

JONBENET RAMSEY: 25 YEARS ON

'THIS MURDER CAN BE SOLVED'

A NEW BOOK SHEDS LIGHT ON THE CONTROVERSIAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE MURDER OF THE 'PAGEANT PRINCESS', AND THE EVIDENCE THAT COULD UNMASK HER KILLER



POLARIS/AUSTRALSCOPE/GETTY



At first, the Ramseys refused to speak to police, and they hired lawyers, which drew suspicion. The Ramseys later explained they didn't trust the police. Both John and Patsy Ramsey told Paula Woodward they had considered suicide.



Suffering terminal ovarian cancer in 2006, Patsy Ramsey sat down with journalist Paula Woodward for an interview, on the promise her words would not be published until after her death. Patsy was the mother of JonBenét Ramsey, the 6-year-old girl who was brutally killed in her home in Boulder, Colorado, in 1996, in a case that gripped the world.

"I asked her how she was," recalls Woodward. "And Patsy said, 'I don't want to die, but I do want to see JonBenét.'" Woodward then asked her if she had considered if her daughter was murdered by someone that she knew. "Patsy said, 'I don't believe we would know somebody that evil,'" says Woodward. "She said, 'How could anyone be so evil?'"

Twenty-five years after the horrific crime, it's a question that still haunts America. JonBenét was found dead by her father, John, in the basement of the family's red-brick Tudor mansion on the day after Christmas. She had been tortured, strangled and bludgeoned. Authorities determined that she had been sexually assaulted.

In the media frenzy that followed, suspicion fell upon Patsy and John, who along with their son, Burke, 9, were the only people known to be in the home at the time. Initial media reports pointed toward a domestic homicide: no footprints had been found outside in the snow, there was "no sign" of forced entry, and Patsy, a former beauty pageant winner, was "refusing" to provide a DNA sample. Further, videos and pictures of JonBenét performing in child beauty pageants flooded the media and fed into a narrative that the parents were weird.

Now, in her new book *Unsolved: The JonBenét Ramsey Murder 25 Years Later*, Woodward, an Emmy Award-winning investigative journalist, claims that the



The Ramseys were quite well off, with the ransom note specifying an amount very close to John's salary bonus.

Boulder Police Department were leaking false information in the case. She also tells WHO that investigators are "sitting on" evidence that could finally lead to solving the mystery. "Twenty-five years later, Boulder Police continue to try and convict the Ramseys," says Woodward, 74, from her home in Denver, Colorado. "But the evidence isn't there."

Though Boulder Police doesn't comment on its active cases, a previous statement released by the department said it was "committed" to finding justice for JonBenét through a "methodical and comprehensive investigation."

Still, by the police's own admission, the investigation was flawed from the start. Just before 6am on December 26, Patsy called 911 to report her daughter missing after finding a rambling ransom note on a staircase inside the home. Addressed to John, a wealthy computer executive, the note demanded the oddly precise sum of \$US118,000 for the safe return of their daughter. When police officers arrived, they performed a cursory search of the home but didn't find anything.

It wasn't until the afternoon, after the first responders had left, that John found his daughter's body in a basement storeroom. A rope was twisted into her bruised neck and duct tape covered her mouth. An autopsy revealed she had been strangled with a garrotte, had a 20cm fracture on her skull, and had abrasions

on various parts of her body, including her vagina.

"The police were just befuddled," says Woodward, who in 1996 reported on the crime for Denver TV station KUSA-TV. "Boulder Police

did not have a homicide department. They didn't know where to start."

But they did have their suspicions. According to Woodward, who obtained a copy of the police case book, the police focused their investigation on the Ramseys and leaked information to the media. "None of it was true," says Woodward of the media reports of the time. "Police said Patsy didn't give DNA, when she had [given DNA] two days prior to their news conference. And there were eight signs of forced entry in the police report."

As for the lack of an intruder's footprints

TRAGIC TIMELINE



1996
December 26, around 6am: Patsy Ramsey wakes and goes downstairs to find a note demanding ransom for their kidnapped daughter. The bizarre two-and-a-half page note is signed, "Victory! S.B.T.C." Around 1pm: John Ramsey finds his daughter's body in a storage room.



1997
April 18: Boulder District Attorney Alex Hunter publicly identifies John and Patsy Ramsey as the focus of the investigation. May 1: In a rare interview, the Ramseys declare their innocence. "Let me assure you that I did not kill JonBenét," says Patsy.



2006
June 24: Patsy dies after battling ovarian cancer. August 15: Alexis Reich (formerly John Mark Karr), a then-41-year-old American teacher living in Thailand, sensationally confesses to JonBenét's murder. But DNA – and other evidence – rules her out as the killer.



2008
July 9: The Ramseys are exonerated after the discovery of male DNA.



2016
September: A CBS documentary series, *The Case of: JonBenét Ramsey*, falsely alleges the Ramseys then-9-year-old son, Burke, killed his sister in a fit of anger. Burke had never been considered a suspect.



2019
January: After launching a \$750 million defamation lawsuit against CBS and the producers of the show, Burke settles for an undisclosed sum.

"The evidence isn't there"
- WOODWARD

"The leaks were malicious"
- WOODWARD



Burke (left) and JonBenét were close siblings who modelled together.

in the snow, "there was no snow on the south side of the house," says Woodward. "The leaks were malicious, unethical and dishonest."

In fact, there was evidence that pointed toward an intruder killing JonBenét: a partial boot print in the basement, and a suitcase found under a broken window. One investigator believed the suitcase

might have been part of the killer's plan to sneak the body out of the house. "The suitcase contained a pillow sham, a duvet and a Dr Suess book, all belonging to the Ramseys," says Woodward. Such a theory might explain the puzzling ransom note. Curiously, the ransom amount was similar to John's bonus that year (\$US118,117.50), and John agreed with an FBI profiler's theory that he may have been the target of someone who held hatred or jealousy toward him. "John said to the profiler, 'But wouldn't I be able to determine someone who hated me that much?'" says Woodward. "And the profiler said, 'You may not even know him; he could have fantasised about you from a distance.'"

In 2008, two years after Patsy died, the Ramseys were exonerated by Boulder County District Attorney Mary Lacy, on the back of new forensic tests that found the DNA of an unidentified male. "In 1997, they uncovered DNA from under JonBenét's fingernails and underwear," says Woodward. "And in 2008, touch DNA tests were done on several items. DNA was found on the long johns she wore that night, but

not on any other submitted item. It matched the DNA found in 1997."

The police, however, aren't moving on the crucial evidence, says Woodward. "Their reasoning is they're waiting for advances in DNA [testing] – for genealogy or family DNA testing," she says. Until such tests are done, Woodward believes there is little hope of solving one of the world's most compelling mysteries, and giving justice to JonBenét. "She was blessed with the gift of beauty and

intelligence, and she was just a sweet girl," says Woodward. "One of her teachers said that if there was a child in class who was sick and needed to go to the school nurse, she would have JonBenét walk the child there, because 'she was such a nice little girl.' And she was tortured and murdered. And no-one has any interest in resolving it."

• By Michael Crooks
Unsolved: The JonBenét Ramsey Murder 25 Years Later (Out now)

