

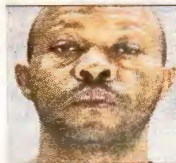
Fake carer charged with suffocating 12 elderly women

Jacqui Goddard Miami

A grandmother aged 91 whose family thought she had died in her sleep has been identified as the victim of an alleged serial killer who targeted elderly women in Texas.

Prosecutors said that Billy Chemirmir, 46, posed as a healthcare worker or maintenance man to trick his way into women's homes — some of them in gated assisted facilities — then suffocated them with pillows and stole jewelry. His victims ranged from 76 to 94.

He was arrested last year for one murder and two attempted murders but after police trawled records of at least



Billy Chemirmir is alleged to have smothered victims with pillows

750 other women who died alone in their homes with causes registered as “natural” or “unexplained”, he has now been charged with 11 more killings.

“That was heart-wrenching, to find out that she had not died peacefully ... heartbreaking,” said Loren Adair, whose mother, Phyllis Payne, 91, was found dead in her bed at a Dallas retirement complex in April 2016 in a case initially certified as from natural causes.

Other families agreed to have their relatives' remains exhumed to assist the investigation. Two women survivors told of their ordeals. One, also 91, was told: “Go to bed and don't fight me,”

after her attacker forced his way into her home in Frisco, near Dallas. She complied, and the man pushed a pillow over her face, causing her to black out. She was saved by paramedics.

Mr Chemirmir was charged in March last year with murdering Lu Thi Harris, 81, at her home in Plano, and attempting to kill two others. Gregory Rushin, the local police chief, stated at the time that a “very large and complex investigation” was being opened into the possibility of there being more victims.

Several families are now suing the retirement homes where their loved ones lived, accusing them of poor security. “They were trying to take care of their parents in a safe place and they wound up being brutally murdered,” Richard Arnold, a lawyer for one of the families, told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

Ellen House, whose mother, Norma French, 81, was murdered in Dallas in 2016, said of the killer: “He's a very bad very evil man.”

In a separate case in Louisiana, police said that a serial killer serving a life sentence for murdering three women may now be linked to many more.

Samuel Little, 78, who was convicted of three California murders in 2014, has since confessed to 90 others, producing portraits last year of women he claimed to have killed.

The FBI has been trying to match his confessions to cold cases spanning four decades, and believe he could well be the most prolific serial killer in US history. Dana Coleman, the police chief of Houma, Louisiana, believes it could be even more than the 90 deaths.

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