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Rapist grew up hating women



NORTHWEST

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — His release from prison enraged residents of a sparsely populated northern California county and rocked the state parole system. The governor is now personally considering his case.

But who is Melvin Alfred Carter, the serial rapist of at least 100 women, by his own count, who so focused one state's attention on where it places parolees?

Carter, 49, who has served less than half his original 25-year prison sentence and is now living in a two-bedroom bungalow in a forest prison camp, grew to manhood with a profound hatred of women, according to a confidential Alameda County probation assessment obtained by *The Associated Press*.

"While he has dated 'a few' women during his adulthood, he has never had a close or satisfying relationship with a woman and he has never had sexual contact with any woman he has dated," the document stated.

Carter had an unhappy childhood, tormented by a stern mother he says humiliated his passive father in domestic battles. Carter believes the hostility he holds for his mother caused him to rape repeatedly, said the court-ordered study.

Carter has said he assaulted women almost monthly for 10 years.

Dubbed the "College Terrace Rapist," for a Palo Alto neighborhood near Stanford University, Carter never varied his methods, investigators said.

He stalked young women who lived alone near college campuses, including Berkeley and Hayward as well as Stanford. Wearing surgical gloves and carrying a knife, he entered the dwellings after the victims had gone to bed. Before creeping into the bedrooms, he cut phone and electrical wires.

"Victim would awake to find defendant on top of her with a knife at her throat," said a district attorney's report.

Carter was captured in 1980 and eventually convicted of 23 crimes, including rape, assault, burglary and attempt to commit burglary.

In the mid-1970s, rape investigators in the San Francisco Bay area began noticing common elements and started trading information. Gradually, crimes as far back as 1971 were clearly tied to the same rapist.

No charges were filed in many of the cases because legal deadlines had passed, prosecutors said.

"It's a woman's worst nightmare," said Tammy Bruce, head of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women, "an entire system that has no idea how to track its most violent offenders."

The break came when Carter was stopped and interrogated as a suspected prowler in Palo Alto. Authorities routinely fed his background into their College Terrace Rapist file and found remarkable matches with parts of a profile developed by police psychiatrists.

The profile identified the rapist as likely to be "unmarried, an engineer or a scientist of high intelligence, and meticulous in his attention to detail."

Carter, identified in one court report as a loner

much of his life, is a research engineer who last worked for Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. in Livermore.

While attending the Colorado School of Mines, Carter was arrested several times on peeping Tom charges. He spent a year in a Colorado jail for assault and assault with intent to rape.

At his sentencing in March 1982, Carter confessed to some 100 rapes. But last month, prison officials realized they had no choice but to release Carter. His good behavior had already shaved off one-third of his 25-year sentence and a subsequent change in state law boosted good-time and work-time credits to half the time off.

Carter was originally scheduled for release in Hayward, conforming to a state law requiring release in the county of conviction. But protests in Alameda County prompted Gov. Pete Wilson to order him sent "out in the wilderness someplace," and Carter was secretly placed in the bungalow at the Devil's Garden Conservation Camp near tiny Alturas, 400 miles northeast of San Francisco.

Devil's Garden is one of the state's 38 minimum-security compounds, which house more than 4,000 inmates. The camps are considered the country clubs of the correctional system, taking only inmates with no history of sex offenses, arson, crimes of violence, kidnapping or escape. Because Carter is a parolee, not an inmate, the guidelines do not apply.

Wilson never specified Modoc County, which has 10,000 residents, as the "wilderness" area, but critics are accusing him of election-year politicking in demanding a rural area with few votes.

Carter's presence has prompted threats against his life, including the digging of a mock grave. A busload of Modoc High School girls and politicians descended on the state Capitol to demand Carter be moved.

Last Wednesday, a group representing the state's 4,000 forest firefighters added their voices, saying that Carter's presence in a camp used as a fire-fighting base placed employees of the Forestry Department in jeopardy.

The same day, sheriffs from numerous rural counties gathered in Alturas to support Modoc County's efforts to evict Carter.

Two weeks ago, a woman who lives in Modoc County came forward and claimed Carter raped her 15 years ago. His continued presence near a victim would violate state law. Wilson is expected to decide early this week whether to transfer Carter to another location.

At the camp, Carter has agreed to far stricter security than any of the state's 85,815 parolees. The three-year conditions include lie-detector tests and wearing an electronic tracking device on his ankle. He is watched around the clock inside the compound; if he leaves camp, he must be accompanied by two officers.

Carter reportedly spends most of his time reading and watching television.

"He's a real avid reader," said camp spokesman Mack Reynolds. "He's a highly intelligent and articulate individual and he's spending his time watching news and reading newspapers and novels and magazines."

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