

**May 18, 1973** -Joe DeAngelo joined Exeter PD, in Exeter, CA. His sister, brother-in-law, and their children had moved to Exeter in 1965.

**May, 1973 - April, 1976** - Exeter experienced a sharp rise in home burglaries, including occupied homes at night, and “ransackings” where little of value was stolen. There was also an increase in obscene phone calls, serious arsons, car and bike “borrowing,” occupied vandalism (police called), and false alarms, including both fire and police.

**March 1974** - The victim, a 13 year old girl, was picked up in Visalia by a police officer, supposedly for being truant from school. The police officer handcuffed the girl, and took her to an isolated area near the St. John’s River, north of Visalia. She was raped, and the suspect threatened to kill her family. This victim has identified Joseph DeAngelo as her attacker, and stated that he was in an Exeter P.D. uniform at the time of the kidnapping. The victim lived 2 blocks from Jennifer Armour, was kidnapped in a VR zone, and was attacked and left in an irrigation ditch.

**April 1974-December 1975** - Visalia, a town about 10 miles west of Exeter, experienced over 100 ransacking burglaries with a very specific MO. The burglar was dubbed the “Visalia Ransacker” (VR).

**Friday, October 4, 1974** - The VR committed a ransacking burglary, and stole a .22 revolver. Later that night, and into Saturday morning, five cat burglaries occurred in Tulare. The burglar gained entry through locked doors, including back sliders. In three of the burglaries, cash and watches were stolen from the bed night stands next to sleeping victims. Nothing was reported missing in two of the burglaries. The VR activity was in Visalia Police Department (VPD) jurisdiction, The Tulare burglaries were in Tulare Police Department (TPD) jurisdiction.

**Wednesday, October 9, 1974** - Caldwell Ave, Visalia (just outside City limits). Late afternoon. A man wearing a mask with only eye holes, armed with a handgun, entered through an unlocked kitchen door. Ordered female into the bedroom. Victim resisted rape attempt, and was beaten in the face, then kicked in the face while she was on the floor. Victim suffered lasting injuries, including to her vision. Offender seemed to be aware of victim’s schedule, and used her name, which prompted TCSO to arrest the next-door neighbor. The neighbor was acquitted by alibi at trial, and the real attacker was never identified.

**Saturday, October 12, 1974** - TCSO publicly announced the arrest of the neighbor in the Caldwell attack. Saturday night into Sunday morning the Tulare cat burglar hit six houses. Purses, wallets and cash were taken from bedrooms next to sleeping victims. All burglaries in TPD jurisdiction.

**Sunday, October 13, 1974** - TCSO jurisdiction. Details withheld pending current LE investigation. Woman attacked in bed while asleep. Suffered injuries nearly identical to victim in October 9th attack. Attack shared eleven key VR/EAR MO points.

**Friday, November 15, 1974** - 15 year old Mt. Whitney High School sophomore, Jennifer Armour, vanished in Visalia while walking from her home to meet friends for a ride to the football game. Jennifer was last seen on a busy street, at about 7:30 pm. She was two blocks from where her friends were waiting in the K-Mart parking lot.

**Saturday, November 16, 1974** - Jennifer's mother realized that she was missing. The police treated it as a possible runaway, and no public plea for information was released.

**Sunday, November 24, 1974** - The following Sunday, an orange rancher discovered Jennifer's body in the Friant-Kern Canal on the edge of his grove. The remote location in rural Exeter was 12 miles from where Jennifer was last seen. She was naked with her hands bound with her bra. Her blouse was found on a nearby canal bank. Her shoes, pants, underpants, jacket and handmade necklace were missing, and never found. Police dragged the canal, and searched down stream, but no additional evidence was found. Jennifer's cause of death was listed as drowning. The case was treated as possibly accidental for over a year.

The area where Jennifer was walking when she was kidnapped had been the center of VR activity in the weeks leading up to her abduction, but no connection between the cases was made, largely because Visalia was PD jurisdiction (VPD), but the canal area was Sheriff's Office (TCSO). On the 26th, Sheriff Wiley issued a statement that "there is no reason to believe that the girl may have been murdered."

**Friday, November 29, 1974** - Jennifer's services held. Between about 5:00 pm-11:00 pm, the VR committed five ransacking burglaries in Visalia. The Tulare cat burglar hit one house after midnight. Entered through garage door into kitchen, took coins while victim was sleeping.

**Saturday, November 30, 1974** - Between about 5:00 pm-11:00 pm, the VR committed thirteen ransacking burglaries in Visalia. The Tulare cat burglar hit eight houses between roughly midnight and 6:00 am Sunday morning. In each case, the offender took a purse and/or wallet from the occupied bedroom, including the home of a TCSO officer where a gun and coins were also taken.

**Thursday July 24, 1975** - W Kaweah Ave, Visalia. A teenaged girl returning home in the afternoon surprised the offender who was coming down the outside stairs from the tenant's apartment over the garage. The suspect was wearing a mask, and he grabbed the victim and knocked her down to make his escape. Tenant's apartment had been ransacked.

**Sunday, August 31, 1975** - W. Royal Oaks Ave, Visalia. Between 6:00-10:45 pm, the VR committed a ransacking burglary where he stole a .38 Miroku Revolver with a 4 1/2" Barrel; loaded with three steel jacket, hollow point bullets. He also took two boxes of 12 gauge ammunition, three boxes (100 count each) of .38 ammo; a necklace; and one silver dollar. The Miroku was later positively identified as the weapon used to murder Claude Snelling.

**Thursday, September 11, 1975** - 16 year old Mt. Whitney High School junior, Beth Snelling, was awakened around 2:00 am by a masked man on top of her in bed, smothering her, and pinning her arms down with his legs. He threatened to stab and shoot her if she made a noise, and he ordered her to go with him. He dragged her out of her house through the back door and into the carport. Beth's father heard the commotion and yelled from the house, the attacker then shot Mr. Snelling twice, kicked Beth several times in the face, and briskly walked away from the scene. Attacker arrived on a stolen bike, and it was presumed that he was going to take Beth in one of the family cars to be raped, and possibly murdered.

The Snelling home had been the center of VR activity since April, 1974, and was located about 4 blocks east of the location where Jennifer Armour was last seen 10 months earlier.

**Friday, September 19, 1975** - A citizen found a Taurus revolver in a ditch between Visalia and Exeter. VPD concluded that the same firearm had been stolen by the VR in a May 24, 1975 burglary. Employees of a nearby fertilizer plant were checked for possible VR suspects.

**Monday, September 22, 1975** - VPD investigators searching the ditches between Visalia and Exeter found a large flathead screwdriver matching VR scenes, and .222 ammunition, wrapped in a vinyl raincoat. These items were located about 500 yards from the home of Oscar Clifton's parents. VPD were not familiar with Clifton, and did not make any connection. VPD Sgt. Vaughan now believes that this was an attempt by the VR to frame Clifton for the Snelling homicide. The area was TCSO jurisdiction, and TCSO Byrd, Barnes and Farris would have immediately made the connection between the location, Clifton, his 1965 case, and possible evidence in the Snelling homicide.

**November, 1975** - DeAngelo was promoted to Sgt., head of Exeter PD's anti-burglary unit, and JAB (Joint Attack on Burglary) multi-jurisdictional task force.

**Fall, 1975** - The VR continued to strike, but only on nights when VPD were not conducting stakeouts. They believed he was somehow aware of their activities, and conducted a secret stakeout at a home where they had found footprints. The prints were found under the window of the teenage VR victim from July 24, 1975.

**Wednesday, December 10, 1975** - The VR appeared outside the girl's window, was held at gunpoint by police, gunfire was exchanged, and the VR escaped. Police were quickly called to a nearby ransack burglary, and it was determined that items dropped by the VR during the shooting matched those from the earlier burglary.

**Thursday, December 18, 1975** - VPD released a composite sketch and description of the VR in the local paper. Described as blond hair parted on the left, pale, late 20s with a round face.

**Friday, December 26, 1975** - 14 yr old Exeter High School freshman, Donna Jo Richmond, disappeared while riding her bike home from her boyfriend's house at around 4:00 pm. The ride home was about 5 miles, but there were no reported sightings of her after she left her boyfriend's house on Marinette.

**6:30 pm** - Donna's bike was found by her brother and a friend, 1/4 mile from her house, on an isolated grove road. The front wheel was turned all the way around, as if the bike had been removed from a car trunk.

**8:45 pm** - Investigating officer, TCSO Sgt. Byrd, reported finding an invoice book and notepad near Donna's bike. No ID on the notepad, but the invoice book was marked "A. Clifton." TCSO determined that the invoice book belonged to the business of Oscar Clifton, and his wife, "A" Clifton prepared the invoices. The outside covers of both items had been wiped, and contained no fingerprints.

**Saturday, December 27, 1975** 1:30 am - Oscar Clifton and family friend, 18 yr old Rick Carter, were arrested at the Clifton home. Their pickup trucks were impounded from the Clifton driveway.

**1:30 pm** - Donna's body was found on Neel Ranch, an orange grove next to the Friant-Kern canal on Marinette, 3 miles directly east of her boyfriend's house on the same road where she was last seen. There were no witnesses or evidence that showed that Donna ever rode south of Marinette towards the location near her home where her bike was found.

Neel Ranch is 1.5 miles due south of the grove/canal location where Jennifer Armour was found 13 months earlier. Both Jennifer and Donna were traveling alone on Friday evenings, had long blonde hair, blue eyes, and were about the same age. Both girls were missing their shoes, panties, and pants, and the clothing items were taken from the homicide scenes. Both girls were killed in rural Exeter, outside of Exeter PD and Visalia PD jurisdiction, and both cases were handled by TCSO.

**2:30 pm** - TCSO found a ski cap/mask on the edge of the grove at Neel Ranch. The unique description appears to match the mask description from the Snelling homicide three months earlier. Visalia PD were not contacted, and Beth Snelling was not shown the mask.

**6:05 pm** - Autopsy showed 17 stab wounds, closed blow to head, no sign of sexual assault, and all swabs negative for spermatozoa. Cause of death listed as manual strangulation, but victim crawled a short distance after the killer left, and hyoid bone not displaced or fractured. Donna's bra, blouse, jacket, coat, and large scarf tied around her waist were not removed or disturbed. No missing jewelry, or personal items noted.

Between Friday evening and Sunday morning, a trail of Donna's clothing was found, ending (or beginning) 1.5 miles east of Clifton's house. The first item to be found was at 5:45 pm, Friday evening, two hours after Donna was last seen. A woman found Donna's pants in the middle of the road, undamaged, and took them home and washed them for her daughter. Later turned over to TCSO.

Donna's shoes were found miles apart from each other; both resting on their soles as if placed, not thrown. No fingerprints on the shoes, including Donna's. Panties and kotex w/belt found in a ditch, not attached to each other, but placed together—not thrown. All items were free of mud, and injury blood. Shoes were on the south side of the road, and the panties were on the east side of the road. The location suggested that they were placed by someone heading back to Exeter, not towards Clifton's house.

Two witness came forward after seeing Clifton's photo and claimed he approached them Friday afternoon between 3:00-3:30 pm. Clifton was seen by witnesses in Visalia, 12-23 miles away, during that same time frame.

**May 11, 1976** - State grant funding announced for DeAngelo's JAB position, slated to cover August, 1976-July, 1977.

**May, 1976** - DeAngelo's brother, John, moved to Exeter with his wife, and infant daughter.

**June 22 - July 14, 1976** - Clifton stood trial in Tulare County for Donna Jo Richmond's murder. Clifton was originally charged with Murder, Kidnapping, Rape and Sodomy. The rape and sodomy charges were widely reported in the local press up until immediately prior to the trial, but those charges were eventually replaced with attempted rape. Clifton's motion for change of venue was denied. He was convicted of all charges and sentenced to death.

**August 4, 1976** - Exeter City Council approved DeAngelo's Sgt. salary in the new 1976-77 fiscal year budget.

**August 25, 1976** - DeAngelo's resignation from Exeter PD announced.

**February, 1977** - TCSO Sgt Byrd ordered the destruction or return of all evidence held by TCSO in the case. In 2001, Donna's pants, underwear, kotex, and Clifton's pocket knife were located at the courthouse, and some slide mounted hairs were found at an outside lab.

**May, 1978** - Clifton's death sentence was modified to life.

**1983-2013** Clifton was repeatedly denied parole. TCSO Byrd wrote multiple official letters asserting that Donna had been raped, sodomized and “run down.” The AG ordered that those letters be removed from Clifton’s file as not supported by the facts of the case, or his conviction, but they remained. TCSO and the Tulare DA’s office wrote additional letters, and made appearances asserting that Donna had been raped and sodomized. Every denial of parole cited this non-existent, brutal sexual assault and Clifton’s refusal to show remorse for the crime, for which he maintained his total innocence. He died in prison in 2013.