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The Briley Brothers The True Story Of The Slaying Brothers Historical Serial Killers And Murderers True Crime By Evil Killers Book 8

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795580879856034

Introduction: The Reign of Terror in Richmond

In the annals of American crime history, few stories are as chilling and disturbing as that of the Briley brothers. For anyone fascinated by the darkest corners of human behavior, **The Briley Brothers The True Story Of The Slaying Brothers Historical Serial Killers And Murderers True Crime By Evil Killers Book 8** offers an unflinching look into a nightmare that gripped Richmond, Virginia, throughout the 1970s. Linwood Briley and his younger brother James Briley, along with a small circle of accomplices, embarked on a violent spree that left at least eleven people dead. Their crimes were not merely acts of murder; they were calculated, brutal, and often ritualistic. This article delves deep into the true story behind these notorious killers, exploring their backgrounds, their horrific crimes, their trial, and their infamous prison break. We will examine what drove these brothers to become some of the most feared serial killers in American history, providing a comprehensive overview that is both informative and respectful to the victims whose lives were tragically cut short.

The Early Lives of the Briley Brothers

Understanding the making of a serial killer often requires looking at the environment in which they were raised. Linwood Briley was born in 1954, and his brother James followed in 1956. The Briley brothers grew up in a predominantly black, working-class neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia. Their father was a strict disciplinarian who often resorted to physical punishment, while their mother was reportedly a kind but overwhelmed woman. From an early age, both Linwood and James exhibited troubling behavior. Linwood, in particular, was known for his cruelty to animals and his uncontrollable temper. He was also an arsonist, setting fires as early as age eleven. James, while more reserved, was easily influenced by his older brother. The brothers were inseparable, forming a dark alliance that would eventually escalate into a killing spree. Their upbringing did not excuse their actions, but it provides a crucial backdrop for understanding how these young men became the slaying brothers who terrorized a community.

The Beginning of the Killing Spree

The First Victims: Harvey and Wilma Jones

The Briley brothers' murder spree began in 1971, but it was not until 1979 that they escalated to a level of violence that would shock the nation. On March 21, 1971, Linwood, then 17, along with an accomplice, entered

the home of 57-year-old Harvey Jones and his wife Wilma. The couple were a well-liked retired couple. The attackers beat Harvey Jones with a hammer and stabbed him before turning on Wilma, who was also brutally assaulted. The Joneses survived the attack, but the incident was a harbinger of the violence to come. Linwood was arrested and sentenced to prison but was released after just a few years. This early brush with the law did nothing to curb his violent impulses. Instead, it seemed to harden him, and upon his release, he began planning with his brother James for a new, more devastating series of crimes.

The 1979 Rampage Begins

The true terror began in March 1979. Over the next several months, the Briley brothers, often joined by a younger accomplice named Duncan Eric Meekins, committed a series of home invasion robberies that quickly escalated into murder. The victims were chosen randomly, targeted based on their vulnerability. The brothers would often pose as delivery men or use other ruses to gain entry into homes. Once inside, they would torture their victims, seeking money and valuables, but also deriving a sick pleasure from the suffering they inflicted. The Briley brothers were historical serial killers in the sense that their methods were sadistic and their lack of remorse was absolute. The city of Richmond began to live in fear, unaware that a pair of brothers were responsible for the wave of violence sweeping through their neighborhoods.

The Horrific Crimes of the Slaying Brothers

The list of victims attributed to the Briley brothers is long and heartbreaking. Each murder was carried out with a specific, brutal signature. The brothers and their accomplices would often beat their victims with blunt objects, stab them, or shoot them. In some cases, they forced victims to watch as others were killed before being murdered themselves. This psychological torture was a hallmark of their crimes. One of the most infamous incidents occurred on March 12, 1979, when they invaded the home of Christopher Phillips, a 35-year-old disc jockey. They beat Phillips with a hammer and a baseball bat, then shot him. His wife, Gwendolyn Briley (no relation), was also killed. The sheer randomness and violence of these attacks left the community paralyzed with fear. The Briley brothers were not just murderers; they were predators who stalked the city with impunity, leaving a trail of blood and grief.

The Dr. Harvey and Wilma Jones Attack Revisited

It is important to note that the attack on the Joneses, while non-fatal, was part of the same pattern of violence that defined the brothers' spree. The brutality of that early attack foreshadowed the even more gruesome murders to come. The fact that Linwood was able to walk free after such a violent crime is a tragic failure of the justice system that allowed these slaying brothers to continue their reign of terror.

The Capture and Trial

The Briley brothers' crime spree was finally brought to an end by a combination of police work and a crucial informant. In October 1979, a witness came forward with information. The police were able to connect the brothers to multiple crime scenes through physical evidence and witness testimony. Linwood and James Briley were arrested, along with their accomplice Duncan Eric Meekins. The trial that followed was a media sensation. The prosecution painted a picture of two cold-blooded killers who showed no mercy to their victims. The defense attempted to argue that the brothers had been abused as children, but the evidence of their crimes was overwhelming. In 1980, Linwood Briley was convicted of multiple counts of murder and sentenced to death. James Briley was also convicted and sentenced to death. The brothers were sent to death row at the Virginia State Penitentiary. For the victims' families, the verdicts brought a measure of justice, but the nightmare was not yet over.

The Daring Escape from Death Row

The Briley brothers were not content to simply wait for their execution. In a move that seems straight out of a

Hollywood script, they orchestrated one of the most audacious prison breaks in American history. On May 31, 1984, Linwood and James Briley, along with another death row inmate, escaped from the Virginia State Penitentiary. The escape was meticulously planned. The inmates had managed to acquire weapons and smuggled them into the death row unit. They took several prison guards hostage, including the warden, and used them as human shields. Over a period of several hours, they negotiated with prison authorities, eventually demanding a getaway car. In a tense standoff, the brothers and their accomplice forced guards to load them into a van and drove away from the prison. The escape was a major embarrassment for the Virginia penal system and sparked a massive manhunt across the eastern United States. The story of the Briley brothers had now become a national sensation, capturing the public's imagination and fear.

The Brief Freedom and Recapture

The Briley brothers' freedom was short-lived. After the escape, they drove south, eventually making their way to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, they attempted to lay low, but their faces were all over the news. A tip from a member of the public led police to a house where they were hiding. On June 19, 1984, less than three weeks after their escape, the Briley brothers were captured without incident. They were returned to Virginia, where security on death row was tightened significantly. The escape attempt, while unsuccessful in achieving lasting freedom, cemented their place in criminal history as not just killers, but as cunning and desperate men willing to risk everything to avoid the electric chair.

The Execution of the Briley Brothers

After their recapture, the legal process for their executions resumed. James Briley was executed in the electric chair on April 18, 1985. His death was controversial, as witnesses reported that it took two jolts of electricity to kill him, and smoke was seen rising from his head. Linwood Briley followed his brother to the electric chair on October 12, 1985. He made a brief statement before his execution, saying, "I'm going home to be with Jesus." The executions of the Briley brothers brought an end to one of the most terrifying crime sprees in Virginia history. For the families of the victims, it was a final closure, but the memories of the horror inflicted by these slaying brothers would never fully fade.

The Accomplice: Duncan Eric Meekins

No account of the Briley brothers' crimes is complete without discussing their accomplice, Duncan Eric Meekins. Meekins was a younger man who was drawn into the brothers' orbit. He participated in several of the murders, including the killing of Christopher Phillips. However, Meekins eventually turned state's witness and testified against the Briley brothers in exchange for a lighter sentence. He was sentenced to life in prison. Meekins' testimony was crucial in securing the convictions of Linwood and James. His role in the crimes remains a stain on his record, but his cooperation with authorities helped bring the brothers to justice. The dynamic between the three killers is a complex one, with the Briley brothers clearly being the dominant, more sadistic personalities, while Meekins played the role of a follower.

Why the Briley Brothers Matter in True Crime History

The story of the Briley brothers, as chronicled in **The Briley Brothers The True Story Of The Slaying Brothers Historical Serial Killers And Murderers True Crime By Evil Killers Book 8**, is more than just a morbid tale. It is a case study in the making of violent criminals, the failures of the justice system, and the resilience of a community under siege. The brothers' ability to evade capture for so long, despite their brazen crimes, highlights the challenges that law enforcement faced in the pre-DNA era. Their trial showcased the power of eyewitness testimony and cooperative witnesses. Their escape from death row remains a legendary event in the annals of prison breaks, a testament to their desperation and cunning. For students of true crime, the Briley brothers represent a unique blend of sadism, opportunism, and cold-blooded calculation. Their crimes were not driven by a single type of victim or location; they were random, making them all the more

terrifying to the general public. This case continues to be studied by criminologists and psychologists seeking to understand the minds of serial killers.

Lessons Learned from the Briley Brothers Case

The case of the Briley brothers offers several grim lessons. First, it demonstrates the importance of taking early signs of violent behavior seriously. Linwood Briley's early history of arson and animal cruelty were red flags that were not adequately addressed. Second, it shows the dangers of releasing violent offenders back into society without proper supervision or rehabilitation. Linwood's early release for the attack on the Joneses was a catastrophic mistake. Third, the case underscores the need for constant vigilance in prison security, especially on death row. The brothers' ability to obtain weapons and orchestrate a hostage situation revealed significant weaknesses in the penal system. Finally, the Briley brothers' story is a reminder of the profound and lasting trauma that violent crime inflicts on victims, their families, and entire communities. The innocent people who crossed paths with these killers lost their lives in the most brutal ways imaginable, and their stories deserve to be remembered.

Conclusion: The Enduring Dark Legacy

The Briley brothers, Linwood and James, left an indelible mark on the history of American crime. Their killing spree, driven by a mix of greed, power, and pure sadism, claimed the lives of at least eleven innocent people. The book **The Briley Brothers The True Story Of The Slaying Brothers Historical Serial Killers And Murderers True Crime By Evil Killers Book 8** provides a comprehensive and harrowing account of their lives, their crimes, and their ultimate fate. While the brothers themselves have been executed, their story remains a cautionary tale about the depths of human depravity. It serves as a stark reminder of the importance of community, the rule of law, and the relentless pursuit of justice for those who have been wronged. For readers interested in true crime, the Briley brothers case is an essential study—a dark chapter in American history that continues to fascinate and horrify. The memory of their victims should never be overshadowed by the notoriety of their killers, and it is through understanding such cases that we can hope to prevent future tragedies. The slaying brothers of Richmond are gone, but their terrible legacy endures as a powerful and somber story of violence, fear, and the fragile nature of human life. The city of Richmond eventually healed, but the scar left by the Briley

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