

The Milwaukee Cannibal

Picture the most vicious sex killer of horror movies or pulp fiction, add your worst nightmare for good measure, multiply by two, and you may come close to the macabre reality of Jeffrey Dahmer. Though he perfectly fitted the profile of the serial killer, profiling was applied too late to stop him from murdering at least 15 black and Asian gay men.

The neighbors at Oxford Apartments had noticed the smell, but the mild-mannered 31-year-old blond man always had a perfectly sensible explanation. It was "rotting meat," Jeffrey Dahmer said, his excuse made more plausible, perhaps, by the fact that it was only half a lie.

But the police should have been suspicious when they found a 14-year-old boy of Asian descent running naked and drugged around the run-down Milwaukee neighborhood. At his side, Dahmer claimed that the boy was his drunken gay lover. He showed the police some ID and took them back to his apartment. It stank, but everything seemed neat and in order, so the two police officers went away without asking any more questions.

The weird dude

A few months later, around midnight on July 22, 1991, two patrol officers stopped a man with handcuffs on one wrist. It turned out he wasn't a fugitive, as they had thought. He babbled about a "weird dude" who'd tried to cuff him, and led the police to 213 Oxford Apartments.

Jeffrey Dahmer answered the door. He was polite. He was calm. He offered to get the handcuff keys from the bedroom. The police might have treated it as another gay lovers' spat had one of them not followed him and spotted photographs of skulls and horribly mutilated corpses. Dahmer's cool manner evaporated when the cop yelled to his buddy to arrest him. They succeeded in handcuffing him, and started to search the apartment. Then things got rapidly worse.

Behind the icebox door

"There's a head in the refrigerator!" shouted one of the officers, slamming the door in shock. There were three more in

HAZARDOUS WASTE
Dahmer dissolved his victims in acid to turn them into sludge. Police needed breathing apparatus to protect themselves from fumes as they removed Dahmer's acid bath from his apartment.



MURDERER'S MUGSHOT ▲

Even as a teenager Jeffrey Dahmer had murderous fantasies about sex with corpses. He first killed at age 18, burying the body in plastic bags in the woods behind his house.

the freezer. A cupboard hid two skulls, as well as more photographs of ghastly, murderous horrors, a saucepan containing rotting hands and a penis, and more genitals, pickled in formaldehyde.

The stomach-churning, scarcely credible truth about Jeffrey Dahmer was that he killed for kicks and had sex with the corpses. He would then cut the bodies up, faithfully photographing every slash. He disposed of his victims by dissolving them in acid, but kept parts of them as trophies. On occasions he even ate their flesh.

Dahmer preyed on homosexual men and boys, most of them black, Asian, or Hispanic. Critics of the Milwaukee police suggested after his arrest that this was one reason why his killing spree continued—if the police weren't so racist and homophobic, they would have stopped him earlier. In fact, this overstates the case, for they nearly did. In 1988, when he had already killed five times, he picked up a 13-year-old Asian boy, drugged and groped him, but stopped short of sex or murder. He was arrested for an assault on a child and spent 10 months in prison. However, he was free by day so that he would not lose his job—at a chocolate factory. Dahmer began his murders

again almost as soon as he was released, and by the time of his arrest in 1991, he was killing on a weekly basis.

On the stand

Dahmer's trial was predictably sensational. Sniffer dogs were used to check for bombs in the courtroom, and every court member was scanned with metal detectors and thoroughly searched on entry.

Dahmer's lawyer urged him to plead not guilty, but he ignored their advice and

Bad, not mad

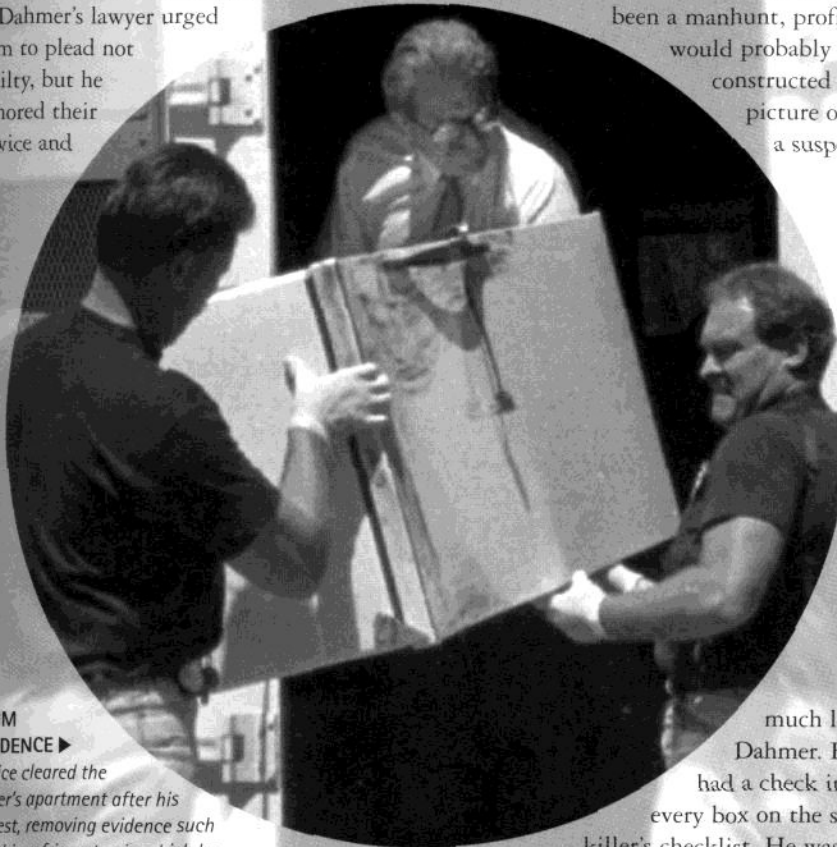
McCann's argument was persuasive. The jury rejected the defense plea of insanity, and found Dahmer guilty on 15 counts of murder. The "Milwaukee Cannibal" received 15 life sentences—nearly 1,000 years in prison.

The verdict did not offer much real comfort to the families of the victims. Nor

did the knowledge that, had there been a manhunt, profilers would probably have constructed a picture of a suspect

COURT APPEARANCE ▼

Fearing that Jeffrey Dahmer would be murdered before he could be sentenced, court authorities built a bulletproof screen in front of the public gallery.



GRIM EVIDENCE ►

Police cleared the killer's apartment after his arrest, removing evidence such as this refrigerator, in which he preserved the heads and other parts of his victims.

instead claimed insanity as a defense. This forced the prosecution to establish that he was simply evil, rather than mad. The prosecution's trial strategy drew heavily on the principles of criminal profiling. District attorney Mike McCann directed the jury's attention to the control that Dahmer exerted over his victims: a classic feature of the personality of serial killers. Dahmer picked victims who were intrinsically easy to control, and he heightened his power over them by drugging their drinks. The ritual of their torture, killing, and dismemberment made him feel omnipotent.

much like Dahmer. For he had a check in every box on the serial killer's checklist. He was in the right age range, 25–35, and he had been a loner at school. He was bright, but worked in a menial manual job. He was charming and plausible. He killed with his hands, and had sadistic sexual fantasies.

Dahmer became a model inmate at the Columbia Correctional Institution in Wisconsin, where he was initially segregated from other inmates for his own protection. However, he wanted more social contact, and persuaded by his coolness and self-control, the prison authorities gave it to him. He didn't live long enough to enjoy it. On November 28, 1994, Christopher Scarver, a black delusional schizophrenic inmate, crushed Dahmer's head with a broom handle and killed him.

