

# Conviction List: Ritual Abuse Cases

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*Note: This list has not been updated. Other cases have been tried, and some convictions have been reversed on appeal. Since this is a copyrighted document, it will not be updated.*

Many ritual child abuse cases never are prosecuted due to the disbelief of authorities or the unlikelihood that young, severely traumatized children will be able to withstand cross-examination. A 1993 survey by the American Bar Association's Center on Children and Family Law determined that 26 percent of prosecutors nationwide have handled cases involving "ritualistic or sexual abuse." (Ross, 1994). The ritualistic aspects of the crimes often are not presented in court but are clearly indicated in the victims' accounts.\*

## Arkansas

### West Memphis

Three teenagers were convicted in the cult killings of three 8-year-old boys. Michael Wayne 'Damien' Echols, 19, and Charles Jason Baldwin, 16, were convicted March 18, 1994, on three counts each of capital murder. (Chicago Tribune, 1994). A jury recommended the death penalty for Echols and life in prison without parole for Baldwin. (Sullivan, 1994). A third teenager, Jessie Lloyd Misskelley, Jr., 18, was convicted in February 1994, of one count of first-degree murder and two counts of second-degree murder. He is serving a prison sentence of life plus 40 years. (Beifuss, 1994)

Misskelley confessed to his role in the killings, telling police the murders were linked to a cult ritual that included the rape and mutilation of victims. (Chicago Tribune, 1993). West Memphis police detective Bryn Ridge testified that elements in the case pointed to the work of a satanic cult. (Sullivan, 1994).

Steve Branch, Christopher Byers and Michael Moore disappeared while riding their bicycles in May 1993. Their nude bodies were found the next day in a drainage ditch. The boys had been bound, raped and beaten. (Chicago Tribune, 1993). One child had been sexually mutilated. One witness testified that one of the defendants drank the victim's blood. (Sullivan, 1994).

During the trial prosecutors presented evidence suggesting that Echols was a satanist. Acquaintances said Echols carried a cat's skull to school, wrote satanic poems, and claimed to worship the devil. (Chicago Tribune, 1993). During his first police interview Echols told Detective Ridge that his favorite author was Anton LaVey, author of *The Satanic Bible*. (Sullivan, 1994). Mental health records indicate that Echols' parents expressed concern about his possible involvement in "satanism or devil worship" when he was hospitalized in 1992. Just four months prior to the murders a clinician noted: "Damien explained that he obtains his powers by drinking blood of others." (Sullivan, 1994).

One item brought to the attention of police was an underground newsletter published by a cousin of Echols' 16-year-old girlfriend. The 1991 edition of the Secret Order of the Undead or "SOUND" featured a drawing of a winged demon molesting a woman, a list of 13 songs "suitable to accompany any ritualistic murder" and a column instructing children on how to build a homemade land mine. (Perrusquia, 1993).

## **California**

### **Bakersfield**

Alvin and Deborah McCuan, Scott and Brenda Kniffen, and Rodney and Linda Phelps (parents of Deborah McCuan) were indicted in 1982 on charges of sexually molesting children. The alleged victims included their own children, traded between families and used for group sex, as well as children from the Bluebird troop run by Deborah McCuan and the unlicensed day care facility in her home. The McCuans and Kniffens were convicted on all counts in 1983, drawing aggregate prison terms in excess of 1,000 years. The Phelps fled town and disappeared after being charged with 33 counts.

Ritual elements in the case were ignored by authorities at the time. (Newton, 1996).

In August 1996, a judge overturned the child molestation convictions of Alvin and Deborah McCuan and Scott and Brenda Kniffen.\*\* (Northwest Herald, August 14, 1996).

A second intrafamilial child-sex ring was exposed and prosecuted in Bakersfield, with trials continuing into 1985. Five adult defendants were convicted, including: Richard Cox, 47 (14 counts); Ruth Ann Taylor, 31 (14 counts); Anthony Cox, 25 (7 counts); George Cox, 24 (7 counts); and Theresa Cox, 21 (3 counts). Prison terms ranged from 10 to 41 years. (Newton, 1996).

Seven defendants in another Bakersfield child-sex ring were convicted in August 1985, with multiple charges including child molestation and endangerment, assault with a deadly weapon, and production of child pornography. Wayne Forsythe, 28, was convicted on 41 separate counts. Other defendants, each convicted on a minimum of 50 counts, included Forsythe's wife, Colleen Dill Forsythe, 26; Ricky Pitts, 31, and his wife Marcella Pitts, 29; Wayne Dill, 26 (Colleen Forsythe's brother); Grace Dill, 50 (mother of Colleen Forsythe and Wayne Dill); and Gina Miller. Cumulative prison sentences in the case came to 2,100 years. (Newton, 1996).

Leroy George Stowe III was convicted on 16 counts of child molestation and sentenced to 30 years in March 1985. Shortly after his conviction, victims in the case expanded their disclosures to include graphic descriptions of satanic ritual abuse and murders, involving nine more defendants.

In January 1987, Gerardo Gonzales (facing 117 charges) pleaded no contest to one count of molesting a 5-year-old girl, and Rev. Willard Lee Thomas (facing 43 charges) pleaded no contest on two counts, including child endangerment and unlawful sexual intercourse with a 17-year-old girl. Both defendants were released

from jail on the basis of time served, and charges against the remaining defendants were dismissed as part of their plea bargain.

In February 1987, a California appeals court reversed Leroy Stowe's conviction on 12 of 16 felony counts, with the grounds cited as a technical insufficiency in the pleadings.\*\* (Newton, 1996).

### **San Diego County**

Robert S. Wilkins, 38, and Lori Elizabeth Bartz, 22, were convicted in July 1987 on 8 counts of sexual abuse involving children from Bartz's unlicensed day-care center. The original list of charges, dating back to 1984, included 92 counts of sex acts forced upon girls aged 10 to 15. The victims described displays of weapons, threats, and occult rituals in which Bartz pretended to channel the voice of Satan, telling the children "This is the devil; do as I say." Both defendants received long prison terms. (Newton, 1996).

### **Santa Rosa**

Darryl Ball and Charlotte Thraikill plea bargained on molestation charges and were sentenced to substantial prison terms. The prosecutor's opening statement referred to the ritual aspect of the crimes, and child victims described satanic ceremonies which included ritual murders.

## **Colorado**

### **Akron**

Philip and Michael Schmidt pleaded guilty to molesting children attending the day care center operated by their grandmother, Hazel Riggs, who was sentenced on a lesser charge. A Denver Post report on the case included ritual allegations by a child victim.

### **Denver**

William L. Acree, former heroin addict and operator of a halfway house for juvenile delinquents, was convicted in February 1983, on two counts of prostituting children and one count of sexually assaulting a child. Acree was sentenced to 90 days in jail, with 5 years suspended on the condition that he undergo psychiatric counseling for at least 4 years.

The victims were male, ages 10 - 17 years old, who displayed satanic tattoos and described themselves as members of Acree's "coven." (Newton, 1996).

## **Connecticut**

### **Bridgeport**

Kerri Lynn Patavino, 28, a school bus driver, was convicted in August 1996 of statutory rape for seducing a 14-year-old boy who said she engaged him in strange rituals during sex. (Northwest Herald, 1996).

The boy testified that Patavino once cut her arm with a razor blade and forced him to lick her blood. According to police, Patavino sent the boy love letters decorated with occult symbols and signed in her blood. During the trial, Patavino wore a pentagram medallion around her neck. (The News-Times, 1996).

Patavino was sentenced to six years in prison. (Northwest Herald, 1996).

## **Florida**

### **Dade County**

Francisco Fuster, 36, was convicted in 1985 on 14 counts of child abuse and sentenced to a minimum of 165 years in prison. Fuster had previously been convicted of lewd and lascivious assault on a 9-year-old girl and had served four years in prison for homicide. More than 50 children accused Fuster and his wife, Iliana, of abuse that included feces-eating, drugging, pornography, animal killings and anal rape with a crucifix. Fuster's 7-year-old son was treated for gonorrhea of the throat.

Iliana Fuster, a 17-year-old native of Honduras, also claimed to have been battered and sexually abused by Fuster. She confessed to her role in the crimes against the children and testified against her husband. Iliana Fuster received a 10-year sentence. (Hollingsworth, 1986).

### **Stuart**

James Toward, 58, owner of Glendale Montessori School, pleaded guilty to child sexual abuse charges and received a 15-year sentence. His office manager, Brenda Williams, 30, was convicted in 1989 and sentenced to 6 years in prison.

Children described being threatened with guns and knives, photographed for pornographic purposes, and forced to participate in sadistic rituals. (The Orlando Sentinel, 1989).

## **Georgia**

### **Hapeville**

Walter P. West, Jr., a former juvenile officer, pleaded guilty on June 20, 1994, to 33 counts of sexual abuse. West was sentenced to 20 years in prison, 20 years probation, and ordered never to be alone with children.

Prosecutors said that West engaged in oral and anal sex with as many as 13 children, fondled them, forced them to engage in sex acts with other children, and filmed the assaults. Most of his victims were pre-adolescent children who had problems at school and with the law. The youngest victim named in the indictment was six years old. (The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution, 1994).

According to a case overview prepared by a special education teacher who reported the abuse, some of the children said West forced them to engage in bestiality and

exposed them to animal killings. Other adults in the community were implicated but no additional arrests were made. (McCullers, 1994).

## **Illinois**

### **Danville**

Robbie Moore, a self-avowed "warlock," was convicted on January 30, 1997, of three counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault and one count of aggravated criminal sexual abuse. Moore, 28, of Danville, Illinois, was arrested in June 1996 when several children, some as young as 4 years old, complained of being sexually abused after joining an informal witchcraft club led by Moore and Kimberly Harris. Harris, 26, pleaded guilty in October 1996 to fondling a 13-year-old girl and is serving a 7-year prison term.

Sgt. John Howard, a juvenile officer with the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department, said that "there appeared to be a connection" between the sexual abuse and what he called "occult activity." Prosecutors said Moore talked about black magic to both lure and terrorize his victims.

Moore was sentenced to 67 years in prison. (Kelley, 1997 and S.O.A.R., 1997).

## **Iowa**

### **Edgewood**

Michael Joseph Schildmeyer, 22, was convicted on second-degree sexual abuse of a 4-year-old boy and sentenced to 25 years in prison. The child testified that Schildmeyer abused him at the Sunshine Preschool and Day Care Center operated by Schildmeyer's wife. The unlicensed center was shut down by the state after children began disclosing ritualistic acts involving stuffed animal decapitations, animal killings, and bondage with ropes and chains. (Hubert, 1989).

## **Massachusetts**

### **Malden**

Gerald Amirault, 32, was convicted in 1986 of 15 counts of child abuse, including rape and indecent assault, and sentenced to 30 to 40 years in prison. Nine children who attended the Fells Acre Day Care Center testified that Amirault sexually assaulted them in a "magic room" while dressed as a clown. One child testified that small animals were killed. (Ross, 1986).

His mother, Violet Amirault, 62, owner of the school, and her daughter, Cheryl Amirault LeFave, were given 8- to 20-year sentences.

In August 1995, a judge ordered new trials for Violet Amirault and Cheryl Amirault LeFave.\*\* (Rabinowitz, 1995).

On March 24, 1997, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled against granting new trials for Violet Amirault, Gerald Amirault and Cheryl LeFave. The court determined that any flaws at trial were outweighed by the evidence presented by the prosecution. (The Survivor Activist, 1997).

### **Pittsfield**

Bernard Baran, Jr., a 19-year-old teacher's aide at a day care center, was convicted of child molestation in January 1985. He was sentenced to life, with parole possible in 15 years. Children testified that he threatened to kill their parents if they disclosed the abuse. (Newton, 1996).

## **Michigan**

### **Niles**

Allan Barkman, co-owner of Small World Preschool, was convicted in April, 1985, of molesting a 5-year-old boy and sentenced to 50 to 75 years in prison. Children told authorities they were driven to barns where Barkman photographed them and tore off the head of a chicken. Children said Barkman's wife, who was not charged, dressed up as a witch. (Ross, 1986). Barkman's conviction was later reversed on appeal.\*\* (Newton, 1996).

### **Sanilac County**

On October 20, 1994, Stephen Rogers, 30, and his live-in girlfriend, Trudy O'Connor, 32, were found guilty of first-degree child abuse of a 9-year-old girl. The girl, Roger's daughter, was found in a dark walk-in closet by Sanilac County sheriff's deputies. The child was shackled by her ankle to a urine-soaked bed. Her arms had been tied behind her back with a harness made of socks and safety pins. The only other thing in the closet was a large, frightening Halloween mask, which hung directly over the bed.

Family members said that Rogers and O'Connor believed the child was "possessed." The girl's maternal grandmother reported suspected sexual abuse in 1989 and 1990, after the little girl returned from visiting Rogers. A medical examination confirmed scar tissue. Teachers from the girl's school testified that she appeared malnourished, had bruises, cuts and burns on her body, and often smelled of urine. (Flint Journal, 1994).

## **Minnesota**

### **Jordan**

James John Rud, a 27-year-old garbage collector with two previous sex abuse convictions, agreed to plead guilty and testify against other defendants accused of abusing children in sex orgies, in exchange for a lighter sentence. Rud gave police a

113-page statement in which he graphically described sadistic assaults on children. (Emmerman, 1984).

Children ranging in age from 2 to 17 years old described being molested by their parents, relatives and family friends during ritualistic orgies. The children talked about playing games with adults that culminated in sexual assaults and said they had been drugged with alcohol and pills. Many referred to being photographed nude and of seeing child pornography in Rud's trailer. (Crewdson, 1984).

In addition to Rud, 24 adults were charged with molesting 37 children. (Emmerman, 1984). Two defendants were tried and acquitted when one child witness recanted his accusation of abuse. (Chicago Tribune, 1984). The prosecutor dropped the charges against all other defendants to avoid releasing 126 pages of police notes containing allegations that implicated some of the former defendants in ritualistic child murders. (Ogintz, 1984).

In January 1985, Rud was sentenced to 40 years in prison, the maximum sentence allowable by law. (Chicago Tribune, 1985).

## **Mississippi**

### **Oxford**

Danny Walter Schertz, 48, a self-avowed former satanist, was sentenced to 9 years in prison without parole for selling a 16-year-old girl into prostitution. Schertz pleaded guilty to charges of kidnapping by trickery and transporting a minor across state lines for prosecution.

F.B.I. agent Leonardo Floyd of Columbus, Mississippi, said Schertz controlled the girl with stories of his satanic powers and threats of harm to the girl and her family. Schertz forced the girl to have satanic symbols tattooed onto her leg and buttocks and to have body piercings in her private parts without anesthesia. (Kraft, 1996).

## **Nevada**

### **Carson City**

Martha Helen Felix and her nephew, Felix "Paco" Ontiveros, were convicted of crimes against children who were placed in their babysitting service. At a preliminary hearing in 1985, children referred to drinking blood, killing animals, and other rituals. Defendants' photographs of "mummified children" were produced at the hearing. (Ross, 1986).

These convictions were later reversed on appeal.\*\*

## **New Jersey**

## **Maplewood**

Margaret Kelly Michaels, a teacher at the Wee Care Nursery operated by an Episcopal Church was convicted in April 1988 on 115 counts of child sexual abuse and sentenced to 47 years in prison. Nineteen preschool-aged children testified that Michaels sexually abused them and subjected them to rituals involving urine, feces, peanut butter and jelly, bloody tampons and penetration with silverware.

Her conviction was overturned in March 1993 by an appeals court on the grounds that Michaels was denied a fair trial because expert testimony was introduced that should not have been allowed and because child witnesses were allowed to testify via closed-circuit TV.\*\* (Chicago Tribune, 1993).

In December 1994, prosecutors dropped the charges against Michaels in order to spare the children the ordeal of testifying in a second trial. (Chicago Tribune, 1994).

Michaels is suing the prosecutors, seeking \$800,000 in attorneys fees. (Chicago Tribune, 1996).

## **New York**

### **Mount Vernon**

Jeannette Martin, 51, was accused of holding children down while they were raped and sodomized at an unlicensed day care center. Martin was convicted on a misdemeanor child endangerment charge in February 1987, and sentenced to one year in jail.

Co-defendant James Watt, 31, was convicted on 11 rape counts, 5 sodomy counts and one count of child endangerment, and sentenced to 55 - 165 years in prison. In January 1992, an appellate court split 3 to 2 in favor of overturning Watts' conviction on the grounds that the dates of the offenses alleged in the indictment were "too vague." \*\* Two dissenting judges voted to uphold the conviction on 6 counts related to a single victim, but were overruled.

Three female victims were diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases. (New York Times and New York Law Journal).

## **North Carolina**

### **Edenton**

Robert F. Kelly, Jr., co-owner of the Little Rascals Day Care Center, was convicted in 1992 on 99 of 100 counts of sexually abusing children. Kelly was sentenced to 12 consecutive life terms, one for each child who testified against him. (Chicago Tribune, April 23-24, 1992).

Twelve children testified that Kelly sexually molested them, forced them to have sex with other children while being photographed, and engaged in sexual acts in the

presence of children. The children described being forced to eat feces, threatened with snakes, penetrated with toys, sticks and other objects, hung from trees and tied in bags, and being present while infants were killed. (Allegood, 1991-1992).

Kelly's conviction was overturned on appeal in 1995.\*\* The court ruled that parents' testimony about children's behavioral symptoms was outside the boundaries of permissible opinion from lay witnesses and that testimony from a victim's father, who had previously been retained as Kelly's defense attorney, should not have been allowed. (Richissin, 1995).

On May 23, 1997, prosecutors dropped all remaining charges against Robert F. Kelly, Jr. and Kathryn Dawn Wilson. Assistant District Attorney Nancy Lamb said the children's parents were reluctant to put them through the ordeal of another trial. (Thompson, 1997). Kelly is awaiting trial on eight new counts of sexual abuse unrelated to the day care case. The eight new indictments charge Kelly with raping, abusing and taking indecent liberties with a 9-year-old girl during the summer of 1987. Kelly is free on bond while awaiting trial. (News & Observer, 1996).

Kathryn Dawn Wilson, 27, former cook at Little Rascals, was sentenced in 1993 to life in prison after being convicted of one charge of first-degree sex offense and four charges of taking indecent liberties with a minor. Four children testified that Wilson touched their genitals, forced them to participate in sexual acts, and had sex with Kelly in front of children. (Allegood, 1993).

Wilson's appeal for a new trial was granted because information about an "irrelevant" theft and Wilson's history of drug abuse was prejudicial and should have been excluded.\*\* (Richissin, 1995).

Kelly's wife, Elizabeth T. "Betsy" Kelly, 38, pleaded no contest on January 21, 1994, to 30 charges of abusing 16 children. She was sentenced to seven years in prison. (Allegood, 1994).

Willard Scott Privott, 45, a former video store owner, pleaded no contest June 16, 1994, to over 30 charges of sexually abusing children at the Little Rascals Day Care Center. Sixteen children said that Privott sexually fondled them, forced them to commit sexual acts with other children, with him and with day care employees, and photographed and videotaped the assaults. (Quillin, 1994). Some children allege Privott dressed as a pirate and took them on a boat where they said he molested them, and that he killed babies and fed them to sharks in a tank.

### **Smithfield**

Patrick Figuered, a former electronics firm executive, was sentenced to three consecutive life terms in 1992, after being convicted of sexually abusing three children in 1988. The children, who were between the ages of 2 and 5 years old when the abuse occurred, testified that Figuered and his girlfriend, Sonja Hill, molested them at the unlicensed child care center Hill's mother operated from her home.

The children testified that they were drugged and videotaped during sexual assaults, sodomized with a screwdriver, and forced to participate in satanic rituals in which

adults wore capes and masks, lit candles, burned Bibles, and forced children to drink urine and blood. (Soloway, 1992).

Sonja Hill pleaded no contest to aiding and abetting the taking of indecent liberties with children and was sentenced in July 1993, to 10 years in prison. (Eisley, 1993).

### **Winston-Salem**

Ricky Martin Vernon, a former Boy Scout volunteer, pleaded guilty in 1989 to taking indecent liberties with 13 teenaged boys from 1981 - 1988, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Vernon offered to initiate the boys into "The Order of the Circle." In order to learn the ways of "The Circle," they had to participate in religious rituals that included sex acts and a service that mimicked Christian communion. (News & Observer, 1989).

## **Ohio**

### **Canton**

Estella M. Sexton, 47, mother of 12 children, was convicted April 15, 1994, of sexually, physically and psychologically abusing her daughter. The charges relate to abuse that occurred five years ago when the daughter was eight years old. The girl testified that her mother beat her, stripped her and sexually fondled her. An older brother corroborated her story of abuse and described satanic rituals that took place in the home.

Sexton's older daughter, Estella M. "Pixie" Good, 24, pleaded guilty earlier in 1994 to manslaughter in the death of her baby. She told authorities she smothered the baby after her father complained about the baby's crying. (Knox, 1994).

### **Mansfield**

Two teenage babysitters at the First Presbyterian Church were convicted of sexually abusing children while the victims' parents attended church services. Lawrence Rohde, 19, was convicted in 1992 on 7 counts of gross sexual imposition and sentenced to 14 years in prison. (Boyd, 1992). Scott Butner, 17, pleaded guilty to 5 counts of rape and received a 5 to 10-year prison sentence. (Trexler, 1992).

As many as 50 children described being sexually abused and taken from the church to wooded areas where they said they were forced to participate in child pornography, infanticide, and mutilation of corpses. Victims' parents demanded that charges be filed against adult church members who allegedly were involved, but only Rohde and Butner were indicted. (Hobbs, 1992).

## **Oregon**

### **Roseburg**

Ed Gallup, Sr., Mary Lou Gallup and their son, Ed "Chip" Gallup, Jr., who together

ran three Gallup Christian Day Care Centers, were accused by over a hundred children of sexual molestation and ritual child abuse. Children described animal killings, pornography, and sexual abuse performed by adults wearing robes.

Ed "Chip" Gallup, Jr. was convicted on three charges of child sexual abuse involving two children. Ed Gallup, Sr., a Nazarene minister, was convicted on the testimony of a 5-year-old girl.

In November, 1989, Mary Lou Gallup's conviction was reversed because of a discovery violation.\*\*

Ed Gallup, Sr. and Ed "Chip" Gallup, Jr. are serving life terms.

## **Tennessee**

### **Memphis**

Frances Lucindy Ballard, a teacher's aide at Georgia Hills Early Childhood Center, was convicted in 1987 on one count of aggravated sexual battery and sentenced to five years in prison.

Nineteen children had initially accused her of sexual assault in June 1984, with allegations including satanic rituals, death threats, and animal sacrifice.

In February 1991, Ballard's conviction was overturned on grounds that one of several videotapes depicting police interviews with children had been taped over, and thus erased, before it could be viewed by the defense. Her other complaints, including allegations that the children had been brainwashed, were described by the court as "meritless."\*\* (Newton, 1996).

## **Texas**

### **Austin**

Frances and Daniel Keller, operators of Fran's Day Care Center, were convicted in 1992 of aggravated sexual assault of a 3-year-old girl. The Kellers were sentenced to 48 years in prison.

Three children made allegations of abuse that included references to being buried alive with animals, painting pictures with bones dipped in blood, being shot and resurrected, digging up a body in a cemetery and nailing it together, having giant germs implanted in their bodies, and making pornographic movies at gunpoint. (Gamino, 1992).

### **El Paso**

Two teachers at the YMCA day-care center were convicted of sexually abusing children in El Paso, Texas. Michelle Noble, 34, was convicted in March 1986 on 18 counts of molestation and sentenced to life plus 311 years in prison. Gayle Stickler

Dove, 40, was convicted in October 1986, on 6 counts of child abuse and sentenced to three life terms plus 60 years.

Two boys and five girls described abuse that included sexual assault, child pornography, spankings with a plastic tennis racket, and occult-type ritual activities by adults dressed in robes and monster costumes.

Noble's conviction was overturned in 1987 when an appeals court decided that allowing children to testify on videotape violated the defendant's right to confront her accusers.\*\* Several witnesses withdrew from the case, and without their testimony, Noble was acquitted at her second trial in April 1988.

Gayle Dove was granted a new trial in March 1987, after her conviction had been set aside on appeal due to an allegation of jury misconduct.\*\* At her second trial, she was convicted on a single count of aggravated battery and sentenced to 20 years. In 1989, her second conviction was overturned on the grounds that three children should have testified in person, rather than on videotape.\*\* In April 1990, prosecutors declined to try her a third time, citing the reluctance of the victims' parents to put their children through the ordeal of another trial. (Newton, 1996).

## **Utah**

### **Lehi**

Alan B. Hadfield was convicted on seven counts of "sodomizing and sexually molesting" two of his children (Salt Lake Tribune, 1988) in a case in which as many as 40 adults in the community were implicated as perpetrators of satanic ritual abuse (Salt Lake Tribune, 1987). No other charges were filed.

## **Virginia**

### **Richmond**

In 1984 two children, ages 7 and 5, were removed from their home due to allegations that they had been sexually abused by their mother and her boyfriend. The children said they were forced to witness the murder of a 12-year-old girl during a cult ritual. The mutilated body of 12-year-old Jessica Hatch was discovered in a remote area of Hanover County. She had disappeared on February 5, 1984, while walking to her grandmother's house.

Police found candles and occult paraphernalia, but said the children "would freeze up... we couldn't tell whether they were telling the truth or fantasizing." (Ross, 1986). The children were ruled incompetent to testify and the sexual abuse charges were dismissed.

Gary Jay Beattie, 28, a convicted "peeping Tom" and friend of the other two suspects, was arrested for making indecent proposals to a 9-year-old girl and two 13-year-old girls. All three girls knew Jessica Hatch and said that Beattie had also propositioned

her. Beattie was acquitted of accosting the 9-year-old, but entered a plea bargain on outstanding sex charges involving the 13-year-old victims. His 5-year prison sentence was suspended.

In 1988 Beattie was arrested again on multiple charges of voyeurism. At his first trial in July 1988, he was sentenced to 60 days and a \$500 fine. He received a 3-year prison term in the second trial. A third trial in October 1988 resulted in a mistrial because one of the jurors was related to a police officer who investigated the case. A retrial was held in December 1988, and Beattie was convicted on a misdemeanor charge, with a 12-month jail term suspended.

In September 1991, while still on probation, Beattie was arrested on new voyeurism charges.

No one has ever been charged with murdering Jessica Hatch, but local newspapers referred to Beattie as the "closest thing to a suspect." County authorities cited a "strong possibility" that Jessica Hatch was killed in a satanic ritual. (Times-Dispatch and News Leader, 1988-1991).

## **Washington**

### **Thurston County**

Paul R. Ingram, a sheriff's deputy, confessed in 1988 to sexually abusing two of his daughters in the context of satanic rituals. Ingram pleaded guilty to six counts of third-degree rape and was sentenced to 220 years in prison.

Later, he attempted to withdraw his guilty plea, claiming he had been coerced and had confessed while in a "trance-like state" to crimes he never committed. In September 1992, the Washington State Supreme Court rejected Ingram's motion to withdraw his guilty plea. (Wright, 1993).

### **Wenatchee**

Five adults were convicted and 11 pleaded no contest in a child sex-ring investigation involving 48 child victims.

Selid Holt, 34, was convicted and sentenced to 14 years in prison; Michael Rose, 26, was convicted on 5 counts of child rape and molestation and sentenced to 23 years; Doris Green, 34, who confessed and then recanted her statement, was convicted at trial and sentenced to 23 years; Randall Reed, 43, pleaded guilty on two counts of child molestation and was sentenced to 80 months; Meredith Town, 37, an ex-convict who pleaded no contest on 62 counts of child rape and 4 counts of indecent liberties, was sentenced to 18 years and 4 months; Cherie Town (Meredith Town's wife), also pleaded nolo contendere and was sentenced to 10 years; Harold and Idella Everett both pleaded guilty to molesting their own children, with Harold sentenced to 23 years and Idella to 4 1/2 years. (Newton, 1996).

Child victims referred to the offenders as "The Circle" and described being sexually assaulted and "swapped" in orgies that allegedly took place at a Pentecostal Church. (Sunde, 1995).

Despite defendants' criticism of the investigation, a review by the U.S. Justice Department found no evidence that defendants' civil rights were violated. (*Sex Crimes Digest*, 1996).

## **Canada**

### **Prescott, Ontario**

Approximately 50 adults were convicted or pleaded guilty in a child sex ring involving over 100 children.

Children described being abused in a basement by adults wearing masks and sheets. They said they were raped, cut with knives, forced to drink blood, and locked in a "dungeon" with a trap door. (Miller, 1995).

A multi-disciplinary team of social workers, prosecutors and police investigating the case took the code name "Project Jericho" to honor Joshua, a baby witnesses say was killed. (Steed, 1994).

### **Martensville, Saskatchewan**

Travis Sterling, 25, was convicted in February, 1994, on eight charges of sexual and physical abuse of children at his parents' unlicensed day care home. Sterling was sentenced to five years in prison.

Travis Sterling and his parents, Ron and Linda Sterling, were among nine people, including five police officers, arrested on more than 150 child abuse charges. Seven child witnesses testified to abuse that included sexual assault, unlawful confinement and anal intercourse. Weapons, a vibrator and pornographic magazines were found in the Sterling home.

In addition to Travis Sterling, a 22-year-old woman who can not be identified because she was a minor at the time of her offenses, was convicted in 1993 on seven child abuse counts. (Wattie, 1994).

## **England**

### **Nottingham**

Twenty-five children were removed from an extended family and taken into foster care following disclosures of incest and ritual child abuse. In February, 1989, nine adults were sentenced for up to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to 53 charges of incest, cruelty and indecent assault. The children described being abused by adults

wearing costumes, being forced to eat excrement and drink blood, and witnessing the killing of animals and babies. (Tate, 1991).

## **The Netherlands**

### **Amsterdam**

Rene Osterwalder, 38, and his girlfriend, Agostina Schonenberger, 21, were convicted in February 1994 of illegal weapons charges and attempted child abduction.

Schonenberger testified that Osterwalder had planned to abduct children, torture them to death in his apartment, and dump their bodies into an aquarium filled with piranhas.

Because the abductions apparently had not been carried out, Osterwalder was sentenced to only 2 years in prison; Schonenberger was sentenced to 6 months. However, they were ordered to serve their sentences in Switzerland, where they face more serious charges of child torture and sexual abuse.

Police found the following evidence in a search of the couple's residences:

- : \* Six videotapes showing Osterwalder abusing three children ranging in age from 6 months to 12 years old. The children were given electric shocks, held under water and resuscitated, and abused with feces and needles;
- \* Two tanks of hydrochloric acid in Switzerland and an aquarium with piranhas in Amsterdam. (Osterwalder owned two homes in Amsterdam; one was a former satanic church);
- \* A fully equipped torture chamber in Switzerland;
- \* Gynecological equipment, including a culposcope, speculum and extractor;
- \* Professional video equipment;
- \* An Uzi rifle with laser visor, hundreds of bullets, two wristweapons and a shooting pen; and
- \* Luggage with air openings, hand cuffs, and gags.

Osterwalder admitted he was a pedophile but insisted he had no plan to kidnap children. (Jonker, 1993 and Newton, 1996)

## **New Zealand**

### **Christchurch**

Peter Hugh McGregor Ellis, 35, a former day care employee, was convicted June 5, 1993, on 16 counts of sexual abuse relating to seven children. Ellis was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Children who attended Christchurch Civic Creche described bizarre sexual abuse with references to frightening rituals. The children allege they were removed from the day care facility and transported to other locations, including a cemetery and a Masonic lodge, where they were abused by adults dressed in black and white and wearing masks. In addition to their reports of being used for pornographic purposes, the

children described being abused within a circle; chanting and participating in mock marriages; being tied up and confined in cages and boxes buried beneath the ground; being penetrated with needles and sticks; witnessing the torture and killing of animals; being drugged; being forced to hurt other children; having blood poured over their heads; and consuming what they believed was human flesh.

## **Other Evidence**

In addition to convictions other evidence has surfaced verifying the existence of ritual abuse of children. Several case examples are given below:

### **New Hampshire**

On March 1, 1991, FBI agents arrested three men suspected of running a major child pornography ring. The three men charged were Wayne H. Bailey, 56, of Fairhaven, RI, an audio technician for a Providence, RI television station; Brian K. Schultz, 44, a Barrington, NH man who allegedly reproduced child pornography under the name "New England Video Exchange"; and Mark Colen, 44, from Brooklyn, CT, who headed a company that reproduced and distributed alleged pornographic films.

Law enforcement officials said videotapes recovered in searches of the men's homes and businesses depicted pregnant women being tortured, children being molested by adults, young women engaged in sexual activities with animals, children urinating on each other and ingesting human feces, and various bizarre sex acts with "satanic" overtones. Some of the children were as young as six years old. (Ford, 1991 and Gaines, 1991).

### **District of Columbia**

A police raid of a home and warehouse connected to the commune known as "The Finders" resulted in the seizure of "several bags of evidence reportedly containing photographs, computer records and other documents." (Cawley, 1987). A customs agent investigating the case noted that the documents "revealed detailed instructions for obtaining children for unspecified purposes." (Tamarkin, 1994).

The customs agent's report listed the following evidence:

"One telex specifically ordered the purchase of two children in Hong Kong. Other files referred to The Finders activities and members in foreign countries. And there was a large amount of data collected on various childcare organizations."

"In one area of the warehouse, according to the investigator's report, there appeared to be an altar. Jars of urine and feces were located nearby. The search warrants also turned up nude photos of children with their genital areas accented and 'on display.' An album contained a series of photos of adults and children dressed in white sheets and participating in the execution, disembowelment, skinning and dismemberment of goats. One photo showed the testes of a male goat being removed. Another showed a crying child looking at a decapitated goat. In fact, the goat's head and goat skins were

removed by Virginia state police during a search of a farm belonging to The Finders group." (Tamarkin, 1994).

Despite the urgings of the customs agent and several U.S. Representatives, The Finders case was dropped "like a hot rock." (Wilkin, 1993).

## **Belgium**

Authorities are investigating a possible link between Belgium's child sex and murder scandal and a self-styled Satanic Order of Abrasax. Police seized 500 video cassettes believed to show hard-core child pornography, computer discs, two human skulls and jars of animal blood. (Sunday Express, 1997 and Sunday Times, 1996)

## **Finland**

Police in Finland discovered a "massive computer library of child pornography that included pictures of torture, mutilation, and cannibalism." The owner of the child pornography was not arrested because distributing hard-core child pornography is a minor offense in Finland. (World, 1996.)

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\* Because ritual abuse allegations often are not disclosed in courtroom proceedings, this list represents only a portion of convictions where ritual child abuse is a factor.

\*\* A conviction is overturned on appeal when the appellate court finds that the defendant was denied a fair trial due to a legal error. Granting an appeal for a new trial does not constitute a ruling that the crime for which the defendant was originally tried could not have been committed.