



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

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PRESS RELEASE

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**JOSEPH JAMES DEANGELO JR. PLEADS GUILTY TO 13 MURDERS, 13
KIDNAPPINGS AND DOZENS OF ADDITIONAL UNCHARGED CRIMES**

***“GOLDEN STATE KILLER” TO BE SENTENCED TO LIFE WITHOUT THE
POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE***

SACRAMENTO, CA – Joseph James DeAngelo Jr., 74, pleaded guilty today to 13 felony counts of first-degree murder and 13 felony counts of kidnapping to commit robbery during a 13-year multicounty 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 also admitted committing more than 161 uncharged crimes related to 61 uncharged victims, including attempted murder, kidnapping to commit robbery, rape, robbery, first-degree burglary, false imprisonment and criminal threats. The uncharged crimes occurred in Alameda, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Tulare and Yolo counties.

Today’s hearing was relocated to the Sacramento State 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 is being 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 ten years. The plea provided the victims and their families who were terrorized by DeAngelo the opportunity to hear him admit his crimes and they will have an opportunity to provide victim impact statements beginning August 17, 2020.

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

- 13 counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances allegations of multiple murders and murder 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, false imprisonment and criminal threats.

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.

Joseph DeAngelo will be sentenced to life in state prison **without** the possibility of parole. The sentence will run consecutive and concurrent to his sentence for the first-degree murders to which he has pled. His sentencing hearing will commence on August 17, 2020. Victims will be given the opportunity to deliver victim impact statements prior to DeAngelo's sentencing on August 21, 2020. The sentencing hearing location will be announced at a later date.

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

“Today’s court proceeding brings us one step closer to ending the horrific saga of Joseph DeAngelo and his decades long crime spree,” said Contra Costa County District Attorney Diana Becton. “The crimes he committed in Contra Costa County, and throughout the state of California, have left a lifetime of scars and pain for our victims and their families. In this case justice did not move swiftly, it was a long time coming. However, our victims remained steadfast and brave throughout this entire process. Today is about remembering all of the victims in this case and finally holding DeAngelo responsible for these crimes.”

“I am an ardent supporter of the death penalty when appropriate. There are crimes that are so heinous and so depraved that death is the only appropriate punishment. This is one of those cases, and that is why all six District Attorneys prosecuting this case decided unanimously to seek the death penalty,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “The ability of victims to confront the person who terrorized them and robbed them of a lifetime of memories with their loved ones is an unequivocal right. I carefully consulted with all of the families of the Orange County victims and had the former district attorney who filed the charges fully briefed on the defendant’s offer to plead guilty. Given the totality of the circumstances including the advanced age of the victims, the advanced age and deaths of key witnesses, and the lengthy capital case process ahead, the decision in Orange County to accept the defendant’s offer was unanimous. Today’s plea will never bring the loved ones back or restore the sense of security that was shattered, but today, after 40 years of uncertainty, dozens of victims and a nation heard the person responsible for this reign of terror finally admit that he – and only he – is responsible.”

“The investigation, identification and prosecution of the East Area Rapist/Golden State Killer has been a long journey for justice – a journey marked by passion, persistence and sheer determination,” said Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert. “Through the revolutionary tool of Investigative Genetic Genealogy, this serial rapist and murderer was not only identified and brought to justice but will spend the rest of his life in prison. It is my sincere hope that today brings healing to victims, their families and communities harmed by the atrocious crimes committed by Joseph DeAngelo.”

“Today, in the eyes of the victims, and the loved ones of those murdered by this vicious defendant, I saw the exception to the rule: justice delayed is justice denied,” said Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce Dudley. “Today I saw justice and it was brought to all of us by the tenacity of Sacramento DA Anne Marie Schubert and her extraordinary team.”

“The crimes committed by the defendant in Tulare County were never eligible for the death penalty based on the law in 1975. It is important to note that he will be sentenced to the maximum for those crimes,” said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. “It would be incorrect to describe today’s events as ‘closure.’ The countless victims in this case will still feel the pain of tragic loss – loss of family, loss of innocence, loss of ever feeling safe again – because of the terror inflicted by the defendant. I am proud to stand with these victims, whether they are from Tulare County or elsewhere, to see justice move forward.”

“Today’s hearing marks a tremendous moment in the lives of dozens, if not hundreds, of California citizens who were direct or collateral victims of this defendant’s crimes. This resolution, brought about by the work of six District Attorneys’ offices, demonstrates the

work of law enforcement at its finest,” said Ventura County District Attorney Greg Totten. “In 1980, Ventura County was rocked by the brutal murders of Lyman and Charlene Smith. Initially, evidence was thin and leads proved fruitless. However, for over forty years, law enforcement never gave up. Using the best technology and legal tools available, teams of investigators linked the Smiths’ murders to other murders and rapes around the state, and we put together a rock-solid case against this defendant. This case, to us, is not just the 26 counts we could charge, but also the myriad other crimes this defendant committed where the statute of limitations had run. We left no lead uninvestigated, and we left no victim forgotten. We wish we could have found him sooner. But we are pleased to be able to say today to our Ventura County community and to Joseph DeAngelo’s victims, you no longer have to wonder who did these horrible crimes. He has not just been arrested and charged; he has now admitted he is guilty. His plea today ensures he will spend the rest of his life in prison, and he will die a convicted rapist and murderer.”

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