

Case Reading

JonBenét Ramsey's Murder

By Gregg McCrary of TruTv

The Crime Scene

It was the day after Christmas, December 26, 1996, at 5:52 in the morning, when JonBenét's mother, Patricia "Patsy" Ramsey, placed a 911 call. Her daughter had been kidnapped, she shouted, and there was a ransom note. In response to questions, she read part of the note and tried to make out who it was from. She insisted she needed help immediately.



Patricia "Patsy" Ramsey

The Boulder police sent over Officer Rick French to the scene at 755 15th Street shortly after 6:00 A.M Patsy Ramsey met him at the door. She was clearly upset, although her husband, John, seemed calmer and more in control. They had another child in the home, nine-year-old Burke, who was still in bed.



JonBenét Ramsey with Brother Burke

According to Patsy, she had gone into JonBenét's second-floor bedroom to wake her and prepare her for a planned trip and found her bed empty. Patsy went down a back staircase to the first floor, and on a lower step she found a three-page note, written in black felt-tip pen on white, lined legal paper and laid out with the pages alongside one another. She picked them up and started to read them, realizing at once it was a note about JonBenét. Directed to her husband, "Mr. Ramsey," the note demanded certain conditions, including that he not call the police and that he prepare to pay \$118,000.

Then a patrol supervisor, Paul Reichenbach, arrived, as did four of the Ramseys' friends. The Whites (friends of the Ramsey's) had seen them the night before in their own home, for a Christmas dinner.



John Ramsey

A crime-scene evidence team was called in and a trace put on the phone line for incoming calls. Reichenbach walked through the house, looking in each room. There were no signs of forced entry, although one friend, Fleet White, went on his own into the basement and did a cursory inspection; he noticed a broken window. John Ramsey said that he'd broken it a few months

before when he'd forgotten his key and had not yet fixed it. More people arrived, including a minister, and Burke was removed to another location.



Basement Window

From the moment the police arrived, the house was not secured. The note had been moved and the Ramseys' friends had been allowed to walk around freely. No scent dog from the K-9 unit was utilized, and several different people touched crucial pieces of evidence.



Outside the Ramsey Home

John Ramsey called his attorney to discuss the ransom money. The deadline for the kidnappers' call came and went without any communication. No one seemed to know quite what to do. During questioning, Patsy seemed to be confused as to whether she had gone to JonBenét's room first or found the note first.

By noon, most of the official personnel had left, except for one detective, Linda Arndt, but seven civilians were in the home. No one had yet really searched the house, so the detective directed John Ramsey to take a friend with him to do so, to see if they could find something that had belonged to the missing child. At 1:00 P.M., he and another man began to go through the house. They started in the basement, spotting a suitcase near the broken window and wondering if an intruder had put it there.



Suitcase Found in Basement

Around 1:20, Ramsey opened the door of a dark room, the so-called wine cellar, and discovered his daughter's body on the floor. She lay on her back, her arms bound over her head with a cord, another cord wrapped around her neck, and her torso wrapped in a white blanket. A piece of black duct tape was over her mouth. Although she was dressed, close by lay her favorite pink nightgown.



Blanket in which body was wrapped.

John Ramsey immediately ripped off the duct tape, removed the blanket, and tried to take off the binding. Then he carried the body of his daughter upstairs. The dead child was laid out and covered with a blanket. She was in a full state of rigor mortis, although there was no expert around to give a proper assessment of its progress. Because of the holiday, the coroner, Dr. John

Meyer, did not arrive for over six hours. At 8:00 that evening, he examined the body and had it moved to the morgue.

The Autopsy



Dr. John Meyer MD

On the morning of December 27, Meyer found chunks of pineapple in JonBenét's upper digestive tract. During the autopsy, Meyer was unable to definitively establish the time of death. He removed a ligature from her right wrist and from around her neck, tightened with the help of a short stick. An abrasion was on her right cheek, and another on the left side of her neck, and others on the right shoulder and left lower leg. A ligature bruise was on her right wrist. There were also dotted pattern injuries to her cheek and torso. A spot of blood was inside her panties and around her vagina. There were petechial hemorrhages on her eyelids, lungs, and neck. In addition, there was a large hemorrhage on the right side of her skull, over an eight-inch fracture and a bruising of the brain.



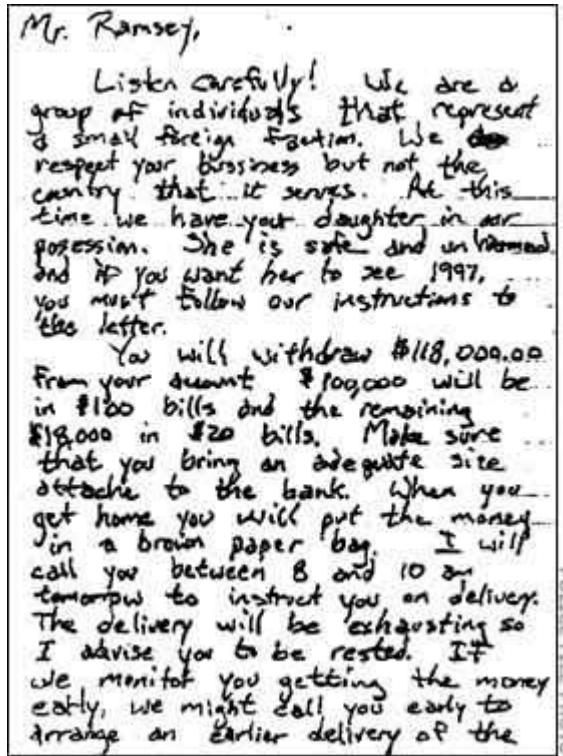
Garrote used to Strangle JonBenét.

The cause of death was determined to be asphyxiation by strangulation, and there had been trauma to the vaginal tissues. She had also suffered blunt force trauma to the head, after strangulation.

Items of Evidence

Physical evidence in this case consisted of:

ransom note and practice note

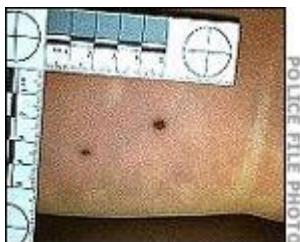


- a bowl of pineapple in kitchen, with Patsy's and Burke's fingerprints
- two tablets of lined white paper from in the house, with a page of "practice" writing
- Sharpie pens that proved to have been used in the writing of the note and practice note, placed back where they belonged in a kitchen container
- handwriting exemplars from John and Patsy Ramsey
- duct tape and bindings from the victim
- a blanket used on victim and nightgown
- the wooden stick used on the garrote, broken off Patsy's paintbrush set in the basement, near the wine cellar
- JonBenét's clothing, including the shirt she'd worn to bed, found in her bathroom, and the shirt she had worn that evening put back on her
- the broken basement window
- a scuff mark on the basement wall below the broken window
- the suitcase placed beneath the broken window
- an open cabinet near the victim's room with a package of diapers pulled out
- the room where the body was discovered
- the autopsy results — injuries to the victim
- foreign DNA under the victim's fingernails and in her underwear
- boot print not matching any family member's footware in wine cellar

- golf club found in the yard, with a blond hair on it

Crime Scene Notes:

- The incident occurred at night and on a holiday
- The incident occurred in the victim's home
- The victim had been covered with a blanket
- The victim had been sexually violated
- The victim was both strangled and bludgeoned, with the bludgeoning occurring afterward
- An unused nightgown lay near the victim's body
- The victim was last seen in her second-floor bedroom in a large, four-story house
- The other members of the family had reported hearing nothing
- The stick used for the garrote had been grabbed from a nearby box, not brought to the scene
- The window was broken (if that was the point of access) but it was covered by a grate.
- No sign of forced entry (even at this broken window), no footprints in melting snow outside
- Pattern injuries on the body resembling those from a stun gun



Injuries on the body resembling those of a stun gun.

- The wine cellar is a dark windowless room in the back corner of the basement. It is actually a room inside another room (the boiler room).
- Seemingly disguised printing for the ransom note
- Note
- Practicing and writing the note inside the home, with materials found there
- Statements given by the parents/the 911 call
- The binding tied around her right wrist was so loose it easily slipped off
- JonBenét's body was wrapped in a white blanket "papoose style" or, as John Ramsey stated, "...as if somebody were tucking her in..." and her favorite pink nightgown was laid next to the body.
- Linda Haufman-Pugh, the Ramseys' housekeeper, believed the white blanket and possibly the pink nightgown had been in a washer or dryer that was built into a cabinet.
- John Ramsey's work bonus that year was \$118,000.
- JonBenét was still dressed in the clothing she had worn the day before, as was Patsy.

The Ransom Note

The ransom note became one of the most crucial pieces of evidence. It proved to have been written on a tablet in the Ramsey home, with a pen from inside the home that was replaced back in its container, with evidence of making a few false starts. Those pages were found on the tablet that Patsy normally used. The note said:

Mr. Ramsey,

"Listen Carefully! We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign faction. We do respect your bussiness but not the country that it serves. At this time we have your daughter in our posession. She is safe and unharmed and if you want her to see 1997, you must follow our instructions to the letter.

"You will withdraw \$118,000.00 from your account. \$100,000 will be in \$100 bills and the remaining \$18,000 in \$20 bills. Make sure that you bring an adequate size attaché to the bank. When you get home you will put the money in a brown paper bag. I will call you between 8 and 10 am tomorrow to instruct you on delivery. The delivery will be exhausting so I advise you to be rested. If we monitor you getting the money early, we might call you early to arrange an earlier delivery of the money and hence a earlier delivery pick-up of your daughter.

"Any deviation of my instructions will result in the immediate execution of your daughter. You will also be denied her remains for proper burial. The two gentlemen watching over your daughter do not particularly like you so I advise you not to provoke them. Speaking to anyone about your situation, such as police, F.B.I., etc., will result in your daughter being beheaded. If we catch you talking to a stray dog, she dies. If you alert bank authorities, she dies. If the money is in any way marked or tampered with, she dies. You will be scanned for electronic devices and if any are found, she dies. You can try to deceive us but be warned that we are familiar with law enforcement countermeasures and tactics. You stand a 99% chance of killing your daughter if you try to outsmart us. Follow our instructions and you stand a 100% chance of getting her back. You and your family are under constant scrutiny as well as the authorities. Don't try to grow a brain John. You are not the only fat cat around so don't think that killing will be difficult. Don't underestimate us John. Use that good southern common sense of yours. It is up to you now John!

"Victory!

"S.B.T.C"