

## THE CASE FILE

# The Golden State Killer

How investigative genetic genealogy ended a 40-year search — and named Joseph DeAngelo. Told victim-first, sourced from the public record, without gratuitous detail.

## At a glance — 10 seconds

CASE	The Golden State Killer
VICTIMS	13 murdered + dozens of survivors of rape and terror, California, 1974–1986
IDENTIFIED	Joseph James DeAngelo — April 2018, via investigative genetic genealogy
STATUS	Pleaded guilty June 2020; life without parole (adjudicated)
HOW SOLVED	Crime-scene DNA → public genealogy database → family tree → discarded-DNA confirmation

## The people first

For more than four decades a single offender — known regionally as the Visalia Ransacker, the East Area Rapist, and the Original Night Stalker — committed burglaries, rapes, and murders across California. This file remembers the thirteen people who were killed and the survivors who outlasted his anonymity: ordinary Californians, young couples and families, people asleep in their own homes. They are the center of this account. Everything else is context.

## Primary-source timeline

- **1974–1986:** A connected series of burglaries, rapes, and murders spans California; siloed jurisdictions investigate the regions separately for years.
- **2001:** DNA confirms the East Area Rapist and the Original Night Stalker were one man — but the profile matches no one in CODIS; he had never been entered.
- **2018:** Investigators upload the crime-scene DNA profile to the public genealogy site GEDmatch and find distant-cousin matches.
- **April 24, 2018:** Reverse genealogy narrows to Joseph James DeAngelo; discarded DNA confirms the match. He is arrested in Sacramento County.
- **June 29, 2020:** DeAngelo pleads guilty to 13 murders and admits dozens of additional crimes.
- **August 21, 2020:** He is sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

## The A.I. AL lens — disclosed

*A.I. AL is our human-overseen analytical lens. It was NOT used in this investigation; the solve belongs to law enforcement and the labs. This is an educational, public-record-only illustration.*

The wall in this case was never linkage — it was identity. A name could only come from forensic genome sequencing plus genetic genealogy, which an analytical lens cannot do. Where a public-record lens adds value is honest about its limits: it could have flagged, from behavioral and geographic patterns, that the regional series was **one offender** — "work these jurisdictions together" — earlier than the 2001 DNA confirmation. That concentrates resources and can protect future victims. It would never name a person; identity stays with the DNA and the people who did the work.

**Stay safe — what this case teaches**

- An unfamiliar pattern across places can be one offender — report what feels connected.
- Genetic genealogy now solves cold cases; preserved evidence matters for decades.
- If you have information about a crime, contact law enforcement directly. In a crisis: 988 (call/text). Sexual-assault support: RAINN 1-800-656-HOPE.

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## Want the full-length case files?

If this is the kind of true crime you want — sourced, victim-first, no filler — the complete books go deeper: **The Trail: The Murder of Rachel Morin** (\$5.99), or get it with **No Accident** in the Case Files Collection for \$8.99 at [cassiancreed.com/books](https://cassiancreed.com/books). And the free Sunday newsletter brings a new case file the day it is published.

© 2026 Neural Edge Publishing. Sources: public court records, official statements, and reputable reporting (see the full case file at [cassiancreed.com](https://cassiancreed.com)). Joseph DeAngelo pleaded guilty in 2020; nothing here is an accusation against any non-adjudicated person.