



Murder in California: The Topography of Evil: Notorious California Murder Sites (Volume 2)

Marques Vickers

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“Murder in California: The Topography of Evil” is author and photographer Marques Vickers’ 417 page visual return to 101 infamous crime scenes detailing the shocking and often searing narratives behind each tragedy. Over 200 images amplify the experience by escorting the reader to the crime location, offering a critical context and perspective for understanding. The captured snapshots portray visual testimonies of extinguished lives removed by acts of violence. Crime scenes often revert back into unremarkable landscape or unassuming buildings over the ensuing years and decades. Several have altered little since their moment of infamy. Many are passed daily by pedestrian and vehicular traffic unaware of a location’s unique significance. California has been the residence for many notorious individual and serial killers including the Zodiac, Ted “Unabomber” Kaczynski, Dan White, Charles Manson, Sirhan Sirhan, Jim Jones, Richard Allen Davis, David Carpenter, Menendez Brothers, Juan Corona, Rodney Alcala, Phil Spector, Juan Corona, Richard Ramirez and Scott Peterson. The media has renamed some such as the Trailside Killer, Co-ed Killer, Children of Thunder, Vampire of Sacramento, Zebra Killers and the Death House Landlady. The region has also buried notables among the profiled victims including Senator Robert Kennedy, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone, Supervisor Harvey Milk, Mobster Bugsy Siegel, Black Panther Huey P. Newton, Journalist Chauncey Bailey, Nicole Simpson-Brown, Rapper Christopher Wallace a.k.a. Notorious B.I.G., Actors Haing Ngor, Ramon Novarro and Sal Mineo, Singers Marvin Gaye and Sam Cooke, Polly Klaas, Lacy Peterson and members from the People’s Temple Massacre in Jonestown, Guyana and Heaven’s Gate cult suicide in Rancho Santa Fe. The Murder in California edition is segmented into nine categories including assassinations, abductions, historical legacies, reckless homicides, chance encounters and manslaughters, law enforcement fatalities and controversies, unsolved murders, rampage and serial killers. Within the context of examining each profile, many important issues are raised for discussion without necessarily culminating in resolution. These subjects include capital punishment, American racial perceptions, parental influences, child rearing, media reporting, public bias, juvenile sentencing, self-incrimination protections and the impartiality of our judicial system. Controversial options such as voluntary euthanasia for the condemned are suggested when examining the hopeless backlog of death row and life-term convicts. An extensive listing of fatality victims is included along with convicted and deceased killers. Each living convict still registered within the California and other state penal systems is identified by their respective current penitentiary residence. Vickers’s own introduction to the consequences of murder began with the 1968 killings of David Faraday and Betty Lou Jenson by the Zodiac killer in the author’s hometown. Faraday was an acquaintance of Vickers through Boy Scouts and his older sister knew both victims. His reflections on the trauma inflicted on his intimate suburban community correspond with the realization that a single homicide affects far more individuals than simply the victim. Hundreds and ultimately thousands may be touched by the arbitrariness and unfairness of life being terminated abruptly and prematurely. While acknowledging that some of the killings defy understanding and others may not properly be classified as evil, each remains uniquely tragic. Remembering the identities and stories of the slain is the author’s priority.

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