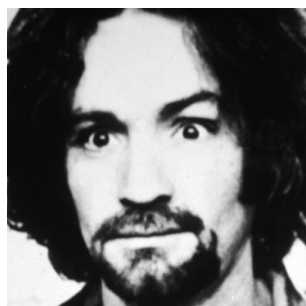


HISTORY &
CULTURE
**The
Importance of
Being Audrey**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Geena Davis



Charles Manson

Murderer (1934–)

Charles Manson is an American cult leader whose followers carried out several notorious murders in the late 1960s and inspired the book *Helter Skelter*.

Synopsis

Born in Ohio in 1934, Charles Manson is notoriously connected to the brutal slayings of actress Sharon Tate and other Hollywood residents, but he was never actually found guilty of committing the murders himself. However, the famous Tate-La Bianca killings have immortalized him as a living embodiment of evil. Images of his staring "mad eyes" are still used today to illustrate countless serial-murder news stories. The Manson Family—including Charles Manson and his young, loyal dropout disciples of murder—is thought to have carried out some 35 killings. Most were never tried, either for lack of evidence or because the perpetrators were already sentenced to life for the Tate/La Bianca killings. In 2012, Manson was denied parole for the 12th time.

NAME
Charles Manson

OCCUPATION
Murderer

BIRTH DATE
November 12, 1934 (age 82)

PLACE OF BIRTH
Cincinnati, Ohio

ZODIAC SIGN
Scorpio

Early Life

Charles Manson was born Charles Milles Maddox on November 12, 1934, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Kathleen Maddox, a 16-year-old girl who was both an alcoholic and prostitute. Kathleen later married William Manson, but the marriage ended quickly and Charles was placed in a boys school. Although the boy ran back to his mother, she didn't want anything to do with him. Charles was soon living on the streets and getting by through petty crime.

By 1951, Manson began spending time in prison, and early on, before he discovered the benefits of being a "model prisoner," he was considered dangerous. He would eventually spend half of the first 32 years of his life behind bars.

A new chapter in his life began in 1955 when he married a 17-year-old girl and moved with her to California. She became pregnant, but Manson resumed a life of crime again, once again stealing cars. It wasn't long before he was back behind bars, and by 1956 his estranged wife had left with their child and her new lover. Manson later had another child with a different woman while out on probation.

Petty Crimes

He was described by probation reports as suffering from a "marked degree of rejection, instability and psychic trauma" and "constantly striving for status and securing some kind of love." Other descriptions included "unpredictable" and "safe only under supervision."

From 1958, Manson was in and out of jail for a variety of offenses, including "pimping" and passing stolen checks, and he was sent to McNeil Island prison in Washington State for 10 years. During this time he had also raped a fellow male prisoner while brandishing a razor. Paradoxically, it was while he was incarcerated that he tapped into his creative talents and learned how to read music and play the guitar.

Helter Skelter

Manson was released on March 21, 1967, and the following year he would spearhead a murderous campaign that would make him one of the most infamous figures in criminal history.

In many ways, Manson reflects personality traits and obsessions that are associated with gurus of cult-quasi-religious groups that began to emerge in the 1960s and are still with us today. He was pathologically deluded into believing that he was the harbinger of doom regarding the planet's future, in much the same way that cult and evangelist figures today claim prophetic knowledge of the world's end.

Manson was also influenced not only by drugs such as LSD but by art works and music of the time such as [The Beatles](#) song "Helter Skelter" from their *White Album*. He had a strong belief and interest in the notion of Armageddon from the Book of Revelations and also looked into Scientology and more obscure cult churches such as Church of the Final Judgment.

After 1967, Manson gathered a group of followers who shared his passion for an unconventional lifestyle and habitual use of hallucinogenic drugs, such as LSD and magic mushrooms. "[The Family](#)," as they became known, moved to San Francisco and later to a deserted ranch in the San Fernando Valley. His followers, numbering around 100, also included a small hard-core unit of impressionable young girls. They began to believe, without question, Manson's claims that he was Jesus and his prophecies of a race war.

In August 1969, a series of Hollywood murders were to shock the world and tarnish the 1960's free love and peace legacy, when Manson gathered a group of his most loyal Family followers to carry out a massacre among Tinseltown's elite and "beautiful people." The act would shock the nation and effectively bring the era to an end.

Murders

The first victims fell on August 9, 1969, at the home [Roman Polanski](#) had rented located at 10050 Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon, an area just north of Beverly Hills. Manson chose four of his most obedient comrades—[Charles "Tex" Watson](#), [Susan Atkins](#), [Patricia Krenwinkel](#) and [Linda Kasabian](#)—to carry out these heinous crimes. Kasabian acted as the getaway driver and was to become the star witness during the trial.

The victims inside the house, actress [Sharon Tate](#); writer Wojciech Frykowski and his partner, the coffee bean heiress Abigail Folger; and celebrity hairstylist Jay Sebring, had returned to the Polanski residence after dining out. Polanski himself was away in London shooting a film.

The first victim was 18-year-old Steven Parent, who had been visiting his friend William Garretson, who took care of and lived in a guest home on the Cielo Drive property which Polanski and Tate rented. He was spotted by the intruders and was shot as he drove away from the house in the dark early morning hours. Kasabian was horrified by the shooting of the boy, and she remained outside to keep watch. When the other three broke into the house, they herded the occupants into the living room and tied them up. Manson himself took no part in the actual killings but directed his murderous disciples to the address and instructed them to kill everyone.

According to one of the Family member's statements, the Polanski household had been targeted because it represented Manson's rejection by the showbiz world and society.

Jay Sebring was shot and brutally kicked as he tried to defend Ms. Tate. During the terrifying fracas, both Frykowski and Folger managed to escape from the house but were chased and stabbed to death. At the trial, Kasabian described how she saw Frykowski staggering out of the house covered in blood and was horrified at the sight. She told him she was "sorry," but despite her pleas to his attacker to stop, the victim was bludgeoned repeatedly. Folger escaped from the house with terrible injuries but was caught on the front lawn and stabbed 28 times.

The most inhumane killing is arguably that of Sharon Tate, who despite pleading for the life of her unborn child was mercilessly stabbed in the stomach by Susan Atkins. Kasabian told of Atkins's chilling words to Tate before she stabbed her: "Look, bitch, I have no mercy for you. You're going to die, and you'd better get used to it." Atkins then used Tate's blood to write the word "pig" on the front door. Instead of this brutal massacre sating the pathological Manson, he instead criticized the murderers for being sloppy.

The following night, on August 10, 1969, Manson took Family members Watson, Krenwinkel and [Leslie Van Houten](#) to the Los Feliz address of wealthy supermarket executive Leno LaBianca and his wife, Rosemary, and the couple was murdered in a similarly horrifying fashion.

Arrest and Trial

Ironically, Manson and his Family were arrested not on suspicion of the murders but simply on the belief that they had vandalized a portion of the Death Valley National Park while they were hiding out in the Mojave Desert. In 1969, the county sheriff had them in custody, not realizing that he had murder suspects on his hands. But it was the confessions of Susan Atkins, while held in detention on suspicion of murdering Gary Hinman during an unrelated incident, that led detectives to realize that Manson and his followers were involved in the Tate/LaBianca killings.

Various motivations were examined during the course of the trial. The most feasible being that Manson's pathological ego, insanity and belief in Armageddon were influences that led him to leave behind a trail of destruction.

Manson believed that he was the new Messiah and that after a "nuclear attack" he and his followers would be saved by hiding in a secret world under the desert. His prophetic visions included a belief that the race war would result in a black victory, and Manson along with his Family members would have to mentor the black community, as they would lack experience to run the planet.

As Manson and the Family were to be the beneficiaries of the race war, he told his followers that they had to help initiate it. According to defense witness and killer Van Houten, this was the primary reason why they murdered the LaBiancas. Manson had taken the wallet of murdered Rosemary Bianca with the intention that he would deposit it in a section of L.A. where an African American might find it, use it and then possibly have the murders pinned on them.

Later in court, Van Houten, who was just 19 when she took part in the LaBianca killings, alleged that Manson had taken advantage of her vulnerability and dislike for her mother although she believed, like the other members, that he was a man of vision.

Thirty years later, during a parole board hearing, she said she was horrified by what she had done that night and desperately wanted to redeem herself. Van Houten was denied parole in 2006 and again in 2010.

Susan Atkins, possibly the most disturbed of all the killers, admitted in initial confessions to fellow prisoners that she had wanted to cut out Tate's unborn baby but didn't have the time. She also revealed that other grisly and macabre acts were to be perpetrated against the victims and that a list of other high-profile Hollywood stars were on a list to be killed and mutilated. These included [Elizabeth Taylor](#) and husband [Richard Burton](#), [Frank Sinatra](#), [Steve McQueen](#) and [Tom Jones](#). When asked why they wanted to kill such people, Atkins replied that they (Manson and Family) wanted to commit murders that would shock the world and make people take notice.

The trial began in June 1970. Ronald Hughes was a young lawyer with experience and knowledge of 1960s counter culture. He was assigned as Manson and Van Houten's attorney but decided to drop Manson in favor of defending Van Houten, who he thought could convince the jury that she was under the influence of Manson. The move may have cost him his life, as in 1970, Hughes went camping and disappeared. His decomposed body was found several months later, and it is thought he was the victim of retaliation killing by members of Manson's Family for, in their eyes, betraying their leader.

During the trial, Manson released an album titled *Lie* in an effort to raise money for his defense. Manson reveled in media attention and during court proceedings turned up with an X carved into his forehead. Some of his female followers copied the act and shaved their heads, sometimes sitting outside the court house. The X was gradually modified until it turned into a swastika.

Throughout the trial, the killers often giggled and exchanged grimaces with Manson, showing no remorse for their crimes.

On January 25, 1971, Manson was convicted of first-degree murder for directing the deaths of the Tate/LaBianca victims. He was sentenced to death, but this was automatically commuted to life in prison after California's Supreme Court invalidated all death sentences prior to 1972.

Kasabian was granted immunity for her part in acting as star witness. Susan Atkins was sentenced to death, but her sentence was later commuted to life in prison. She was incarcerated from 1969 until her death in 2009.

Beach Boys Connection

One interesting aspect to this disturbing saga was the emergence of record producer Terry Melcher, son of [Doris Day](#) and friend/producer of popular 1960s band the Beach Boys. Before the Manson Family's murderous spree, [Dennis Wilson](#) of the Beach Boys had allowed Manson and several members of his Family to stay at his home after picking up two female members of the Family who'd been hitchhiking. It was through this association that Manson got the opportunity to audition for Melcher, who was living at Polanski's house at the time. Melcher wasn't interested in signing a contract with Manson. However, Manson allegedly did record some music at Dennis's brother, [Brian Wilson](#)'s home studio, and the Beach Boys released a song written by Manson entitled "Cease to Exist" (renamed "Never Learn Not to Love") on their 1969 album, *20/20*, as a single B-side.

Life in Prison

Manson is serving his time in Corcoran State Prison in California. Even behind bars, he has still managed to attract followers. A woman named Afton Burton, who calls herself Star, claimed that she and Manson are in a relationship. In a 2013 interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, she said that "I'll tell you straight up, Charlie and I are going to get married. When that will be, we don't know. But I take it very seriously. Charlie is my husband. Charlie told me to tell you this."

At the age of 19, Star moved from Illinois to Corcoran, California, to be near the prison where Manson is incarcerated. In November 2014, 26-year-old Star and 80-year-old Manson got a marriage license. Star also runs several websites aimed at getting Manson released from prison. However, their marriage license expired in 2015, and allegations were made in February of that year by writer Daniel Simone that Star primarily intended to marry Manson so she could publicly display his corpse for profit after his death. Star later told *Inside Edition* the nuptials are still on while her mother, who is not planning to attend the alleged wedding, disputed Simone's claims in a *Rolling Stone* story.

The original house owned by the Polanski's at 10050 Cielo Drive has since been demolished. The property that replaced it still stands empty. No agents will include it on their books.

In January 2017, it was reported that Manson had been hospitalized in Bakersfield with a serious illness, however no details about his medical condition or the inmate's location were disclosed citing privacy and security reasons.

Article Title

Charles Manson Biography

Author

Biography.com Editors

Website Name

The Biography.com website

URL

<http://www.biography.com/people/charles-manson-9397912>

Access Date

January 21, 2017

Publisher

A&E Television Networks

Last Updated

January 4, 2017

Original Published Date

n/a

BIO NEWSLETTER

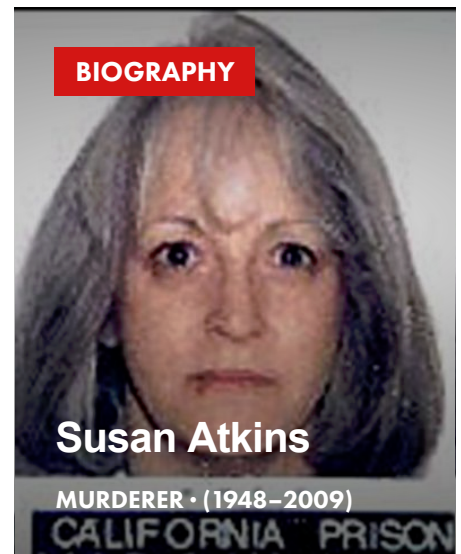
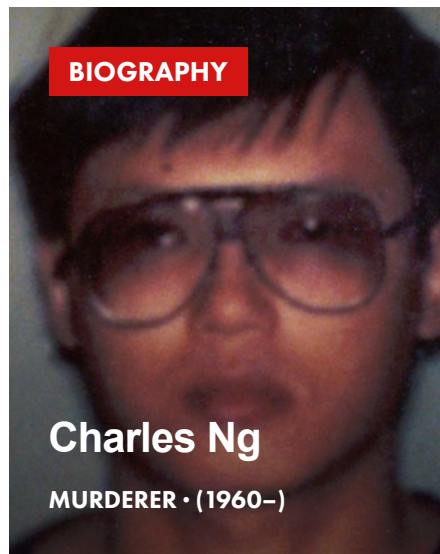
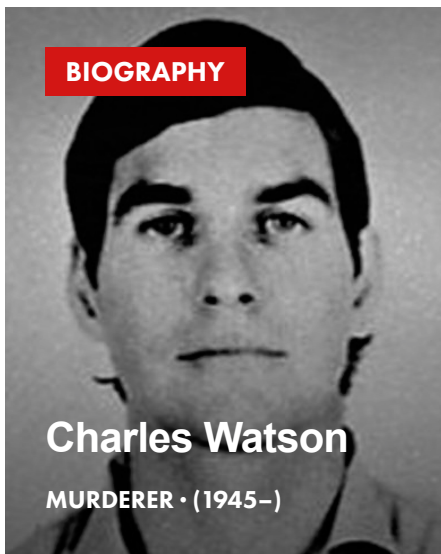
Sign up to receive updates from BIO and A+E Networks.

email address

SUBSCRIBE



MORE STORIES FROM BIO



SEE MORE