

Dennis Rader's Dormancy Period: The Truth or a Coverup?

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses in detail and at length the crimes and victims of Dennis Rader, known primarily as the BTK Strangler. Rader's dormancy period prior to his capture by the police has been of question and fascination to researchers and scholars, all of whom are trying to dissect this man to know once and for all if his dormancy period was true, or if Rader found a new way to kill. The "truck stop killings" spanning from 1999-2004 have uncovered uncanny similarities in the methods and signatures of the killings in comparison to Rader's 10 known murders, for which I have investigated and compared in this paper. The apparent correlation between the two sets of murders, while unnerving nonetheless, have failed to prove any concrete connections of Dennis Rader to the "truck stop killings", leaving everyone to continue wondering if Rader ever truly went dormant.

Introduction

Dennis Rader, aka the BTK Strangler, stacks up against some of the most notorious American serial killers, after committing ten known murders between the years of 1974 to 1991. BTK, an acronym for "Bind, Torture, and Kill", terrorized the streets of Wichita, Kansas over a 17-year period, but continued haunting the residents of this city for 14 additional years until his official capture on February 25, 2005. Those 14 years of dormancy have stumped researchers and criminologists alike, given that research often points to the idea that serial killers cannot ever truly stop killing. Yet it appears that Dennis Rader did. The question then remains, did Rader truly cease his killing spree, or is there an alternative explanation for why the world didn't hear from BTK again until his announcement of return in March of 2004? Former FBI profiler John Douglas questioned in his book *Inside the Mind of BTK*, how "this publicity-starved psychopath [was] able to go underground for so many years? Was he still killing?" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 5). Some have theorized Rader's vanishing act could be attributed to Kansas's reinstatement of the death penalty in 1994, which Rader could have been hoping to evade. This gives room for theories about subsequent killings taking place under different conditions or MOs that would have kept Rader's anonymity and BTK out of the radar of the police. Various cold cases remaining unsolved in Kansas, as well as the "truck stop killings" in states surrounding Kansas could all be further investigated to look for Rader's touch; assuming that research remains consistent with this killer and those urges to kill never cease without action.

The Background of Dennis Rader

Dennis Rader, the self-named BTK strangler, "has been the subject of documentaries, podcasts, articles, and more" (Williams, 2021) since his reign in the spotlight in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. From all of these media sources attempting to digest and analyze how this man turned into a monster, one thing should be taken away from them: Rader was not special when compared to others of his kind. He didn't grow up drastically differently than the other names we've spent our whole lives fearing in terms of predicting behaviors. Jeffrey Dahmer, and Ed Kemper "killed animals and

had violent, sexual fantasies” (Williams, 2021). Rader was just the same. However, what did make him different is a factor one would assume would make him less likely to turn out the way he did. Rader actually grew up in a seemingly “normal and unremarkable” (Bonn, 2022) fashion. His parents had common jobs, he joined groups and clubs. There was nothing out of the ordinary, such as neglect or abuse, that would point to his eventual behaviors. He was an evidently normal child who grew up to appear as a regular, neighbor-friendly type of man. Yet from the years of 1974 to 1991, Rader put on one of the best Jekyll and Hyde performances recorded in history. While presenting as “a family man, government worker and church leader by day” (Ott, 2021), Rader lived a life void of any suspicion of unusual behaviors. All the while, his alter ego was out terrorizing the streets and tormenting law enforcement as he finally acted out the violent fantasies from his childhood. Rader was a married Air Force veteran with two children; no one would have suspected that the perpetrator behind this serial killer’s crimes was him. However, he fooled the world for more than 30 years, starting with his first attack in 1974.

While everybody knows about BTK and Dennis Rader, few know of the victims of his crimes. Media does so much to advertise the criminal yet gives no effort to acknowledge that there were real people who were murdered and that they have names too. Justice for these families might never fully come, but their names deserve to be known. The Otero family, consisting of Joseph (38), Julie (34), Josephine (11), and Joseph (9), were BTK’s first victims; the attack taking place on January 15, 1974. Kathryn Bright (21) was Rader’s next target, alongside her brother Kevin Bright (19) who managed to escape death by BTK’s hands on April 4, 1974. Shirley Vain (24) was murdered three years later on March 17, 1977. Nancy Fox (25) was murdered just 9 months later on December 8, 1977. His next murder didn’t occur until 8 years later. Marine Hedge (53) was murdered on April 27, 1985. On September 16, 1987, Vicki Wegerle (28) was murdered. BTK’s final known victim was Dolores Davis (62), murdered January 18, 1991 (Tait). These 10 victims were slaughtered at the hands of Dennis Rader over a 17-year span that ended abruptly following his last attack in 1991. After that, “Rader ceases killing and BTK drops off the map” (Ott, 2021). His dormancy period, allegedly, lasted 14 more years, until he was apprehended on February 25, 2005, after he got careless with the games he played with law enforcement, giving them the opportunity to finally crack the case of the BTK. Today, Rader is “serving 10 consecutive life sentences in solitary confinement at El Dorado Correctional Facility in Butler County, Kansas” (Williams, 2021).

Discussion of BTK’s Crimes

All of the most feared and most “famous” serial killers have been given some sort of clever nickname based in some part on the crimes they committed. Rader, having an incessant need for notoriety from the media, decided to take matters into his own hands when the media had yet to acknowledge his crimes. He deemed himself the BTK strangler, for obvious reasons. Rader had a unique approach to killing his victims, most importantly, focusing on his bondage of his victims. John Douglas wrote that “Although he was obsessed with physical torture, it wasn’t part of what’s referred to as his ‘signature,’... BTK’s signature was bondage - not physical torture” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 29). The one thing that always, no matter what, remained constant in each of the killings was this element. The rest of his MO, including other forms of physical torture, letters to the police, cutting the phone lines, and some sort of ruse to get into the victim’s home, were all usually present, but could also vary from crime to crime. His MO changed by circumstance, since to this killer, bondage was the key. During his interview with Rader, John Douglas confirmed and asked, ““So all you really cared about was binding your victims with rope?” ... ‘Your fantasy was to look at someone who you had totally immobilized and made powerless, someone who you were in total control of, free to do as you pleased’” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 308). To this, Rader simply nodded. For him, power was the end goal. And the way he got that? By binding each of his victims.

A unique characteristic to Rader’s crimes was that, unlike someone such as Jeffrey Dahmer who solely targeted gay men and boys, Rader didn’t have one target group. He killed men and women, children, and more elderly individuals. Rader was what criminologists would call an “opportunistic killer”. Within the bounds of the Wichita

area, Rader exercised the idea that when he could, he would. This didn't stop him from showing his true desires though, as the women victims were always shown special attention by Rader. Douglas "believed that deep down, he loathed women. Whatever conflicts he'd had with them, as well as with society, were released through the murders" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 31). The most apparent case of this loathing comes from his first crime, the Ottero Family. Starting with the "wild card" of the family, Rader "quickly decided to get rid of Joseph" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 41). Joey, the nickname for the youngest boy Joseph, was also not given much attention, as he died from asphyxiation, taking only a few minutes to go. With the mother, Julie, Rader gave a bit more attention than the men. He "straddled her, lifting her torso up off the bed while choking her" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 41). Yet compared to all of three of these members of the Ottero family, "It seemed obvious that ... what he really longed for was the main course and the dessert, all rolled into one--eleven-year-old Josephine" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 41). Rader took the most time with Josephine, carrying her down into the basement where he could have her all to himself. Rader hung Josephine's body from a pipe, rope tied around her neck, as he watched her struggle. Rader watched the life evaporate from this eleven-year-old child and in that moment, he acquired the power and control he had always dreamt of. This gave him the sexual gratification to then defame this child even further, ejaculating onto the girl's legs before leaving her limp body in basement as he went on his way. His treatment of Josey "indicated just how badly he wanted her and to what lengths he'd travel to act out the fantasies writhing inside his head" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 42). Only somebody with a complete absence of respect for a human being and extreme loathing, specifically of women, would be capable of the disgusting behavior Rader acted out.

After the Ottero family, Rader executed three more murders. Kathryn Bright was stabbed eleven times in the torso, Shirley Vain was murdered in the room next to where Rader had locked up her three children, and Nancy Fox's body was rolled over by police to reveal part of her face that had turned black. Each of these women were clearly outlets of Rader's rage and disdain for women, as they were more than simply bound. They each had experienced even further forms of torture, both psychologically and physically, than the men of his first crimes. Yet after these murders, when police assumed BTK to be on a high, he seemed to vanish before their eyes. Rader's first dormancy period took place from 1978 all the way to 1985, leaving 8 years between Nancy Fox and his next victim Marine Hedge. Once again, the question of "How does a serial killer not kill?" loomed over police and the community of Wichita. Wichita, for 8 years, were left constantly looking over their shoulder, waiting for the day BTK would return. In those years, Rader continued the same public identity of father, husband, and church leader that he had all those years. Now though, instead of killing to fulfill his urges, Rader found a way to repress them. "During interviews conducted by law enforcement, Rader admitted to engaging in autoerotic activities as a substitute for his killings" (Hoffman, 2018). Such activities would frequently include masturbation while daydreaming about his previous kills, cross-dressing, autoerotic asphyxiation, and self-bondage (Crime + Investigation UK). Eventually, these techniques to delay his compulsion were no longer enough. Rader reignited BTK in April of 1985, and went on to commit 3 more murders, his final taking place in 1991.

In January of 2004, *The Wichita Eagle* "runs a 30th anniversary piece on BTK...[and] prints an article recalling the terror BTK wielded in the 1970s and suggesting that he had faded from memory after so many years" (Ott, 2021). This suggestion of a lack of relevance triggered Rader. As previously seen in instances such as his comment to the media in 1978 saying, "How many people do I have to kill before I get my name in the paper or some national attention?" (Ott, 2021), Rader has an extreme need for notoriety. He had witnessed the publicity of his counterparts such as Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and David Berkowitz, and was frustrated that his crimes weren't enough to gain such recognition as theirs. Rader admitted to the article's part in spurring the revival of BTK, leading him to publicly announce his return on March 19, 2004, via *The Wichita Eagle*. What once started as a secret hidden from the world quickly turned into a game for Rader. "The moment he realized how much attention his crimes were receiving from the media, he reveled in the notoriety. Suddenly he wanted the world to know that the BTK Strangler was badder than bad and utterly unstoppable" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 290). The more he was talked about, the more he wanted to be talked about. So, he decided that he wouldn't tolerate the slander *The Wichita Eagle* wrote about his irrelevance. BTK came

back cockier than ever, relishing in the idea of once again proving his intelligence in evading capture. Yet this cockiness is exactly what led the police straight to him. On February 25, 2005, Dennis Rader, the man behind the facade of BTK, was arrested. Just 6 months later, Rader was sentenced to 10 consecutive life terms in prison. Rader did manage to evade one thing during his capture though: the death penalty. In Kansas, the death penalty wasn't reinstated until 1994, three years after his last known murder. So, Rader, still to this day, is left to serve out those sentences in Butler County, Kansas.

The Dormancy Period

When thinking about the possibility that BTK wasn't actually dormant during those 14 years between 1991 and 2005, there are often doubts that he could have killed under different conditions or with different MOs. Yet Rader himself had already proved this to be inaccurate, as his final two kills showed changes in his MO. Even from the Ottero family murders to Kathryn Brights, "There appeared to be so many differences - Bright's killer didn't cut the phone line, and he'd used both a knife and a gun on his victims" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 52). These inconsistencies in BTK's killings leave room for the idea that Rader could have adopted new techniques in potential killings during BTK's dormancy, which separated Rader from the identity of BTK. This switch in MOs or specificities of the crimes could have been a technique adopted by Rader to continue evading the police while also ensuring he would not be subject to the death penalty in Kansas, should he ever be caught as BTK. In fact, in his book, John Douglas does his own "myth-busting" in regard to the accusations that BTK's MO couldn't have changed, saying how "every criminal justice student with even the slightest bit of frontal lobe activity knows that killers *do* change their MO. It is their most malleable and fluid quality, a skill that is constantly evolving and changing to the point of perfection" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 71). This doubt can then be fully banished from conversation regarding the dormancy of BTK.

Although "Rader never confessed to other murders", "he has proven again and again that he is not reliable when it comes to describing his life and his crimes" (Lamothe, 2021). So even though Rader has never verbally insinuated any further crimes than the ten he was charged with, his journal writings could suggest otherwise. Rader was known to keep notebooks filled with what he called "project" plans for potential victims, mainly women he stalked, as well as documented records of his fulfilled attacks. From these journals, Rader divulged how "committing murders further from Wichita would be a good idea because it would suggest that BTK was not from that area" (Lamothe, 2021), suggesting that Rader's geographic circle could have expanded well beyond the greater Wichita area. With law enforcement assuming he was only terrorizing that one city, other cold cases, following similarities to BTK cases in different cities or states, were never looked into as potential crimes committed by Rader. In his journals, there were also entries that appeared "sparse and consist of many loose pages. It seems possible he may have gotten rid of at least some entries as well" (Lamothe, 2021). Missing entries could mean there were additional victims Rader didn't want known, maybe because of the date on which they occurred. If they had taken place after 1994, Rader's fate could have ended a lot differently...

In the Shirley Vain case of 1977, Vain was actually not Rader's intended target. He had the intention of attacking Cheryl Gilmore, but when she wasn't home, "the urge to kill was too strong, so [Rader] changed directions in midstream" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 70) leaving Vain at the wrong place at the wrong time. This sporadic decision to switch victims on a whim drives home the idea of Rader as an opportunistic killer. This could mean that when his dormancy period started, Rader could have fooled the police making them believe he had stopped killing, by executing murders that seemed "off-brand" for BTK. If he simply took whatever opportunity was given to him, such as something like the "truck stop killing" victims, this would have allowed him to continue acting out his urges without anyone knowing it was him. Rader's opportunistic behavior could also be attributed to a lack of patience and need to fulfill the urges immediately. In 1979, around the time of Rader's first dormancy, there was another intended target on Rader's mind. In fact, "he sent his intended target a letter, informing her that he'd chosen her as his next victim, but had opted not to kill her after growing tired of waiting for her to arrive home" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 18). When his carefully thought-out plans were not executed to his liking, this could have created a frenzied attitude, pushing Rader

to simply just kill, regardless of circumstances, MO, or other details. As long as he can act out his signature of bondage, that was all that was required.

Arguments over the validity of Rader confession to only 10 murders have occurred since his sentencing in 2005. “While some believe Rader committed no further murder than the ones he admitted to, others surmise that he did indeed kill more victims over the years” (Lamothe, 2021). Yet a lot of these arguments stem from subjective opinions and don’t bear any fruitful evidence one way or the other. John Douglas, however, gathered the most substantial evidence possible in this case to form his own conclusion on whether or not he believes Rader is guilty of further crimes. Douglas was given the opportunity to visit Rader at the El Dorado Correctional Facility to get the insider’s scoop on what really went down from 1974 to 1991 and even after that. Douglas’s idea of what happened in the 14 years between Rader’s last killing to his arrest swayed significantly from before and during the interview to after. Before even stepping foot in the prison, Douglas made the statement that “Someone as sick and dangerous as BTK will stop killing only when he is killed or gets locked behind bars” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 32). Given that in 1991, Rader was neither dead nor behind bars, it seems that Douglas would have assumed the killings had somehow continued. This seems a fairly popular conclusion drawn by police officials close to the case seeing how, after his arrest, “The authorities still had no idea how many people Rader might have killed” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 282). They too believed that Rader could have “gone into hiding” or somehow killed without connecting them to BTK out of fear of what would have awaited him if he were caught. During the actual interview, Douglas still seemed to come to the same conclusion saying how he was “not completely convinced that he hadn’t taken another life after Kansas reinstated capital punishment in 1994” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 302). Douglas had this thought right after Rader had told him there were no more victims. During the span of the interview, it seems clear that Douglas didn’t trust Rader enough to believe otherwise. Yet the twist in his conclusion came after the interview concluded. Kris Casarona, a close confidant of Rader’s who was in the process of writing a documented book about his life, spoke with Douglas pre and post interview hoping to gain insight that she herself might not have acquired during her many discussions with Rader. Casarona stated to Douglas, “I don’t think he killed anyone after 1991” to which Douglas responded “Neither do I” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 318). This leaves a really large question mark over the dormancy period of Dennis Rader. John Douglas is one of the most influential profilers as well as agents in FBI history, so his judgements come with a lot of weight and merit to them. However, the one person in this case who could add even more value would be the killer himself, Dennis Rader. In a letter written by Rader in 1978 he made this chilling statement: “*There is no help, no cure, except death or being caught and put away*” (Douglas, 2009, pg. 81). Rader’s statement follows parallel to the previously aforementioned statement by Douglas insinuating one of two things: Either Rader was full of it and wanted to come off as the big, bad wolf; Or he really and truly meant it. There was no way of stopping unless he was dead or locked up. If this is the case, Rader himself could have left the opening for the discovery of additional crimes.

The “Truck Stop Killings”

The “truck stop killings” were a string of murders that took place in six states from the years of 1999 to January of 2004. Though these killings crossed states lines, the one thing that tied them all together was that they took place at truck stops off highways and typically targeted “women living high-risk lifestyles, such as homeless women and truck stop prostitutes” (Raymond, 2009). While some might think each state had their own separate murders committed by different individuals, “Investigators [thought] there [were] enough common threads to suggest the killings are linked” (Gold, 2004). Across six states, including Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee, there were women who had been “found nude and had been strangled and left under bridges or overpasses near major highways” (Gold, 2004). This alone would not be enough to assume Rader could have had any part in these crimes. Especially with the aspect of rape that often occurred during these crimes, it would in turn point even further from Rader, given that rape was never a part of his MO in the BTK killings. However, as has been made known, one’s MO can change. The one thing that can’t is the element of bondage. This might not be an issue for some of these cases, however. When looked into by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, they found that in three of the cases, one

in Arkansas, Oklahoma City, and Oxford, Mississippi, “Each victim had been bound in a similar manner” (Raymond, 2009). These three murders all took place within a span of three months.

After heavy investigation of these cases by representatives from 17 different law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, two suspects were taken into custody. John Robert Williams, a long-haul truck driver, and his girlfriend Rachel Cumberland, were suspects in three Oklahoma City women’s deaths. Both pleaded guilty on some account to one murder that took place in Mississippi. However there has been less than sufficient enough evidence to link the couple to any of the other cases (Raymond, 2005; Raymond 2009). Given that the majority of these cases have yet to be closed, there could be some reason to look into Rader as a suspect in at least the cases with the mention of bondage. Given his extreme hatred for women, there is no doubt that he could have treated these women in such a manner as to dump them under a bridge and leave them there to rot. Considering the societal status of most of the victims as well, it wouldn’t be unreasonable to assume Rader could have looked down on these women as inferiors to himself, giving him even more justification for the cruel and inhumane treatment. Also, given his mentioning of looking into victims outside of the state of Kansas, these cases fit into that idea. The killings also all took place in the same timeframe as BTK’s dormancy period and ended just before Rader’s official arrest in 2005.

There is obviously no hard evidence that could link Rader to any of these truck stop killings, and there very well probably never would be. However, it is naive of people to not give thought to such potential theories as the truck stop killings. When looking into such cases, there could be hidden links that at the time might have not seemed significant enough to look at as a link, but that could very well prove to be just that. The connection between BTK’s killings and the truck stop killings include an extreme loathing of women seen in the treatment and discarding of them, bondage in some cases, timeline matchup, and possibility for changes in MO. Could any of these cases actually check out? Probably not, seeing as Rader has never made a confession, and that few if any law enforcement officers or agencies have really ever given thought to this idea. So, for now, the families of the victims and anyone involved will be left to wonder who was behind these multi-state serial killings.

Potential Subsequent Victims

If the truck stop killings truly have no connection to Rader, does that mean that his dormancy period was actually true, or are there other cases that could have Rader’s stamp on them? There are dozens of cold case homicides in the state of Kansas going back decades, and it would be hard to assume just any old homicide case could be linked to one of the biggest and baddest... There is also the possibility that cold cases from other surrounding states could be looked at as potential Rader cases. Yet for the sake of giving them the best shot at a link, there are a few cases specifically in Kansas or right outside the state to look at that have quite a few similarities to the cases known to be committed by BTK. While some of these cases took place during Rader’s killing years from 1974-1991, it is important to note that if any of these cases could have backed validity to them, that means Rader had lied about his victim count. And if he had lied about those, there is the potential he could have definitely lied about killings that took place after the death penalty was reenacted.

The first case deals with a victim by the name of Linda Shawn Casey, who was murdered in 1985. Casey, 31 at the time of the murder, was originally from Cushing, Oklahoma, and later moved to Wichita, Kansas, BTK’s hunting grounds. One forum discussing Casey’s case and advocating for a need for justice for the family has a strong suspicion that her case could be added to the list of cases committed by BTK. The author wrote that “She [Casey] was later brutally murdered in a fashion that resembled many of Dennis Rader’s victims” (thelocator77). The fashion that resembled BTK that this author is talking about is the fact that when she was found in her apartment, they found that “the killer had stabbed her repeatedly... and left her naked except a blue blouse tied around her waist. She was also bound and gagged” (Brown, 2006). Those details led to the rumors that this was the doing of BTK. The police dismissed the idea, however it is not an unreasonable one to think. The one thing needed for Rader was the bondage, which was present in this case. She had been stabbed repeatedly, similar to Kathryn Bright in 1974. She was also murdered in Wichita during the same period BTK was terrorizing its streets. Once again, there is no concrete evidence

to either confirm or deny these suspicions, however this case provides relevant details and information that make for a solid theory about BTK having a larger victim count than initially assumed.

On October 31, 1987, Shannon Olson (15), was murdered just Northeast of Wichita, Kansas. Olson's body was found floating in a pond by two fishermen. "Reports from the crime say Olson was stabbed several times in the chest, her throat had been slashed, and her hands had been tied behind her back" (KWCH.com, 2019). Yet again, elements of BTK can be observed in this case. Like Kathryn Bright and potential victim Linda Shawn Casey, Olson was stabbed multiple times. She also had her hands tied behind her back, showing signs of BTK's signature of bondage. There also appears to be no sexual penetration in this case, consistent with the rest of BTK's crimes. The one abnormal aspect that was never a part in the other crimes was the element of the throat slashing. This change in MO could still align with Rader as the suspect however, given that "plenty of criminals change their MOs" (Douglas, 2009, pg. 57). Olson's connection to BTK might not be as strong as Casey's when comparing the two cold cases, but that doesn't take away from the evidence pointing towards a potential link.

Shawna Beth Garber is arguably one of the most promising cold cases that could prove some sort of connection to Dennis Rader. Lori Lamothe, author of the article "The Shawna Beth Garber Cold Case: Could There Be a BTK Connection?" made a promising argument to answer the question "Could Rader have committed other murders, including Shawna Beth Garber's?" (Lamothe, 2021). Shawna Beth Garber (22), known for three decades as Grace Doe, was murdered in 1990 at an abandoned farmhouse in a town just Southeast of Kansas in Missouri. This case, even more so than the others, has significant similarities to BTK's other murders. The most notable: significant and excessive bondage - Garber was found with six types of bindings. Lamothe suggests that "the extensive and varied use of bindings on Garber suggest this was the killer's signature" (Lamothe, 2021), starting this case off with very promising evidence to connect it to Dennis Rader. Garber was not raped, keeping consistent with the trends of the 10 known victims. The location where Garber was found, while not in the Wichita area, was not far from the place where Rader would spend his childhood summers with his grandparents. Towards the end of his murders, Rader was also noted by John Douglas to have started taking more risks, instead of becoming more cautious as one would expect. This aligns with the idea that his MOs were ever changing and evolving with each new crime. Lamothe herself states how all of these possible connections could be mere coincidences and this case could have nothing to do with Dennis Rader. However, there are a lot of pieces that seem to just make sense. Authorities have yet to comment about the potential for this case to be connected to BTK, so until there is further investigation, this is just another, albeit convincing, theory about a crack in Rader's dormancy coverup.

Conclusion

All of these theories suggesting that BTK never truly went dormant, but that he simply found new ways to commit murder and fool the police, are merely speculation looking for connections. None of these have ever been proven, nor is there concrete evidence or reason to think they ever will be. However, it is hard knowing what is known about serial killers, to fully trust Rader's own denial of additional killings and to believe that he was the minority; the one who could stop. Both the "truck stop killings" as well as the three cold cases discussed have sufficient details to think there could be a possible connection in at least one of them. In Rader's daughter, Kerri Rawson's, book, she writes that Rader "was often gone for days at a time - traveling around Kansas but also in Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma" (Lamothe, 2021), putting him at the right place at the right time for some of these cases to make sense. There is also reason to believe that if none of these are accurate, there could still be some unknown case out there that Dennis Rader is responsible for. Some of these cases, though not occurring after the reinstatement of the death penalty in Kansas, could at least call Rader's bluff in saying that there were only the 10 known victims. If he can be proved to have lied about that, it makes sense to investigate other crimes following his patterns that occurred after 1994. This could lead to Rader then being eligible for the death penalty, something officials have theorized he was attempting to evade all along. The biggest setback in all of this theorization is the fact that John Douglas, former FBI profiler, himself doesn't believe Rader to have committed anymore murders after 1991. His researched opinion comes with a lot of merit given

his long-standing credibility in the field, but even the best of the best have been proven wrong. There is no clear evidence suggesting Rader's dormancy was anything but the truth, but the idea that it was a coverup looks more and more likely with each potential connection.

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