OVERKILL

**Mass Murder and
Serial Killing Exposed**

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To our families:

Sue Ann, David, Jennifer, and Alexander
Flea, Michael, Bonnie, and Andrea

Preface

Previous decades hold memories that many would like to forget. The 1960s had the Vietnam war and a number of shocking political assassinations, the 1970s Watergate and the Iranian hostage takeover. But since 1980, the tragedies etched into our national consciousness have been of a different kind.

What would be in a time capsule to record the most painful events since 1980? We fought a war in the Persian Gulf, but it lasted only a few weeks—extremely brief by any standard of warfare. The invasion of Grenada was even shorter, measured in days and hours, not even weeks. America suffered through two recessions in which millions of workers lost their jobs, but in each case, the economy rebounded with unanticipated strength. Fortunately, there was no Great Depression. Hurricanes Hugo and Andrew, the floods through the Midwest, and the major earthquakes in San Francisco and Los Angeles killed dozens of Americans, but these catastrophes were overshadowed in their devastation by much more powerful *unnatural* disasters—those of human origin.

In 1982, for example, seven innocent people were poisoned to death by cyanide-laced Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules, the first of many product tamperings. The Tylenol tragedy permanently changed our confidence in mass-produced consumer products, not to mention packaging strategies. In 1984, McDonald's, a symbol of modern America, was stained with the blood of 21 children, massacred at the hands of an enraged gunman. This single event significantly altered our sense of security in public places. In 1988, snipers declared open season on schoolchildren around the country. As a result, not only did school officials begin barricading their classrooms from intruders, but several cities passed ordinances prohibiting the sale of assault rifles. The gruesome discovery in 1991 of Jeffrey Dahmer's cannibalistic killings—his apartment cluttered with human body parts—pushed our level of cynicism to a new limit. Among those who have paid close attention to the darker side of human nature, many will remember the years since 1980 as the age of mass murder and serial killing—the age of over-kill.

A decade ago, when we published *Mass Murder: America's Growing Menace*, we could not have anticipated the full extent to which multiple murder would invade our lives. We expected that mass and serial killing would be a "growing menace," but not that these hideous and frightening crimes would become part of our popular culture as well as of our everyday concerns for safety.

The purpose of this book is to describe and explain the most infamous and deadly murders of our time. We are not, however, just chronicling new cases. It should be clear throughout the book that we have revised and refined our thinking and knowledge about the sadistic acts of serial killers and the vengeful minds of mass murderers. Not only

do we explain the specific motives and rationale for dozens of cases of multiple homicide, but we also discuss the reasons underlying the growth of these hideous crimes.

In researching this book, we benefited from the help of police investigators, attorneys, reporters, victim's families, even multiple murderers and their families. So many people were involved in this process that we could not possibly name them all and will not attempt to identify some for fear of slighting others. We would, however, like to thank specifically those of our Northeastern University students who assisted us through their kindness and interest in our work: Chris Baker, Julie Bonsteel, Panagiota Diles, Kevin Donahue, Jen Klein, Mark McHugh, Julie Mulholland, and Jeff Ruck. We also thank our wives and families, who complained only once in a while when we had to write or travel. We apologize to them for all the time away, but then at least they didn't have to listen to us talk about this gruesome topic.

JAMES ALAN FOX
JACK LEVIN

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