



## **Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders**

*Joe Sharkey*

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# Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders

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**Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders** Joe Sharkey  
**The true account of the man who murdered his family in their New Jersey mansion—and eluded a nationwide manhunt for eighteen years.**

Until 1971, life was good for mild-mannered accountant John List. He was vice president of a Jersey City bank and had moved his mother, wife, and three teenage children into a nineteen-room home in Westfield, New Jersey. But all that changed when he lost his job. Raised by his Lutheran father to believe success meant being a good provider, List saw himself as an utter failure. Straining under financial burdens, the stress of hiding his unemployment, as well as the fear that the free-spirited 1970s would corrupt the souls of his children, List came to a shattering conclusion.

“It was my belief that if you kill yourself, you won’t go to heaven,” List told Connie Chung in a television interview. “So eventually I got to the point where I felt that I could kill them. Hopefully they would go to heaven, and then maybe I would have a chance to later confess my sins to God and get forgiveness.”

List methodically shot his entire family in their home, managing to conceal the deaths for weeks with a carefully orchestrated plan of deception. Then he vanished and started over as Robert P. Clark. Chronicling List’s life before and after the grisly crime, *Death Sentence* exposes the truth about the accountant-turned-killer, including his revealing letter to his pastor, his years as a fugitive with a new name—and a new wife—his eventual arrest, and the details of his high-profile trial.

*Revised and updated, this ebook also includes photos.*

## Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders Details

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## **From Reader Review Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders for online ebook**

### **Tammy says**

This book was great, very informative. I have seen many shows and documentaries about John List but this book had a lot of background information that I never knew. I really liked it.

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### **♥ Marlene♥ says**

Another book I bought at amazon UK. This one though I bought from a secondhand seller. Looked interesting.

Have already read 68 pages a few days ago and liked the writing so I hope this is going to be another good true crime read.

I really need something I can get lost in to take my mind of my sister and then it works best for me to go to my old favourite genre.

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My sister passed away yesterday and I have not read much but I was so glad I had this book cause it helped me to relax.

I highly recommend this book. Not just to true crime fans but to everyone really.

This is good writing and the story is so interesting you cannot put this book down.

To me John List was a control freak who when he did not get his way with his children decided to kill them

There was one question left which was not answered in the book.

Why did this idiot think that a few days before he killed them he told them he would kill them and they had to prepare for it?

To me that made it even more cruel.

If you get buy a copy secondhand, BUY IT!!!

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### **Terri Riffle says**

#### **Good telling of a bad tale**

If you like true crime, this is a good book. It's an interesting look, without glorifying the violence, at the

events that destroyed this beautiful family.

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### **Ronnie Cramer says**

I've read many accounts of the John List murders, but this is by far the best. It's well-written and loaded with detail. Updated from the original 1990 publication.

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### **Jessica Janson says**

Thank you to NetGalley and WildBlue press for the digital copy of Death Sentence in exchange for my honest review.

This is a true crime story of a man named John List "a family annihilator" who murders his family and follows his life after he creates a new identity and evades authorities for decades.

I first became interested in this crime after hearing it featured on the podcast My Favorite Murder. The story is thoroughly researched and well written. Sharkey displays an interesting insight into List's character and personality, providing a chilling look at a sociopath's slanted thought processes and reasoning. List's arrogance and lack of remorse is truly staggering. While the majority of the book is very detailed, the end felt rushed and cut short. I recommend this book to any fans of true crime.

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### **Susan says**

Another true life murder story which I was aware of at the time because the daughter was three weeks younger than me. Thank God my parents didn't snap in our teenage years is all I have to say. And his kids were not even that bad! He was just a religious lunatic.

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### **John says**

"pride is the worst sin" C.S. Lewis

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### **E. says**

This book was well researched & very well written. The story of John List is one of a cold man's quest to rid himself from the burden of his family & start life over again, unencumbered. In November of 1971, in Westfield, NJ, he murdered his wife, elderly mother, & 3 children then simply drove away, living a life incognito until his identity was discovered in 1989 by a new tool in the field of forensics. I really looked forward to reading this book & found it hard to put down. The story was told through memories of people who knew John List & those who knew him as Bob Clark during his 18 years on the run. I recommend it to anyone interested in true crime!

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## **Michelle says**

In 1971, John List arrived at the Westfield N.J. police station to pick-up his wayward teen daughter for violating curfew, in the early morning hours, wearing a formal business suit (neighbors also observed him doing yard work in his suit/tie). This would be the only outward clue that there was something seriously wrong with John Emil List (1925-2008). In “Death Sentence: The Inside Story of the John List Murders” author Joe Sharkey fully researched and interviewed scores of people affiliated with the case, providing a disturbing, shocking, and spine-chilling portrayal of one of the worst mass murderers in New Jersey’s state history.

John List could not have been a spiritual man, this would have required a heart and conscience he obviously didn’t have. Though very religious, he faithfully attended church services and read the Bible regularly. Always well dressed, neat, orderly, and polite he appeared so low key and ordinary that those who encountered him could barely remember him. However, List simmered with an internal uncontrollable rage and anger at the Vietnam protests, the rapidly changing times that led to open expression of free love--the “hippie culture” List perceived as immoral.

After List drove his daughter home from the police station he shouted at his wife and daughter that they were both “sluts”. Following this incident, List purchased a gun for “home protection”. There were several other things that caused List to unravel: his wife was mentally ill, he had lost his job, he was stealing money from his mother’s bank account, being unable to maintain the standard of living at “Breeze Knoll”—the mansion he and his wife Helen had bought in 1965, when he was vice-president of a local bank.

After List committed his methodical atrocious carnage on November 09, 1971, he wrote confessional letters and left further instructions, cleaned the crime scene and himself up, prepared his dinner and washed his dishes after eating. Before leaving, he had stopped mail and newspaper delivery, turned the heat down, and left loud classical music playing on the intercom. The horrified police arrived at the crime scene 28 days later.

By that time, List had relocated to Denver, Colorado and assumed his new life and name of Bob P. Clark, deducting several years off his age, working at first as a short order cook, pleased that his skills cooking for his family, had been beneficial to begin his new life. List remained at large for 18 years, until tips were reported to America’s Most Wanted and he was captured.

On April 12, 1990, List received 5 consecutive life terms for first degree murder, guaranteeing he would never be eligible for parole. Superior Court Judge William L. Wertheimer observed: “The name John Emil List will be eternally synonymous with concepts of selfishness, horror, and evil. John Emil List is without remorse and without honor. After 18 years, 5 months, 22 days, it is now time for the voices of Helen (1924-71), Alma, Patricia M. (1955-71), Frederick M. (1958-71), and John F. List (1956-71), to rise from the grave.” ~ Special thanks to NetGalley for the ARC for the purpose of review. Reissue date of January 17, 2017.

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## **Karen Bullock says**

### **Interesting**

This was an interesting read. The historical facts about the List family was extremely informative. John, having been raised with very little affection from male family members & the over abundance of protectiveness from his mother may have done more damage than people would think.

Mix anti-social personality with super religious behavior with a strict regimen was not going to follow the process of changing times very well.

Patty, was a flirty child who went out of her way to be extreme in the eyes of John List.

This book poses several "what if" scenarios. What if John was raised differently, would he have still killed his family? What if he just realized earlier on that living outside your budget, should have been an eye opener? Who was he really trying to impress with his faux wealth?

No one will ever know.

The background was in depth & informative & because it was my home state, Michigan, it made it that more interesting.

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### **Crystal Toller says**

#### **John List**

This book details the story of John List who killed his family in New Jersey in 1971 and then went on to another life. The book details his life after the murders in 1971 until he was arrested in the late 1980s and the trial. This was an interesting book about a true crime that has fascinated me. I highly recommend this book.

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### **Netanella says**

"Death Sentence" is the true crime story of infamous mass murderer John List, who killed his three children, wife, and mother in their home in 1971 New Jersey, and then set off to create a new life for himself for nineteen years.

Raised in a strict German Lutheran household with God and frugality as key indicators of success, John's upbringing was sad but not tragic. Tragedy, however, was what happened to his poor family when he chose to kill them rather than simply walk away from the failure that his life had become.

I was inspired to read this book after watching the *Forensic Files* episode that featured this story. I couldn't understand how a seemingly mild mannered person could do something so horrific. Definitely brings Norman Bates to mind.

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### **Jane Thompson says**

#### **True Crime**

The infamous story of the murders of the family of John List. While the story is well-known, the author manages to offer new detail to the story. However, he is unable to offer a complete explanation of why the murders occurred.

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## Karen says

### DEATH SENTENCE BY JOE SHARKEY

I am amazed AGAIN, how talented of a writer Joe Sharkey is and how captivated I was reading Death Sentence. Anne Rule used to be my favorite writer of true crime until a month ago I discovered Joe Sharkey on Net Galley. The first book I read by this author was " Above Suspicion" which is my favorite true crime book that I have ever read. This book "Death Sentence" has tied the score in it's ability to describe the psychological nuances of both of the victim's and the pathology of the murderer's character. There is absolutely no way that I believe there is an excuse for murder, taking the life of another. I am squeamish to watch on television anything sadistic or gratuitous violence. I cannot watch or read of torture or abuse of anybody. When television commercial's show advertisements of sending money to help rescue an abused cat or dog, I always contribute money to help rescue the abused. There is something about Joe Sharkey's writing that brings out the sympathy or empathy of caring about each and every person he describes in his well researched stories of humanity. With the exception of Charles Stuart, who premeditated the murder of his pregnant wife Carol. That was called " Deadly Greed" by Joe Sharkey. I didn't feel an ounce of empathy for Charles Stuart. Is it because I followed the story and believed in the deceit and lies that Stuart shocked all of my colleagues and myself? Was it because I worked and lived in Boston and gave birth in the same hospital where poor Carol Stuart was brought to dead? Was it because I cared about and was appalled that he fooled me for six weeks that he was also attacked? There is something and I cannot put my finger on it about Joe Sharkey's in depth characterizations of the victims and the murderer. In" Above Suspicion" I didn't want the bereft FBI agent to volunteer his confession.

As I am writing this review, I am beginning to think that Joe Sharkey writes about the perpetrator's of these murders with such acuity and if possible with humanity. His background as a writer includes working for The New York Times for nineteen years. He also served as an assistant editor of The Wall Street Journal. He is currently an adjunct professor of journalism at the University of Arizona. He and his wife live in Tucson. I am a fan now, after reading three books from Net Galley and a kind publisher from Open Road Integrated Media. A very kind person from Open Road Publishing sent me an email reminding me to make sure I posted a review of my first experience of reading Joe Sharkey's "Above Suspicion." I wrote the person back with links to both Good Reads and Amazon of my review. I received a second email thanking me (the pleasure was all mine) with a telephone contact where I left a message telling how much I loved "Above Suspicion." I received a response email from this generous person from Open Road with direct links to "Deadly Greed" and "Death Sentence" plus some more books that are fiction from other authors. I am grateful for that person's kindness and generosity.

I don't want to admit it, but I found myself disappointed when the FBI caught the perpetrator's of the murder in "Above Suspicion" and the mass murderer in "Death Sentence." As I said I cannot watch movies or television where there is murder or mayhem. I couldn't read the popular "All the Pretty Girls." I couldn't read "Difficult Women" which received mostly five and four star reviews on Good Reads. My complaints were "Too dark, dismal, bleak, rot." In this book called "Death Sentence," I despised John E List for killing his mother, his wife, his daughter, and his two sons.'

Parts Two and Parts Three of the book describe a sweet, easy to get along with Robert P Clark, the new identity John List had reinvented for himself. The Bob Clark that is described never hurt a soul for the next eighteen years of his life living peacefully and cooperative with employers, friends, and his new wife. But, still there was something about him that was flat and emotionless. A few people could feel a vibe that

something was off about sweet, loving Bob. The book describes his massacre of his family to be the second worse crime in New Jersey's history. Second, to the Charles Lindbergh kidnapping. But that couldn't be true because I remembered "The Iceman" who killed over one hundred people for the New York five mafioso crime families.

I highly recommend this book "Death Sentence" and "Above Suspicion" to readers who like true crime that is written tastefully if that word isn't an oxymoron.

Thank You to Net Galley, Joe Sharkey and Open Road Publishing for providing me with my copy for an honest and fair review.

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### **Suzanne says**

Great read

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