

The Crime Lab Expert Series

The Ordinary Serial Killer?

Summarised by:
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Who Is Rex Heuermann?

Rex Andrew Heuermann (born September 13, 1963) is a New York-based architect from Massapequa Park, Long Island. Before his arrest, he lived a relatively ordinary life: married (27 years), two adult children, and a career commuting into Manhattan.

The Allegations: Gilgo Beach Murders

Background of the Case

The Gilgo Beach murders refer to a series of bodies discovered along Long Island's south shore, especially near Gilgo Beach, over many years. Many of the victims were sex workers, and their deaths remained unsolved for over a decade.

Charges Against Heuermann

- In July 2023, Heuermann was arrested and charged with the murders of Melissa Barthelemy, Megan Waterman, and Amber Costello, all found in December 2010.
- In January 2024, he was additionally charged in the death of Maureen Brainard-Barnes, making her the fourth in what's often called the "Gilgo Four."
- Further charges followed: in mid-2024, he was indicted for Jessica Taylor and Sandra Costilla, and later for Valerie Mack.
- In total, he now faces seven murder charges.

He has pleaded **not guilty** to all counts.

Key Evidence Against Him

Some of the most compelling evidence involves DNA:

- Investigators recovered hairs from several victims.
- To connect those hairs to Heuermann, they used whole-genome sequencing — a relatively advanced technique for extracting nuclear DNA from rootless hairs. This is a major breakthrough for forensic science, not only for this case, but other cold cases worldwide
- A particularly dramatic moment: law enforcement put Heuermann under human surveillance, and when he discarded a pizza box (from his architecture firm), they recovered the crust. The DNA from that crust matched the DNA from the hairs on a victim.
- A judge has ruled that this nuclear DNA evidence is admissible in trial. This has been a key pre-trial issue which has taken months to resolve. The defence were trying to have the DNA ruled out.

Legal Developments

A judge (State Supreme Court Justice Timothy Mazzei) has ordered that all seven murder cases will be tried together — instead of separately

A pretrial motions deadline has been set (January 13, 2026).

Personal Life & Character

- Heuermann's estranged wife, Asa Ellerup, has publicly said she is reserving judgment and continues to visit him in jail. Whilst his daughter is saying, "he probably did it"
- According to sources, some who knew him described him as "weird" and a "big talker."
- A friend who visited him in prison claimed Heuermann has "shown no remorse" and suggested he might have a personality with one side calm, the other "dark" and "sadistic." If this is true I would like to see where he fits on the *Hare Scale*
- Another former employee said that Heuermann once told her he could "find you anywhere ... even in the middle of the ocean," a comment she said he later proved by leaving a note while she was on a cruise. If this is true, it underlines obsessive and stalking behaviour

Why This Case Matters

1. Cold Case Breakthrough

These murders had haunted Long Island for years, with many victims unidentified or never linked to a suspect. Heuermann's arrest and the forensic evidence represent a major breakthrough.

2. Forensic Innovation

The use of whole-genome sequencing on rootless hairs and its acceptance by the court could mark a turning point in how cold cases are prosecuted and have worldwide implications

3. Societal Impact

Many of the victims were sex workers. Their cases highlight the vulnerability of marginalised communities and the challenges law enforcement faces in solving crimes involving them.

Current Status

- As of today, Heuermann is in custody, held at the Riverhead Correctional Facility in Suffolk County.
- The trial is moving forward, with pretrial motions underway.
- Media and public attention remain high — the case has been covered in deep-dive documentaries and true crime shows.

Questions Still Unanswered

- Could there be more victims linked to Heuermann that haven't yet been charged?
- Are there other forensic or digital clues (phones, location data) that might lead to additional links?
- What defence strategies will Heuermann's legal team use, especially around the DNA evidence?
- How will the trial handle so many separate murder counts together — will jurors be able to fairly assess each?

Conclusion

As some of you are aware, I pursued a cold case serial killing for 30 years and know what the investigators have been through. See ITV's **Playboy Bunny Club Murders** (ITV Catch up)

Rex Heuermann's case is one of the most high-profile developments in the Gilgo Beach murders saga. From a seemingly ordinary architect to a suspect in a chilling serial killing case, his story raises powerful issues about forensic science, justice, and the value society places on vulnerable lives. Whether he's ultimately convicted or acquitted, this case will likely shape how similar cold cases are prosecuted in the future. From a psychologist's point, it goes some way to indicating the myth that all serial killers were abused etc OR there was some trigger in their past which stimulated their offender behaviour

This trial ,will not only be a media feeding frenzy, but will also add to the admissibility of fresh DNA methods. It will also be of extreme value to psychologists and criminologists.

Steve Gaskin

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