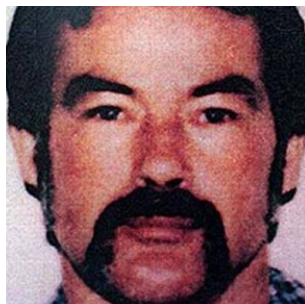


HISTORY &
CULTURE
**The
Importance of
Being Audrey**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Geena Davis



Ivan Milat

Murderer (1944–)

Ivan Milat is best known as the Backpack Killer, convicted of seven murders of backpackers in Australia.

Synopsis

Ivan Milat was born December 27, 1944, in Guildford, Australia, to a large immigrant Yugoslav family. From the age of 17, Milat was in trouble with the police, but it didn't come close to the seven murders he would be convicted for committing in 1996. Milat became known as the Backpack Killer after being found guilty of seven gruesome murders, though suspected of more.

Early Life

Ivan Robert Marko Milat was born in Australia on December 27, 1944, one of 14 children in an extended Yugoslavian immigrant family. Family life was rural and insular, and the Milats kept to themselves, making reliable information about Ivan Milat's upbringing difficult to obtain. Interviews with his brother, Boris, after Milat's trial, indicate that he exhibited psychopathic tendencies early on, though other family

members dispute this. Milat was described as a good-looking, muscular boy, who had a fascination for hunting and guns, and took great care of his appearance. His parents were hard working and strict. With 14 children to manage, discipline was difficult, and Milat and his brothers had a reputation for lawlessness in their neighborhood. The family endured numerous police visits to their farm as the children grew older.

From the age of 17 Milat was constantly in trouble with both the police and the courts, on charges as varied as housebreaking, car thefts and armed robberies.

In 1971, Milat was put on trial for the alleged rape of two female hitchhikers, who testified that he had been armed with a knife during the attacks. He was acquitted on the rape charges when the prosecution failed to make a convincing case against him.

There has been much speculation about the true number of Milat's victims, given that he has always maintained his innocence, but the luckiest of them was certainly British backpacker Paul Onions, who was hitchhiking south from Sydney, in search of work, and was picked up by Milat on January 25, 1990.

NAME
Ivan Milat

OCCUPATION
Murderer

BIRTH DATE
December 27, 1944 (age
72)

PLACE OF BIRTH
Guildford, Australia

FULL NAME
Ivan Robert Marko Milat

ZODIAC SIGN
Capricorn

Milat was initially very friendly, introducing himself as "Bill," but Onions found Milat's personal questions about his plans unnerving, and he became concerned for his safety when Milat began ranting, and making racist and xenophobic remarks. When Milat pulled his car to the side of the road, Onions tried to get out, but Milat pulled out a revolver and told him to put on his seatbelt. Onions managed to bolt for safety, leaving his backpack, which contained all his possessions and passport. Despite Milat's threat that he would shoot him, he managed to flag down a passing car, which took him to the nearest police station so that he could report the incident. He returned to Sydney to replace the missing passport, and eventually returned to the UK, not yet aware of his narrow escape.

Crimes

The first of Milat's less fortunate victims to be discovered were British backpackers, Caroline Clarke and Joanne Walters. They were found in an area of the Belangalo State Forest known as Executioners Drop, by orienteering enthusiasts who were out on their weekly run, on September 19, 1992. This location was not far from the area where the attack on Paul Onions had occurred in 1990.

Both girls had been missing since May of that year, when they had teamed up to look for work south of Sydney. Joanne Walters had been stabbed repeatedly; including one wound to her spine that, it was believed, might have paralyzed her while the killer continued his vicious attack. The zip of her jeans had been undone, but the top button was still fastened, as if she had been partially stripped and sexually assaulted, then buttoned up hastily after the attack. Her remains were too badly decomposed to actually establish whether a sexual attack had occurred. Caroline Clarke, as well as being stabbed repeatedly, had been shot in the head ten times. She also had a similar spinal wound to Walters. Four bullets that remained inside her skull were preserved for forensic analysis, and detectives were confident that they would be able to use these to track the weapon responsible.

A primitive brick fireplace had been constructed near the bodies, and cigarette butts and spent .22-caliber cartridge cases were also recovered from the scene. An extensive search of the surrounding area produced no more bodies at that time, and the possibility that a serial killer was on the loose, although speculated in the press, was denied by the police authorities. Despite the abundance of forensic evidence, police made little progress over the following weeks and sought the assistance of a forensic psychiatrist, Dr. Rod Milton. He concluded that the killer was in his mid thirties, with a history of aggression, was familiar with the surrounding terrain and motivated by the pleasure of inflicting pain. Furthermore, he did not believe that a serial killer was responsible, although it was possible that the killer might have an assistant. Police progress continued to be slow, as all leads were painstakingly followed, including a thorough investigation of all suspicious disappearances over the previous decade.

The discovery of the second set of bodies, in October 1993, injected new life into a case that had become stale despite the best investigative efforts. The badly decomposed remains were those of Australian nationals James Gibson and Deborah Everist, who had gone missing in 1989. Despite the environmental damage wrought on the clothing, Gibson's zipper was intact; it was open, but with the top button fastened, in a similar manner to Joanne Walters. Post-mortem examinations again revealed paralyzing spinal knife wounds, inflicted in a similar manner to the earlier British victims.

Crime scene similarities included a small fireplace built near the bodies, making the police more certain that they were dealing with the same killer, and Superintendent Clive Small was placed in overall charge of the investigation, setting up a large task force to progress the investigations. A massive manual search of the extended Belangalo Forest area was initiated, and it took almost a month before the next victim was found, on November 1. German national Simone Schmidl, had been missing since January 1991, when she had been planning to hitchhike south from Sydney in search of work. The trademark fireplace and discarded .22 shells were close by. There was no doubt she had fallen victim to the same killer, showing the now-familiar spinal injury.

Three days later the exhaustive search yielded the final two victims, German nationals Anja Habschied and her boyfriend, Gabor Neugebauer, who had been missing since just after Christmas 1991. The boy's jeans had been unzipped, but with the button fastened, and he had been strangled, as well as shot numerous times. The recovered bullets were a perfect match to previous crime scenes. The girl's body was missing its skull completely, which appeared to have been severed by a machete or sword.

Given the new bodies, Superintendent Small was forced to admit to the media that the police were looking for a serial killer, confirming what many already believed. The wide range of methods employed by the killer, including beating, strangulation, shooting, stabbing and decapitation, as well as the sexual assault of both male and female victims, made it difficult to narrow down the suspect list, and police were also hampered by the sheer volume of calls from concerned citizens, who swamped the task force with information.

Various independent reports had led the police to develop suspicions about the Milat family and, in particular Ivan Milat, but they had no firm evidence linking Milat to the crimes. The international media interest served its purpose, however, when Paul Onions, the only one of Milat's victims to escape, contacted Australian authorities in April 1994, with information about his 1990 attack. His account was further corroborated by an independent call from the woman who had rescued Onions and driven him to the police station, and police recognized quickly that, if Onions could identify Milat as his attacker, then they could perhaps tie him to the other murders.

Onions was flown out to Australia, where he identified Milat from a video line-up, giving police the excuse they needed to seek a warrant for the search of various Milat family properties. A simultaneous raid was carried out in the early hours of May 22, 1994, which revealed a huge amount of evidence linking Milat to the crimes, including personal effects of many of the victims, including clothing, sleeping bags, and other camping equipment, as well as vast quantities of ammunition. They also found parts of disassembled weapons, including a .22 caliber rifle. A long curved cavalry sword, suitable for the beheading of Anja Habschied, was found in a locked cupboard at the home of Milat's mother.

Trial and Aftermath

Milat was arrested and taken into custody for questioning, where he was evasive and uncooperative. He was initially charged with the attack on Paul Onions, then subsequently with the seven murders, once ballistic evidence matched his weapon to the attacks. He was remanded in custody to await trial. He engaged the same lawyer who had represented him during his 1971 rape trial and acquittal, John Marsden, but fired him when he advised Milat to plead guilty.

Milat's trial was set for June 1995, but the case was delayed by wrangles over legal aid, and finally went ahead in the full glare of international publicity in March 1996. Milat was charged with the seven murders, as well as the attack on Paul Onions, and pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Onions was the first prosecution witness, who was followed by testimony from the family members of the victims. Then followed detail of the hundreds of exhibits and scene of crime photos, as well as expert witness testimony. The prosecution case took 12 weeks to present.

The defense called Milat to the stand; he denied any involvement in the killings, but performed poorly under cross-examination, making a bad impression on the jury. The defense tried to imply that other members of the Milat family had committed the crimes, and had then set Ivan Milat up, but the case presented was not credible.

On July 27, 1996, following a 15-week trial, the jury returned after three days of consideration, finding Milat guilty on all charges. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment for the attack on Paul Onions and seven consecutive life sentences for each of the murders. When asked if he had any comment, Milat continued to protest his innocence.

Milat was first incarcerated in Maitland Prison, where he would stay for nearly a year. In May 1997 authorities foiled a well-planned jailbreak attempt masterminded by Milat. After discovering the plot, the inmates were separated. His accomplice George Savvas was found hanged in his cell the next morning. He was then transferred to the maximum-security wing of Goulburn Prison, near Sydney. After a blade was discovered in his cell, Milat spent time in solitary confinement. Milat has always maintained his innocence, and later staged self-mutilation attacks and hunger strikes in a bid to get his appeals heard.

In July 2001 his initial appeal against his sentence was denied.

Other Developments

Police maintain that Milat may have been involved in many more murders than the seven for which he was convicted. In the summer of 2001, Milat was ordered to give evidence at an inquest into the disappearances of three other female backpackers, but no case has been brought against him, due to lack of evidence. Similar inquiries were launched in 2003, in relation to the disappearance of two nurses and again in 2005, relating to the disappearance of hitchhiker Annette Briffa, but no charges have resulted.

On November 8, 2004, Ivan Milat gave a televised interview, in which he denied that any of his family had been implicated in the seven murders.

On July 18, 2005, Milat's former lawyer, John Marsden, who had been fired before the murder trial, made a deathbed statement, in which he claimed that Milat had been assisted by an unknown woman, in the killings of the two British backpackers.

On September 7, 2005, his final appeal was refused, and Milat is likely to remain in prison for the rest of his natural life.

In May 2015, Milat's brother Boris came forward and said that Milat was responsible for another shooting: that of taxi cab driver Neville Knight, in 1962. Steve van Aparen, a former homicide detective who serves as a consultant with the LAPD and FBI, among others, was called in to conduct polygraph tests with Boris Milat and Allan Dillon, the man convicted of paralyzing Knight with a gunshot to the back those many years ago. The tests convinced Aparen that both men are telling the truth and that Ivan Milat did in fact shoot Knight.

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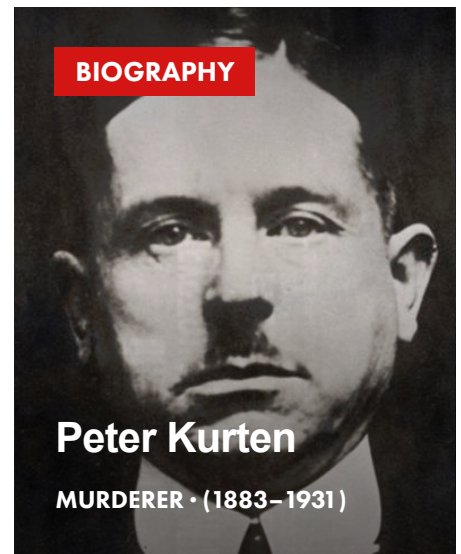
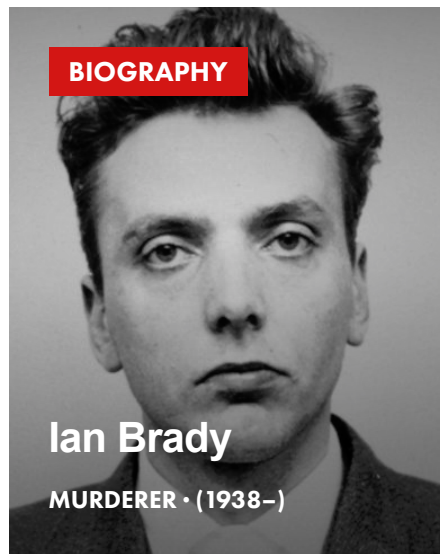
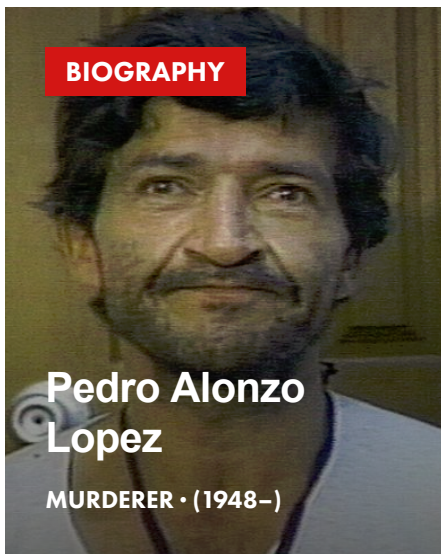
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