

LAST MEALS

**THE FINAL SUPPERS OF
SERIAL KILLERS
AND MURDERERS**



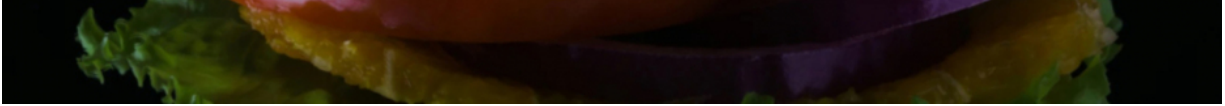
DYLAN FROST

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Dylan Frost

Last Meals - The Final Suppers of Serial Killers & Murderers

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INTRODUCTION

It is a longstanding custom in the United States that a condemned prisoner about to be executed is granted a last meal. They can, within reason, choose one last special meal to eat before they are put to death. There are variations but this custom still prevails today. The last meal is by no means exclusive to the United States. In parts of Asia condemned prisoners are still granted a last meal. In Europe it was more common though for a prisoner to be offered alcohol or perhaps a cigar before their execution rather than food. Alcohol and tobacco are not permitted as part of a last request if someone is executed in the United States today. They can have food though. Burgers, pizzas, lobster, cherry pie, whatever they want (dependent on which jurisdiction they reside in).

Most of the famous last meal requests in modern true crime reside in the United States because the other western nations have long since abolished the death penalty. It is not quite true that condemned prisoners can order whatever they want as a last meal. Sometimes they are limited to what the prison chefs can actually find or cook themselves. In Florida, the last meal is not allowed to exceed \$40 and must be procured locally. In some states the budget for the last meal is even lower.

Generally though, the request of a condemned prisoner will usually be catered to as long as it isn't too elaborate or rare - although in some cases some very elaborate last meal requests have been granted. It is unavoidably fascinating of course to see what famous killers choose as their last ever meal on planet Earth. In 2012, the journal *Appetite* published a study of last meals by condemned prisoners in

the United States from 2002 to 2006. The average last meal came in at 2,756 calories but there were cases of a last meal clocking in at 7,000 calories. As we shall see, one last meal request clocked in at 30,000 calories.

70% of last meal requests ordered fried food. The most popular beverage (alcohol is not usually permitted) was Coca-Cola. 17% of last meal requests asked for Coca-Cola to drink. The most popular last meal request overall in the United States is cheeseburger and fries. The most popular dessert request is ice cream. 24% of last meal requests involve burgers and 22% of last meals contain steak. Vegetarian meals are very rare. It seems there aren't too many vegetarians on death row. As we shall see, among the things which are surprisingly popular when it comes to death row last meals are baked potatoes and fish. A large number of famous killers have requested seafood for their last meal.

Prisons in Texas abandoned the tradition of the last meal for condemned prisoners in 2011. There are a couple of reasons why they did this. The first was the fact that there were numerous documented cases of prisoners receiving a last meal but then being reprieved at the last minute. Prisons clearly got a bit tired of laying on last meals for prisoners who (thanks to appeals) were then not even executed anyway.

Another reason why lawmakers and prison officials in Texas dropped the last meal request was the convicted murderer Lawrence Russell Brewer. For his last meal in a Texas prison, the condemned Brewer requested chicken-fried steaks, one pound of barbecued meat, a triple-patty bacon cheeseburger, a meat-lover's pizza, three fajitas, an omelet, a bowl of okra, one pint of Blue Bell Ice Cream, some peanut-butter fudge with crushed peanuts and three

root beers. However, when this feast finally arrived Brewer never actually ate a single bite of it. As you might imagine, the prison staff were pretty annoyed about that.

So if you are executed in Texas today you must choose something from the standard prison menu. Strange but true - most last meals are cooked by other inmates who work in the prison kitchen. Last meals are usually covered and hidden from other inmates once they are cooked. In the book that follows we will offer an eclectic mix of famous (and not so famous) criminals from history and reveal what they had for their last ever meal. So, make sure you aren't too hungry when you read this book, and prepare to enter the disturbing but darkly fascinating world of killers and food...

BURTON ABBOTT

CRIMES?

Burton Abbott was born in Oregon in 1928. In 1955 he was convicted of the rape and murder of 14-year-old Stephanie Bryan and sentenced to death. Abbott was an accounting student at the University of California at Berkeley around the time when Stephanie went missing. The police were alerted to Abbott when his wife Georgia found items in the house (a purse and some identification) which belonged to Stephanie Bryan. Georgia reported this to the police and Burton Abbott suddenly became the prime suspect in the worrying disappearance of this local girl.

Burton Abbott's mother had actually been the first person to find the missing girl's purse in the house but she had declined to report this discovery to the authorities. She simply refused to believe that her son could have any involvement in this awful case. The senior Mrs Abbott was another in the long line of true crime mothers who refuse to accept that their boy could have done anything wrong.

The most famous example of this phenomenon is Ted Bundy's mother Louise. Louise steadfastly refused to accept that her lovely kind son Ted was a serial killer. "Ted Bundy does not go around killing women and little children!" she told The News Tribune in 1980 after Bundy was convicted for the Florida killings. "And I know this, too, that our never-ending faith in Ted - our faith that he is innocent - has never wavered. And it never will." On his last night alive, Ted Bundy called his mother twice. She told him he was still her son whatever happened.

Burton Abbott's already troubled situation became even more precarious and serious when a pair of spectacles and some underwear belonging to Stephanie Bryan were found in his basement. These discoveries were obviously something of a torpedo hole for Abbott when it came to defending himself. The suspicious connection between Burton Abbott and the missing girl had come to light about three months after her disappearance. The police found Burton Abbott to be unconvincing and shifty when they subjected him to interviews. His evidence often contradicted itself and wasn't very consistent. Abbott appeared to the police to be offering a confusing blizzard of lies in the vague hope that one of them might somehow work and get him off the hook.

Only days later, the body of Stephanie Bryan was found in a shallow grave near Abbott's cabin. After this tragic discovery he was charged with the rape and murder of the girl. The general theory is that Abbott tried to force himself on the girl sexually and, to ensure her silence, ended up killing her when she struggled, cried out, and fought back. Given the decomposition of the body, the pathologist could not officially determine though if a sexual assault had actually taken place.

Despite all the evidence weighted against him, Burton Abbott continued to protest his innocence. As for the items belonging to Stephanie Bryan found in his house, Abbott argued that his house had been used as a polling station in the past so any number of people could have left the victim's possessions there. His protests were to no avail and despite his spirited performance in court he was sentenced to death. On March the 15th, 1957, a one-hour stay of execution from the governor of California was communicated to the prison fractionally too late to halt his

execution. By this time, Burton Abbott was already in the gas chamber.

LAST MEAL?

Burton Abbott kept it fairly simple when it came to his last meal - certainly in comparison to the calorie laden junk food binges which would become common sights on death row in the decades to come. He began with French fried butterfly jumbo prawns with cocktail sauce. As we shall see in the book that follows, seafood dishes seem to be quite common when it comes to condemned prisoners facing execution in the United States. Abbott then had some Ravioli. Ravioli, as I'm sure the reader will already know, are a type of pasta comprising a filling enveloped in thin pasta dough and usually served in broth or with a sauce. So it was pasta and fish for Abbott's main courses.

Abbott's main course was very light as far as last meals go as the only other thing he had was a salad in a simple dressing. The salad he ate wasn't very fancy at all and consisted mostly of lettuce. Burton Abbott was clearly a man of simplicity when it came to food. For his dessert, Abbott had some chocolate cake. This was Abbott's one junk food (if chocolate cake qualifies as junk food - you'd probably describe it as a guilty pleasure) indulgence when it came to his final supper. Chocolate cake seems to be quite popular when it comes to last meals on death row. Studies indicate that cake is third after ice cream and pie when it comes to last meal desserts. Abbott also requested and received a pack of Salem cigarettes to enjoy after his meal.

CHARLES ALBANESE

CRIMES?

Charles Albanese was born in Chicago in 1947. He was something of an idle young man but had a stint as a car salesman. Albanese desired most of all to make lots of money without having to work too hard for that money. Join the club Charlie! In that he was a lot like the rest of us. The difference being that Charlie was fully prepared to kill for that money. Most of us want to be rich but we draw the line at actually harming anyone to achieve this. That's the key difference between killers and ordinary people. Killers have a lump of coal where their heart is supposed to be. You could accurately describe Albanese as a financially motivated killer. Radford University's research suggested that 31% of killers murder for financial reasons.

Albanese was another in the long line of true crime poisoners. True crime history is positively (if you'll pardon the pun) laced with murderous poisoners. The victims of Albanese were all relatives of either him or his wife. He killed his wife's mother and grandmother with arsenic in an attempt to shift the family inheritance down a few generations. Charlie would often visit these relatives in a retirement community and bring them gifts and food. They probably thought he was a really nice man. Little did they know he planned to poison them. He was successful in this too and soon had his mother and grandmother in law shuffling off this mortal coil by way of arsenic laced grub.

Charlie's wife (who wasn't part of the poisoning scheme and had no idea her husband was a murderous criminal) was awarded \$150,000 as a result of these murders. The

weird thing by this point is that Charlie's father had a Die Casting company and Charles Albanese worked there and earned a decent salary. It isn't as if Charlie was destitute or starved of money. He had a pretty decent standard of living working for his father. Most people would have been perfectly content with the money he earned. It was pure greed which made him also murder relatives for the inheritance. Charlie always wanted more money. They say money is the root of all evil and that was certainly the case with Charles Albanese.

In 1980, the same year as his previous murders, Albanese had a falling out with his father and was demoted in the family company. Charlie seemed to take this demotion surprisingly well though and even began bringing his father cookies as a gift whenever he saw him. No prizes for guessing what was in these biscuits. Charlie's father was poisoned to death by cookies and as a consequence Charles Albanese inherited \$250,000 and complete control over the family business. Charlie now had everything he had ever desired. He was awash with money and the family business was his and his alone. What could possibly go wrong? Well, just about everything as it turned out.

The trouble began for Charlie when the McHenry County Coroner, Alvin Querhammer, found arsenic in the body of Charlie's father and so a criminal investigation was launched. The bodies of the two other recently deceased relatives were examined and also found to contain arsenic. The police then discovered that Charles Albanese had been sold some arsenic. The game was nearly up for Charlie. A noose of damning evidence was being drawn ever tighter around his neck.

At this time, Charlie was set to go away with his wife and mother on a trip. The police strongly suspected that Charlie

planned to poison his mother on this trip for the last of the family inheritance money. Given what he'd already done, Charles Albanese was probably more than capable of killing his dear old mother. If he had killed his mother then - in terms of statistics - this would have put Albanese in serial killer territory. When the police saw how much money Charles Albanese and his wife had made from the deaths of the three deceased relatives it became rather obvious that he must have been the killer. The evidence against him was overwhelming.

Charles Albanese was tried in two separate jurisdictions and executed via lethal injection at the Stateville Correctional Center in 1995 (as true crime buffs will be well aware, once someone is sentenced to death in the United States it can take years and decades before the execution actually takes place). Albanese never expressed any remorse for his crimes and displayed no emotion in court. He was simply a very cold and ruthless man.

LAST MEAL?

For his last meal, Charles Albanese requested a steak and baked potato. Steaks are very common as a last meal request on death row - which probably isn't surprising. More surprising is the fact that baked potatoes are somewhat popular on death row too it seems - which is slightly strange as you don't tend to think of them as the most exciting food in the world. Would you order a baked potato as part of your last ever meal? I don't think I would.

As a side dish for his steak and potato, Albanese had some garlic bread. Garlic bread consists of bread (usually a baguette or sour dough like a ciabatta), topped with garlic and olive oil or butter and may include additional herbs,

such as oregano or chives. Garlic bread is an Italian comfort food. It is often eaten with pasta or pizza.

For his dessert, Charles Albanese had some pistachio ice cream. This was a slightly atypical selection because when it comes to ice cream many death row prisoners go for chocolate or vanilla. Charles Albanese washed his meal down with Coca-Cola (which is VERY popular on death row) and also had a cup of coffee.



Pizza

STEPHEN ANDERSON

CRIMES?

Stephen Wayne Anderson was born in Utah in 1953. Anderson, a wrong 'un from an early age and always destined for trouble, served some time in prison in the early 1970s for burglary. Most serial killers have criminal convictions from the time before they killed. Sexual offences and robbery are the most common early offences for serial killers. Many serial killers begin their life of crime as thieves and rapists. Anderson inevitably ended up back in prison again - where he killed a fellow inmate in 1977.

While he was in prison, Anderson confessed to several previous murders which he seemed to suggest were contract killings. He was sentenced to death but actually escaped and started working as a drug dealer. During these duties he is believed to have murdered again in drug dealing related activity. In 1980, Anderson then robbed the house of 81-year-old Elizabeth Lyman in Bloomington. When she woke up during the robbery he shot her in the face with a handgun. Stephen Wayne Anderson was a vicious man. He had no qualms whatsoever about killing people - however innocent and vulnerable the victims might be.

Anderson's meagre reward for this senseless murder was \$100. Anderson, who was clearly no rocket scientist, then continued to loiter in the house of Elizabeth Lyman and even prepared himself some food to eat. Hollywood often depicts serial killers as elusive criminal masterminds who are always two steps ahead of the police. The reality is very different. Many serial killers are of average or below average intelligence and not exactly impossible to catch.

Stephen Wayne Anderson was an absolute doddle to catch in the case of this particular murder.

A suspicious and observant neighbour of Elizabeth Lyman (who had obviously noticed that a strange man was wandering around in Elizabeth's house) called the cops and Anderson was swiftly arrested. Anderson was sentenced to death for the second time in 1981 but - as ever - it took many years for the execution to be carried out. On January the 29th, 2002, Anderson was executed by lethal injection at San Quentin State Prison.

The prosecution at the trial had argued that Anderson was so dangerous no one was safe with him INSIDE of prison let alone outside of it. They pointed out that Anderson had once stabbed another inmate while some prisoners were watching a movie together. Stephen Wayne Anderson was one of those criminals who even looked disturbingly evil and crazy in all his mug shots. He definitely isn't someone you would have wanted to meet in real life.

LAST MEAL?

A rather unusual last meal for this ruthless killer. Stephen Wayne Anderson requested two grilled cheese sandwiches. Nothing too strange or unusual about that but he also had some radishes with them. He must be one of the few people in death row history to ask for radishes! Anderson also had a hominy corn mixture. Hominy is made from maize, which is also called field corn. Anderson also asked for some cottage cheese. Not many people would order cottage cheese as their last meal on planet Earth but Anderson did. Cottage cheese is a curdled milk product.

For his dessert, Stephen Wayne Anderson had some peach pie and a pint of chocolate chip ice cream. Peach pie

has been popular in Europe and the United States for many years. It is usually served with cream but ice cream is fine too. Anderson's choice of last meal items was somewhat atypical but the choice of chocolate ice cream was certainly very conventional. Who wouldn't want chocolate ice cream as part of their final meal?

DENNIS BAGWELL

CRIMES?

Dennis Bagwell was born in 1963. In 1995, Bagwell committed a brutal spree killing which resulted in the deaths of five (either blood or step) relatives in Texas. Bagwell was living in a trailer on the grounds of a rural Texas home where his mother Leona McBee lived with a man named Ronald Boone. Also in the house were Boone's daughter Libby Best and his granddaughters Reba Best and Tassy Boone. Their ages were 24, 4, and 14 respectively. Bagwell, who was in his early thirties at the time, was living in the trailer with his girlfriend Victoria Wolford. Bagwell was a petty thief with a cocaine habit to fund. He would sometimes pawn stuff to buy drugs.

One day, Bagwell said to Wolford he was going into the house to borrow some money from his mother. His mother hardly had any money to give him though and this enraged Bagwell. He shortly went back into his mother's house and Wolford soon heard screams. Ronald Boone later arrived back at the house to be greeted by a harrowing scene. Leona McBee and Tassy had been strangled so violently that their necks were broken. It was later established that young Tassy had probably been raped too. Libby had been shot in the head while young Reba had been bludgeoned to death with a hammer. It was basically a bloodbath. Dennis Bagwell had gone crazy and killed a house full of women and kids.

Victoria Wolford later testified against Bagwell. She said that she'd seen him strike his mother with a gun through the house window and also heard terrifying screams. She'd also heard the girls pleading for their lives. You'd imagine that

Wolford had nightmares for life after this tragic and distressing day. Bagwell then came out of the house and got some water and cloths in a futile attempt to clean up the blood and DNA evidence. His plan was to make it look like a home invasion robbery.

Bagwell's attempts to fool the police didn't get very far at all and this was in no small way thanks to the cooperation of Victoria Wolford. She showed the police the spots where Bagwell had taken evidence from the house and dumped it. The police were also able to extract enough forensic evidence to prove that Bagwell was in the house during the murders. They also matched the spent bullets found in the house to a rifle that he owned. It only took a jury three hours of deliberation to return a guilty verdict and another four hours to sentence Bagwell to death.

Victoria Wolford also told the police that Bagwell was responsible for the murder of 63-year-old George Barry in 1995. George Barry was responsible for making the night deposit in a local bar and Wolford had murdered Barry and then stole two moneybags as a consequence of the killing. Bagwell is believed to have killed Barry by crushing his throat with his boot. Bagwell was convicted of this murder in 1997 and got life added to his slate. Not that it made much difference because he was already on death row for his previous murders. Victoria Wolford got immunity from prosecution as a result of all this information she divulged to the police. On February the 17th, 2005, Dennis Bagwell was executed by lethal injection at the Texas State Penitentiary in Huntsville.

LAST MEAL?

Dennis Bagwell had a generous and uncomplicated last meal. He asked for a steak and some fried chicken. He also

had BBQ ribs. Bagwell definitely wasn't a vegetarian, that's for sure. He also had bacon and scrambled eggs with onion. Putting onions or peppers in scrambled eggs is pretty common and gives them a bit of extra zing. That was enough grub to be getting on with but Bagwell wasn't finished yet - not by a long shot. He also had two burgers and some fried potatoes. As a side dish to these courses he had a salad with ranch dressing and some tomatoes. For his dessert, Bagwell had some peach pie. To wash down this last supper, Bagwell had no less than three beverages. He had a glass of milk, iced tea, and - last but not least - a cup of coffee.