

**Virginia Rearden  
McGinnis**



Information researched and summarized by  
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Date	Age	Life Event
January, 1937	0	Born in Ithaca, New York (Tompkins County) to Christie and Mary Agnes Hoffman. She is their second child (they have a son, Thomas). Virginia grew up in poverty.
	Childhood	Virginia grew up in poverty and there are indications that she was physically and sexually abused. (Heilbroner, 1983, page 150)
Fall, 1953	16	The Hoffman's barn burned down. Virginia is suspected of arson.
Fall, 1954	17	Virginia marries Dick Coates and they move in with Dick's parents. After Virginia is caught stealing from Dick's parents, Virginia and Dick move in with Virginia's parents.
May, 1955	18	Virginia gives birth to her first child, Ronald Albert Coates.
January, 1956	19	Virginia, Dick, and Ronald move into a house of their own in Newfield, NY. Virginia has many sexual affairs and continues to steal.
1956		Virginia gives birth to her second child, Jimmy.
Winter, 1958	21	After a fire in their rented home, The Coates' are asked to find a new place to live and move back in with her parents. Dick suspects Virginia set the fire.
07-03-1959	21	Virginia is arrested for forging \$195 in checks.
10-05-1959	22	Virginia pleads guilty and is placed on two years of probation.
Fall, 1961	24	Virginia's house catches on fire.
12-24-1966	29	Virginia and Dick separate. Virginia takes the two boys and they move back with her father.
March, 1967	30	The Hoffman's house where Virginia is living in Ithaca, NY, catches on fire. Virginia falls from a second-story window and hits her head. She is hospitalized for two weeks.
02-19-1969	32	Virginia's daughter, Cynthia Elaine Coates, is born in Palo Alto, California (Source: California Birth Index, 1905-1995)
02-25-1971	34	Virginia' and Dick's divorce becomes official.
06-05-1971	35	Virginia marries Sylvester "Bud" Rearden in Santa Clara County, California

		(Source: California Marriage Index, 1960-1985). Bud is in the Navy and has three sons: Kenneth, Sylvester, and Butch.
July, 1972	35	Virginia and Bud move to Louisville when Bud is transferred. They move into a house in Fairdale, Kentucky.
12-06-1972	35	First alleged victim, daughter Cynthia Elaine Coats (WF, 3), was found hanging in a Louisville, Kentucky barn by McGinnis.
12-08-1972	35	Cynthia Coats is buried in Resthaven Memorial Park
09-08-1974	37	Virginia's second husband, Sylvester "Bud" Rearden (WM, 36), dies in Louisville, KY. Although he died from cancer, many speculate that Virginia caused him to die earlier than he would have.
1975	38	Virginia moves from Kentucky to California.
04-14-1984	47	Virginia marries Billie Joe "B.J." McGinnis at the Wedding Bells Chapel in Carson City, Nevada. This was his fifth marriage and Virginia's third marriage.
06-23-1985	48	The house in Palo Alto, CA, where Virginia and her mother are living, catches fire and the insurance company decides to rebuild it rather than paying a claim.
July, 1985	48	The house catches on fire again and burns to the ground. The fire inspectors suspect arson but the insurance company pays Virginia and her mother \$122,255.
August, 1986	49	Virginia's mother, Mary Agnes Hoffman (WF, 74), dies of a heart attack in Chula Vista, California.
04-01-1987	50	Virginia McGinnis took out a \$35,000 life insurance policy on Deana Wild.
04-02-1987	50	Last Victim, Deanna Wild (WF, 20), was found dead in Big Sur, California. Police eventually suspect that Virginia and B.J. McGinnis drove Deanna from San Diego and then pushed her over a cliff in Big Sur,
1987	50	Virginia and B.J. get divorced.
1989	52	Virginia is now living in Pittsburg, California
09-15-1989	52	Virginia is arrested at her home in Pittsburg, California.
September 1989	52	Murder charges were filed against McGinnis by San Diego Prosecutor's Office.
November, 1991	54	Jury selection begins in Virginia's trial for the murder of Deanna Wild,
12-01-1991	54	Accomplice and third husband, Billie Joe McGinnis (WM, 52), dies of AIDS.
12-03-1991	54	Virginia McGinnis is held in Las Colinas Jail in Santee, California.
01-06-1992		Jury selection ends and the trial begins.
01-17-1992		The jurors are flown from San Diego to Monterey to view the crime scene.
02-27-1992	55	The jurors begin deliberation
03-02-1992	55	The jury delivers a verdict of, "Guilty of murder in the first degree".
03-20-1992	55	Virginia was sentenced to life without parole for the murder of Deana Hubbard Wild.

### General Information

Sex	Female
Race	White
Number of victims	4 suspected
Country where killing occurred	United States
States where killing occurred	California, Kentucky
Cities where killing occurred	Big Sur, Chula Vista, Louisville
Counties where killing occurred	Monterey, San Diego, Jefferson
Type of killer	Financial Gain: Black Widow
Height	N/A

### Childhood Information

Date of birth	January, 1932
Location	Ithaca, New York
Number of siblings	1
XYY?	N/A
Raised by	Both parents
Birth category	Youngest, second of two
Parent's marital status	Married
Did serial killer spend time in an orphanage?	No
Did serial killer spend time in a foster home?	No
Was serial killer ever raised by a relative?	No
Did serial killer ever live with adopted family?	No
Did serial killer ever live with a step-parent?	No
Family event	N/A
Age of family event	N/A
Problems in school?	Yes
Teased while in school?	Yes
Physically attractive?	No
Physical defect?	No
Speech defect?	No
Head injury?	Yes, as an adult
Physically abused?	Yes
Psychologically abused?	Yes
Sexually abused?	Yes
Father's occupation	Dairy farmer
Mother's occupation	N/A
Father abused drugs/alcohol	N/A
Mother abused drugs/alcohol	N/A
<b>Cognitive Ability</b>	
Highest grade in school	N/A
Highest degree	N/A
Grades in school	N/A
IQ	N/A
Source of IQ information	N/A
<b>Work History</b>	
Fired from jobs?	N/A
Types of jobs worked	N/A
Employment status during series	Practical Nurse/Hospital Worker
<b>Relationships</b>	
Sexual preference	Heterosexual
Marital status	Married, divorced, remarried
Number of children	3
Lives with her children	Lived with daughter until she died
Living with	Spouse, friend
<b>Triad</b>	
Animal torture	Yes
Fire setting	Yes
Bed wetting	Yes
<b>Killer Psychological Information</b>	
Abused drugs?	N/A
Abused alcohol?	N/A
Been to a psychologist (prior to killing)?	N/A
Time in forensic hospital (prior to killing)?	No

Diagnosis	Antisocial Behavior/Psychopath
<b>Killer Criminal History (Prior to the series)</b>	
Committed previous crimes?	Arson, forgery
Spent time in jail?	Yes
Spent time in prison?	No
Killed prior to series? Age?	No
<b>Serial Killing</b>	
Number of victims (suspected of)	4
Number of victims (confessed to)	None
Number of victims (convicted of)	1
Victim type	Family, friends
Killer age at start of series	35
Killer age at end of series	50
Date of first kill in series	December 6, 1972
Date of final kill in series	April 2, 1987
Gender of victims	1 man and 3 women
Race of victims	White
Age of victims	3, 20, 36, 74
Type of victim	Close individuals with Insurance policies
Method of killing	Hanging, Overdose, Push off Cliff
Weapon	Yes
Was gun used?	No
Type	
Did killer have a partner?	Yes, for the death of Deanna Wild
Name of partner	Billie Joe McGinnis
Sex of partner	Male
Relationship of partner	Spouse
How close did killer live?	Lived with victims 1-3 / Neighbor of victim 4
Location of first contact	N/A
Location of killing	Barn/House/Big Sur, California
Killing occurred in home of victim?	Yes for victims 1-3, no for victim 4
Killing occurred in home of killer?	Yes
Victim abducted or killed at contact?	No
<b>Behavior During Crimes</b>	
Rape?	No
Tortured victims?	No
Intentionally went out that day to kill?	Yes
Overkill?	No
Quick & efficient?	Yes
Used blindfold?	No
Bound the victims?	No
<b>After Death Behavior</b>	
Sex with the body?	No
Mutilated body?	No
Ate part of the body?	No
Drank victim's blood?	No
Posed the body?	No
Took totem – body part	No
Took totem – personal item	No
Robbed victim or location	No
<b>Disposal of Body</b>	
Left at scene, no attempt to hide	Yes

Left at scene, hidden	No
Left at scene, buried	No
Moved, no attempt to hide	No
Moved, hidden	No
Moved, buried	No
Cut-up and disposed of	No
Burned body	No
Dumped body in lake, river, etc.	No
Moved, took home	No
<b>Sentencing</b>	
Date killer arrested	September 15, 1989
Date convicted	March 30, 1992
Sentence	Life without parole
Killer executed?	No
Did killer plead NGRI?	No
Did serial killer confess?	No
Name and state of prison	N/A
Killer killed in prison?	N/A
Date of death	Still Alive
<b>Victim 1</b>	
Name	Cynthia Elaine Coats
Date killed	December 6, 1972
Date body was found	December 6, 1972
Gender	Female
Race	White
Age	3
How killed	Hanged
State killed	Kentucky
City killed	Louisville
County killed	Jefferson
Type of target	Family - Daughter
Did killer confess to this murder?	No
Was killer convicted of this murder?	No
<b>Victim 2</b>	
Name	Sylvester "Bud" Rearden
Date killed	September 8, 1974
Date body was found	September 8, 1974
Gender	Male
Race	White
Age	36
How killed	Suspicious circumstances
State killed	N/A
City killed	N/A
County killed	N/A
Type of target	Family - Husband.
Did killer confess to this murder?	No
Was killer convicted of this murder?	No
<b>Victim 3</b>	
Name	Mary Agnes Hoffman
Date killed	1986
Date body was found	1986
Gender	Female
Race	White

Age	74
How killed	Heart attack (suspicious circumstances)
State killed	California
City killed	Chula Vista
County killed	San Diego
Type of target	Family - Mother
Did killer confess to this murder?	No
Was killer convicted of this murder?	No
<b>Victim 4</b>	
Name	Deana Hubbard Wild
Date killed	April 2, 1987
Date body was found	April 2, 1987
Gender	Female
Race	White
Age	20
How killed	Pushed over a cliff
State killed	California
City killed	Big Sur
County killed	Monterey
Type of target	Friend
Did killer confess to this murder?	No
Was killer convicted of this murder?	Yes

#### References

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\*N/A means that this data was not found. Our group did an extensive search through books, online publications, LexisNexis, newspapers, Ancestry.com, and received help from the Reference Desk in the Library. This is all the information we could gather on Virginia McGinnis. She is not a very well-known serial killer; however, her story is interesting nonetheless. We wish we could find more on her, but the information out there is limited. The book "Death Benefit" was more of a narrative of the lawyer who got involved in Deanna Wild's death and uncovered the truth about her murder. The other victims' information was much harder to find and background information on McGinnis as well.

This photo taken by Virginia Rearden of her husband, BJ McGinnis, and her son's girlfriend, Deana Wild . Shortly after this photo was taken, Deana was killed in a 200 foot fall off the side of a cliff. The three were hiking in Big Sur, CA, and the couple claimed that Deana stumbled and fell. Five years later Virginia was convicted of her murder. Virginia Rearden's houses had caught fire or burned down no less than 6 times in her life. She collected insurance money in several of those fires. Virginia Rearden and her ex-husband were charged with first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit murder, forgery and insurance fraud; McGinnis later died of AIDS before he faced his day in court. Joe Coates, serving time on an unrelated conviction, was not indicted, but he tried to help his mother on the witness stand. Virginia Rearden McGinnis had a long string of arrests for petty crimes and was suspected of a number of arson fires starting at the age of 18. She was suspected of three murders. In 1972, daughter Cynthia Coates (3), child of the second of four marriages, whose body was found by Virginia, then 35, had supposedly hanged herself with bailing wire by accident from an 8-foot high rafter in a barn. Virginia cut down the body before anybody could examine the scene. Cynthia's life insurance paid off on schedule. This movie was based on the 1987 murder of Deana Hubbard Wild by Virginia Rearden McGinnis and her husband, Joe, in Big Sur, California. Wild died one day after Rearden made the first payment on a \$35,000.00 life insurance policy on Wild in which Rearden was the beneficiary. 3 of 3 found this interesting Interesting? Yes.