



MONICA ALMEIDA / Los Angeles Times

Night Stalker suspect Richard Ramirez is led from police station where crowd gathered, below.



ELLEN JASKOL / Los Angeles Times

Citizens Capture Stalker Fugitive

East L.A. Residents Foil Suspect's Attempt to Elude Police Pursuit

By DAVID FREED and CAROL McGRAW, *Times Staff Writers*

A 25-year-old drifter identified as the Night Stalker was chased, beaten with a steel rod and captured by angry citizens Saturday morning after he allegedly tried to steal a car in East Los Angeles.

Dazed and bloodied, Richard Ramirez was cornered at about 9 a.m. by four men unaware they were pursuing the man suspected of killing 16 people and assaulting at least 21 others in California.

"Thank God, you came," the beaten and exhausted Ramirez told an officer who took him into custody.

Less than 12 hours earlier, law enforcement authorities had publicly identified Ramirez as the Stalker, describing him in an all-points bulletin as possibly armed and dangerous.

When Ramirez walked into an East Los Angeles liquor store Sat-

Additional Stalker photos and stories on Pages 3, 30.

urday morning, he saw his photograph on the front page of a Spanish language newspaper. According to the liquor store clerk, Ramirez threw the paper down and bolted from the store. The clerk contacted police. But before they could catch up with him, citizens did.

After taking him into custody, authorities drove Ramirez to the Los Angeles Police Department's Hollenbeck station, where he was treated for head and wrist injuries, interrogated by detectives and then booked on suspicion of murder. He is being held without bail at the Central Jail.

"California can breathe a sigh of relief tonight," declared Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, who went to the Hollenbeck station to congratulate police.

"I can't begin to tell you how proud we are of our citizens," Bradley said. "It is one of those beautiful stories."

With Ramirez's capture, some chilling new information emerged about the Night Stalker case.

Ramirez, according to sources close to the case, may have been involved in satanic worship.

Pentagrams Discovered

More than once, investigators said, they discovered spray-painted pentagrams on inside walls of victims' homes. Such symbols are said to be used by Satan worshipers to represent the devil's horns.

Authorities apparently made a tenuous connection between the Stalker and satanic worship in their investigation of the March 17 slaying of 35-year-old Dayle Okazaki. Authorities discovered a baseball cap in her Rosemead condominium that they believe the Stalker inadvertently left behind. On the cap was a logo for the heavy metal rock band AC/DC, which some believe is meant to be an acronym for "Anti-Christ, Devil's Child."

Authorities focused on AC/DC's 1979 "Highway to Hell" album, and its six-minute "Night Prowler" cut, which says in part: "What's the noise outside your window? What's the shadow on the blind? As you lay there naked like a body in a tomb, suspended animation as I slip into your room."

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In determined pursuit of a devil-worshiper connection last month, sheriff's cadets searched the Skyline Drive area of La Habra Heights in East Los Angeles, where investigators believed a satanic cult had met. Distinctive tennis shoe prints were found, which matched shoe prints that were discovered at some Stalker crime scenes, sources said.

The Night Stalker spread terror throughout California this summer by sneaking into darkened houses through unlocked windows and doors to attack his sleeping victims. Some were shot to death with handguns. Three types were used: a .22-caliber revolver, a .22-caliber semi-automatic and a .25-caliber semi-automatic. Others were bludgeoned with hammers or tire irons. Some were stabbed, and others had their throats slashed.

Investigators said they believe the Stalker used cotton work gloves in the attacks. They said he cut telephone wires once inside some of the houses. He attacked men first and usually shot them in the head. He then attacked women—in some cases raping and sodomizing them.

Some Victims Tied Up

Some victims were found tied up with extension cords. Some were restrained at the wrist with handcuffs. Others were immobilized with cuffs that fit around thumbs of both hands, sources said.

At one crime scene, a woman victim had her eyeballs gouged out, sources said.

The man suspected of these atrocities was first spotted clad in black jeans and a black Jack Daniel's T-shirt at about 8:30 a.m. Saturday when he entered a small liquor store at 819 S. Towne Ave. and picked up a newspaper that had

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See full page image or
microfilm.

Earlier, Ramirez, in police car, wore bandages around his head after East Los Angeles residents chased and captured him.

his picture on the first page.

Richard Ramirez threw the paper down, ran out of the store and boarded a bus, witnesses said.

Ramirez was sighted again at 8:42 a.m. walking in the 800 block of Mott Street. Several residents called police. When he reached Euclid Avenue and Garnet Street, police received another report of his sighting, and they dispatched seven squad cars to the scene.

Acting on tips from neighbors along the way, officers plotted the suspect's zigzag course, which took him to East Hubbard Street.

There, he tried to steal a red Ford Mustang. Failing that, he ran across the street, hit Angelina De La Torre, 28, in the stomach and tried to grab her keys as she was about to get in her car to go shopping.

Her husband, Manuel De La Torre, 32, ran out to the street in a rage and chased Ramirez, beating him as he ran with a steel rod.

Three of De La Torre's neighbors joined in a half-block foot chase and subdued Ramirez in front of 3732 E. Hubbard St., just east of the Los Angeles city line.

"I didn't realize it was him (the Stalker)," said Jaime Burgoin, 21, who helped capture Ramirez. "I was just doing it because he was messing around in our neighborhood."

Tina Pinon, 15, who lives on Hubbard Street, said that after his capture, Ramirez was forced to sit on a curbstone. She said Ramirez kept trying to get up and talk, but that Manuel De La Torre held the steel bar near Ramirez's eyes, daring him to "Come on, move." Someone else kept telling Ramirez,

"You don't have a right to talk."

It was not immediately known whether those who captured Ramirez would share in a \$70,000 Stalker reward fund.

Saturday's arrest came on the heels of a late Friday night news conference in which Los Angeles County Sheriff Sherman Block, Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl F. Gates and Orange County Sheriff Brad Gates announced that they had identified Ramirez as the so-called Night Stalker.

A December, 1984, photograph of Ramirez, taken when he was arrested in Los Angeles on suspicion of driving a stolen car, was released to the public along with a physical description that matched the description of the Stalker provided by witnesses and survivors of his attacks.

Block told reporters that a positive identification of Ramirez had been made through exhaustive studies of fingerprints found on a stolen car and fingerprints taken of Ramirez in his many previous arrests. Ramirez, authorities said, is also known to have gone by several aliases, including "Richard Moreno," "Noah Jimenez," "Nicholas Adame," "Richard Munoz" and "Richard Mena."

He also is known to call himself "Ricardo."

Teeth Checked

At first, officers weren't sure if they had, in fact, arrested the Stalker suspect. At one point, police officers ordered Ramirez to open his mouth so that they could check his teeth. They were convinced of his true identity when he complied.

The Stalker's most notable facial feature, witnesses have said, is his widely-gapped, discolored front teeth. Sheriff's Lt. Dick Walls said

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that the 6-foot-1, 155 pound Ramirez "only has four or five teeth left." He described Ramirez as "emaciated."

Ramirez, who was born in El Paso, has a history of minor, nonviolent crimes, including drug offenses and driving stolen vehicles, authorities said. In addition to his arrests in Los Angeles, he has been picked up by police in Pasadena and Alhambra, officials said.

Despite the arrests, he has never spent a long term in prison and has been chronically unemployed, officials said.

The suspect has lived in California since 1981, in Los Angeles and in San Francisco before that, but officials have little knowledge of his background.

No Driver's License

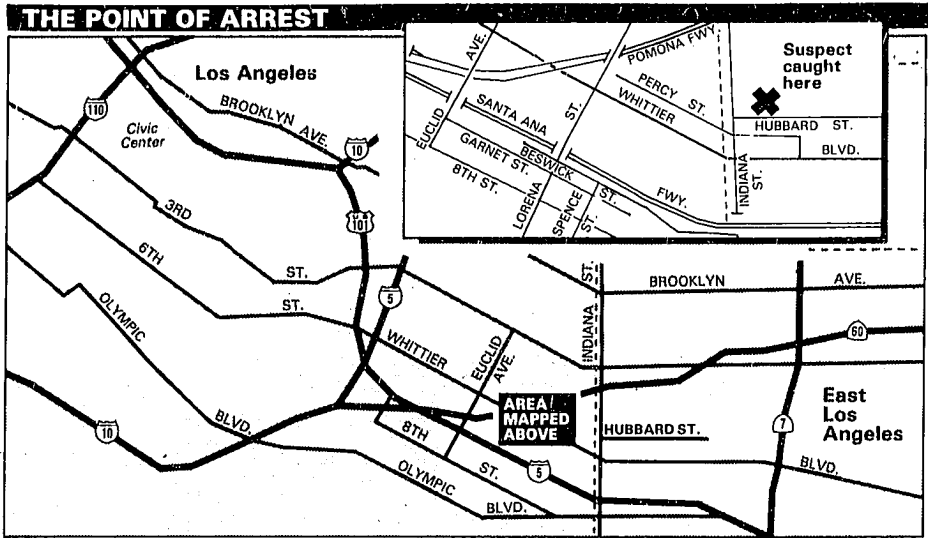
According to the California Department of Motor Vehicles, Ramirez has no driver's license but applied for and was given an identification card in 1981. Records show that he received more than one ticket for driving without a license but never paid them.

Ramirez listed his address in 1981 as 614 East 52nd St., just south of the USC campus near downtown Los Angeles. There is no such residence.

Ramirez applied for a new DMV identification card in 1983 and listed his latest home address as 3306 Eagle Rock Blvd. in the Glassell Park area in northeast Los Angeles. But no such street address exists—the closest address is a Romanian Orthodox church—and residents in the 3300 block of Eagle Rock Boulevard said Saturday they have no recollection of him.

"Of course, everybody knows (Ramirez) now," said the pastor of the church, Constantine Alexia, when shown a photograph of the suspect.

The location is within a mile of where a Glendale couple, Max and Lela Kneiding, were killed July 20 by the Stalker. It was in the same area that an abducted 8-year-old girl was released after she was sexually assaulted by the Stalker, authorities believe.



MICKIE GARRETT / Los Angeles Times

Word of Ramirez's arrest produced a carnival-like atmosphere outside the Police Department's Hollenbeck substation in the 3900 block of 1st Street, where Ramirez initially was taken and interrogated. Residents said they had not experienced as much excitement since last year, when actress Angie Dickinson filmed a movie in their neighborhood.

Vendors Do Brisk Business

As soda and ice cream street vendors did a brisk business under a scorching sun, spectators gathered five and six deep on the curb and watched from windows to commend the police and condemn the suspect.

"I hope they give him the electric chair," said Alphonso Aguayo, 16. "That's what vicious killers deserve."

"Oh, he won't last in jail. They'll kill him," said housewife Carmen Villanueva.

Police eventually had to seal off the area in front of the police station because the crowd, estimated at more than 400, had grown so

large and boisterous in waiting for a glimpse of the Stalker suspect.

At one point, spectators thought that a handcuffed man being brought into the station on another arrest was the suspect. They begin to push and shove and flail out at him as police raced him through the gate.

About 40 officers marched out of the building and cleared the street adjacent to the station's side entrance.

Officers arrested one unidentified man who was armed with a knife. The man claimed that the Stalker had killed his wife.

The noisy crowd became quiet as Ramirez was quickly brought out the back door of the station and placed between two officers in the back seat of an unmarked brown police car at about 3:30 p.m. to be taken to Central Jail.

He ducked his head into his lap as he was driven through the gate.

The crowd then cheered loudly. One teen-age boy, who had stood on a wall for almost two hours to get a glimpse of the Ramirez, said, "He sure doesn't look mean. He

looks just everyday, doesn't he?"

At a press conference held immediately after Ramirez's departure, Cmdr. William Booth, a Police Department spokesman, said Ramirez would be put in protective custody.

"We will make sure that man will survive to stand trial," he said.

Local law enforcement officials who have worked together for weeks to solve the Stalker series of violence congratulated themselves upon Ramirez's arrest. Assistant Sheriff Robert A. Edmonds could be seen hugging Sgt. Frank Solerno, a top Sheriff's Department homicide detective who helped coordinate the task force that has hunted the Stalker for weeks.

But officials in San Francisco also took credit for solving the case.

"You bet we broke this thing," said San Francisco homicide Inspector Frank Falzon, smiling broadly. Falzon said he and his partner, Detective Carl Klotz, came up with the suspect's last name after "receiving statements from individuals from the East Bay who

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were able to give a last," Falzon said.

That aside, a crucial break in the case apparently came through the San Francisco police's investigation of a routine residential burglary Aug. 15 in that city's exclusive Marina's district, near the Presidio army base. The burglary at 3637 Baker St. occurred two days before the Stalker killed San Francisco accountant Peter Pan, 66, in Pan's Lakeside district home, about five miles away.

On a wall in Pan's house, investigators found a taunting signature scrawled in lipstick: "Jack the Knife."

Fingerprints found after the Aug. 15 Baker Street burglary apparently matched at least one print found on a stolen car spotted Aug. 25 in the Orange County community of Mission Viejo, near the scene of the most recent Stalker attack. Both prints matched those taken directly from Ramirez in previous arrests, according to sources close to the investigation.

The second-story San Francisco

burglary proved just how tenacious the Stalker could be.

Residents of the neighborhood in which the 11 p.m. break-in took place said Saturday that the burglar first went to a house being remodeled two doors away and crept into the darkened backyard, which was filled with old kitchen cabinets and heavy wooden scaffolding.

He grabbed a cabinet front and a 7-by-1 foot plank, dragged them both over one fence, through a second backyard, over a second fence and into the yard of the house he planned to break into. Using the cabinet front, he propped the plank against the side of the house scampering through an open, second-floor bathroom window, residents said.

The burglar made off with cash, jewelry and cameras, among other items.

On Saturday, black powder outlining fingerprints could still be clearly seen on the cabinet front.

Residents of the block, on which the president of Levi Strauss & Co. and other corporate executives



MONICA ALMEIDA / Los Angeles Times

Police hold back a line of spectators outside Hollenbeck station.

live, said they saw a large, green American-built car, possibly a Cadillac, parked in front of the house on the night of the burglary, but did not give it a second thought. Some

authorities believe that the car might well have been the green Pontiac Grand Prix that Ramirez reportedly was seen driving in recent days.

Neighbors on Baker Street said they heard strange noises that night but attributed them to marauding raccoons.

San Francisco authorities said Saturday that, despite some rumors, Ramirez acted alone in his attacks.

"We're satisfied he is the lone Stalker," Falzon said in answer to a question about whether Ramirez had a partner. A partner was once mentioned as a possibility by police in San Francisco and in Los Angeles.

"Catching him is one thing," Falzon said. "Now the real detective work starts, trying to piece together all these cases."

On Saturday, the Night Stalker task force got information on still another possibly-related case. This one concerned an early morning incident in Montclair, 35 miles east of Los Angeles. Two men in a house there were shot to death by an intruder who gained entry through an open door, police said.

"It would be a relief if he is proven without a shadow of a doubt to be the Night Stalker," a relative of William Doi said of Ramirez. Doi's relation was a Monterey Park business executive who fell victim to the Stalker on May 14. "His

arrest could never relieve the pain of the crimes he committed. What justice could exist for such a heinous crime?"

Times staff writers Mirna Alfonso, Bob Baker, Jerry Belcher, Steve Bloom, Peter H. King, Dan Morain, Nancy Skelton and Mark Stein contributed to this story.