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| Robert John Erler *“The Catch Me Killer”* | | |  |
| Information summarized and researched by  *Laura Hehemann*  *Robert Cowell*  *Katherine Cippel*  *Savannah Childer*  Department of Psychology  Radford University  Radford, VA 24142-6946 | | | |
| **Date** | **Age** | **Life Event** | |
| unknown |  | Born in Adams, Massachusetts | |
|  |  | Moved to Alabama city in Arizona | |
|  |  | Grew up in Phoenix Arizona | |
|  |  | Was the oldest son of 8 children | |
|  |  | As a child his father pushed him to be tough and put pressure on him to live out his life. | |
| 1963 |  | As an amateur boxer Erler went up against a well known fighter named Florentino Fernandez. During that bout, Erler suffered a severe concussion. Later that night he went berserk in Hollywood’s Diplomat Hotel. It took 11 police officers to calm him down and from then on he would wake up with blood soaking his pillow from his ears. This is thought to be the reason Erler suffered from severe migraines. | |
| 1965 |  | Joined the Army and was a Green Beret | |
| 1965 |  | Attended Special Forces Medical School at Fort Sam Houston. | |
|  | 23 | Worked for the North American Boat Corporation | |
|  |  | Married Go-Go dancer Pattie Gould who was pregnant at the time. | |
|  |  | Rented a house in Phoniz and they moved in with the new baby. | |
| 1967- 1968 |  | Became a cop for the Dania Police Department.1968 he graduated from Broward County Police Academy. Also went and worked for the Hollywood Police Department. | |
| 08-12-68 | 25 | Attempted murder of Dorothy Clark and her 12 yr old daughter Marilyn. | |
| Married and had one son. Lived with wife and child until they left him. | |
| While on the job, Erler suffered a severe brain concussion from a high speed chase | |
| 08-12-68 | Attempted murder of a mother and killed the 12 yr. old daughter. Shot them both in the head with a .22 caliber pistol. Shot the mother five times in the head and also shot | |

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|  |  | the 12 yr. old daughter in the head five times. Killing took place inside his mobile home. | |
| 09-10-68 |  | Erler drove to sisters house in Phoeniz to stay for a few days. Upon his arrival he was arrested for the attempted murder of Dorothy Clark and the murder of her 12 year old daughter. | |
| 09-24-68 |  | Dorothy Clark, mother of child shooting victim was unable to positively identify Erler in a line up. | |
| 11-05-68 |  | New Republican judge assigned to the trial of Erler | |
| 01-27-69 |  | Trial began for Erler | |
|  |  | Erler sentenced to 99.5 years in prison | |
| 1973 |  | Erler escapes from jail | |
| March 1974 |  | Erler captured. He had dyed his hair black and went under the assumed name Bruce Strickland | |
| 03-26-74 |  | Dorothy Clark admitted to lying on the stand about the events that occurred the night that she and her daughter were shot. | |
| 1974 |  | Bob Erler accepts Christ as his Savior and admits to the murder of Marilyn Clark. | |
|  |  | Transferred to Fort Grant in Arizona, which is a minimum security prison. | |
|  |  | Transferred back to Florence because he was a runaway risk for the minimum security prison. | |
| **General Information** | | | |
| Sex | | | Male |
| Race | | | Caucasian |
| Number of victims | | | 2 attempted victims, mother and daughter |
| Country where killing occurred | | | United States |
| States where killing occurred | | | Florida |
| Type of killer | | | Disorganized |
| Height | | | 5’10 |
| **Childhood Information** | | | |
| Date of birth | | |  |
| Location | | | Adams, Massachusetts |
| Birth order | | | Oldest |
| Number of siblings | | | 7 younger siblings |
| XYY? | | | Did not specify |
| Raised by | | | Both parents |
| Birth category | | | Oldest |
| Parent’s marital status | | | Married |
| Family event | | | Death of parent- father |
| Age of family event | | | No specific date given as to the death of his father |
| Problems in school? | | | No information |
| Teased while in school? | | | No information |
| Physically attractive? | | | Yes |
| Physical defect? | | | No |
| Speech defect? | | | No |
| Head injury? | | | Yes, During a police chase. The car slid 56 feet before hitting a stop sign and projecting Erler through the window. He had a severe brain concussion. This left him with severe migraines that brought on nausea and dizziness as well as blacking out |
| Physically abused? | | | No information |
| Psychologically abused? | | | No information |
| Sexually abused? | | | No information |
| Father’s occupation | | | Served in military |
| Age of first sexual experience | | | No information |
| Age when first had intercourse | | | No information |
| Mother’s occupation | | | Stay at home mother |

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| Father abused drugs/alcohol | Not specified |
| Mother abused drugs/alcohol | Not specified |
| **Cognitive Ability** | |
| Highest grade in school | 12 |
| Highest degree | High-school diploma |
| Grades in school | No information |
| IQ | Not specified |
| **Work History** | |
| Served in the military? | Yes |
| Branch | Army - Green Beret |
| Type of discharge | Left on emergency leave. Didn’t come back |
| Saw combat duty | No information |
| Killed enemy during service? | No information |
| Applied for job as a cop? | Yes, Accepted |
| Worked in law enforcement? | Police Officer |
| Fired from jobs? | No, quit police |
| Types of jobs worked | North American Boat Corporation, Police officer |
| Employment status during series | Police officer |
| **Relationships** |  |
| Sexual preference | Heterosexual |
| Marital status | Separated at time of killings due to domestic dispute where Erler hit his wife for punishing their son. Remarried now |
| Number of children | 1 son |
| Lives with his children | No |
| Living with | Alone at the time of the killings. Live with wife now |
| **Triad** | |
| Animal torture | No information |
| Fire setting | No information |
| Bed wetting | No information |
| **Killer Psychological Information** | |
| Abused drugs? | He abused pot, pills and coke during his time in prison |
| Abused alcohol? | He attended Alcoholics Anonymous in prison, but was assumed not to have abused alcohol. |
| Been to a psychologist? | He was interviewed by a psychologist while he was in jail awaiting trial. |
| Time in forensic hospital? | No |
| Diagnosis | The diagnosis (whileErler was in jail) from the psychologist said that Erler had a sociopathic personality, which suggests an angry and hostile personality. |
| **Killer Criminal History** | |
| Committed previous crimes? | No information |
| Spend time in jail? | No information |
| Spend time in prison? | No |
| Killed prior to series? Age? | No |
| **Serial Killing** | |
| Number of victims | 1 |
| Victim type | young woman, mother of young woman |
| Killer age at start of series | 25 |
| Gender of victims | Young woman and her middle aged mother |
| Race of victims | Caucasian |
| Age of victims | 12, the mother’s age was not specified |
| Method of killing | Shooting with .22 caliber pistol |
| Type of serial killer | Organized lust, disorganized thrill |
| How close did killer live? | Drove to crime |

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| Killing occurred in home of victim? | No |
| Killing occurred in home of killer? | Yes |
| Weapon | Killer brought with him |
| Behavior During Crimes | |
| Rape? | No |
| Tortured victims? | No |
| Stalked victims? | No |
| Overkill? | Yes, shooting victims more than once |
| Quick & efficient? | Yes, he shot the victims several times with .22 pistol |
| Used blindfold? | No |
| Bound the victims? | No |
| After Death Behavior | |
| Sex with the body? | No |
| Mutilated body? | No |
| Ate part of the body? | No |
| Drank victim’s blood? | No |
| Posed the body? | No |
| Took totem – body part | No |
| Took totem – personal item | No |
| Robbed victim or location |  |
| Disposal of Body | |
| Left at scene, no attempt to hide | No |
| Left at scene, hidden | No |
| Left at scene, buried | No |
| Moved, no attempt to hide | Yes, moved the victim to side of the road in an industrial park about 5 miles from the home where the shooting occurred and then dropped off the mother at the Fort Lauderdale Airport and left her in the car. She was later discovered alive by an airport security guard. |
| Moved, buried | No |
| Cut-op and disposed of | No |
| Moved, too home | No |
| Sentencing |  |
| Date killer arrested | September 1968, no specific date given |
| Date convicted | No specific date given, but the assumption would be 1968 |
| Sentence | 99 years and 6 months for second degree murder |
| Killer executed? | No |
| Did killer plead NGRI? | No |
| Was the NGRI plea successful? | It was ruled by psychiatrist that examined Erler that he would not qualify for the NGRI plea. |
| Name and state of prison | Florida State Prison |
| Killer committed suicide? | No, yes, attempted |
| Killer killed in prison? | No |
| Date of death |  |
| **References**  Erler, B., & Souter, J.C. (1981). *They Called Me the Catch Me Killer*.. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.  Frasier, D.K. (1996). *Murder Cases of the 20th Century*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company.  Varon, J. A. (1994). *The Catch Me Killer. The True Story of Florida’s Most Sensational Murder*. New York Lifetime Books. | |