 1.3 million pages of discovery, would have unduly burdened the victims with a lengthy prosecution that was anticipated to take as many as 10 years. The plea provided the victims and their families who were terrorized by DeAngelo the opportunity to hear him admit his crimes. Over the last three days, victims and their loved ones described the impact of the crimes to the court, the community, and the defendant.

This six-county joint prosecution resulted in a guilty plea of:

- 13 counts of first-degree murder with special circumstance allegations of multiple murders and murder committed during the commission of rape, robbery, and burglary.
- 13 felony counts of kidnapping to commit robbery with sentencing enhancements for personal use of a firearm and personal use of a knife during the commission of the offenses.
- DeAngelo admitted murdering:
 - Claude Snelling – September 11, 1975 – Tulare County
 - Katie and Brian Maggiore – February 2, 1978 – Sacramento County
 - Debra Alexandria Manning - December 30, 1979 – Santa Barbara County
 - Robert Offerman - December 30, 1979 – Santa Barbara County
 - Cheri Domingo – July 27, 1981 – Santa Barbara County
 - Greg Sanchez – July 27, 1981 – Santa Barbara County
 - Charlene and Lyman Smith – on or about March 13, 1980 – Ventura County
 - Keith and Patrice Harrington – August 21, 1980 – Orange County
 - Manuela Witthuhn – February 6, 1981 – Orange County
 - Janelle Cruz – May 5, 1986 – Orange County

DeAngelo also admitted to the uncharged crimes of:

- Attempted murder, kidnapping to commit robbery, rape, robbery, first-degree burglary, and false imprisonment.

DeAngelo's crime spree began in 1975 when he was working as a police officer with the Exeter Police Department. The crimes, which continued long after he was fired from the Auburn Police Department in 1979, escalated from peeping through windows to stalking, to rape and serial murder.

His crimes earned him the nicknames of the Visalia Ransacker, the East Area Rapist, the Original Night Stalker, and the Golden State Killer. It was not until April 2018 that Sacramento authorities announced that Investigative Genetic Genealogy had identified DeAngelo as the person responsible.

The identification, arrest, and prosecution of DeAngelo is the result of decades of work by law enforcement agencies across California.

“After today’s sentencing, Joseph DeAngelo will now serve the rest of his life behind bars,” said Contra Costa County District Attorney Diana Becton. “His horrific crimes are unspeakable and forever changed the lives of our victims. I want to underscore the strength our victims and their families displayed over the years, and their courage this week to share in open court with all of us the pain and agony they have endured over the years. They deserved their day in court. Our Office’s history with this case is tied with our former cold case investigator Paul Holes. I want to express my gratitude for Paul’s tireless work on this case and on behalf of all the victims across the state of California. Lastly, I want to highlight the important work done by our team and the five other district attorneys’ offices to bring this case to an end.”

“Yesterday marked 40 years to the day that a stranger walked into Patti and Keith Harrington’s Dana Point home and robbed the newlyweds of the life that they had just begun to build together,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “They never made it to their first wedding anniversary. Manuela Witthuhn spent 28 short years on this earth, never knowing the joy of motherhood. Janelle Cruz’ life was ended before she realized her dreams of graduating from college or picking out her dream wedding dress. For the last three days we heard about the 13 lives that were cut short, of the memories that were never made, and of the dozens of additional victims whose peace of mind was shattered for eternity because of one depraved individual who terrorized an entire generation of Californians. As he was destroying lives, he was living his – blowing out birthday candles, holding his granddaughter, fishing on his boat. Today, it is the victims - whether in heaven or here on earth – who are free from the shackles they and their loved ones were forced to endure since their paths intersected with the devil. And today, it is the devil who was condemned to live out his existence behind bars, knowing he will never be free. He may have destroyed their lives, but he did not destroy their memories – and those memories will live on.”

“It has been **16,417 days** since Joseph DeAngelo’s reign of terror began. 44 years, 11 months, 11 days. Victims, families and entire communities have waited decades for this day - a day of reckoning,” said Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert. “This entire week, hearing from the victims and their loved ones about the devastating impact this man had on their lives, was overwhelming and gut wrenching. Generations of families have been affected by the depravity of one human being. The power, strength and resilience of so many victims and their families has been truly remarkable and inspiring. It is my sincere hope that today brings healing for victims, their loved ones and our communities.”

“This “cold case” never went cold for the victims and survivors - it burned them to their very soul. I respectfully hope today resulted in a step forward in their healing process,” said Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley.

“Though not immediately apparent, the legacy of this case will be triumph. No victim, no survivor, and no member of law enforcement ever allowed the tragic events of decades past to be forgotten,” said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. “We stand with those who have been victimized or lost loved ones to violent crime, here in Tulare County and across this state. The law, scientific advancement, perseverance, and a father’s love for his daughter triumphed today. Justice has been served. May Professor Snelling rest in peace as the world now knows he died a true hero.”

“This case, in many respects, was groundbreaking,” said Ventura County District Attorney Greg Totten. “The swath of destruction left in the wake of this defendant’s crimes is massive and heart wrenching. I pray that never again will society have to deal with a man as cruel, and as vicious. But the unique aspects of this case, and what it means to us as a community, go beyond the defendant’s heinous crimes. His arrest was the first time Genetic Genealogy was used to solve a rape or murder. Ever. We continue to use and improve the technology we used to catch this killer. We hope this news resonates with criminals everywhere: We will find you. This case is a shining example of the constant improvement, and ceaseless determination, of the men and women in law enforcement. But really, the most enduring message of this case must be that our system of justice did not focus on just this monstrous killer... Instead, our criminal justice system, in its infinite wisdom and compassion, allowed us to work creatively, and collaboratively, with a team of wonderful partners from around the state, to make this case rock solid and then ultimately about one thing, and one thing only: Victims. The unique resolution of this case roped in everything we would have presented at trial. Even though some crimes could not be charged as ‘counts’ we wanted them *to count*, and we were prepared to prove them. Each and every crime mattered to each and every victim, and they mattered to us. The brave men and women who stood at the podium and poured out their stories over the last several days were, collectively, the most powerful force for good, and for grace, and for everything right with the world. Their stories were painful to hear. Their resolve incredible. And their stoicism is inspiring. There is nothing we can do to erase what the defendant did to them and their loved ones so many years ago. But we all stand united with them as they go forward. We hope today’s judgement and sentencing brings certainty, and finality, to this chapter of their lives.”

Additional background information about People v. Joseph James DeAngelo, including the factual basis for each plea, can be found at www.peopleversusjosephdeangelopressmaterials.com