

by Erin Banks

The Case

An unexpected rainstorm hit Tacoma, Washington, on the night between August 30 and 31, 1961. The Burrs, a Catholic family of six, had put their children to bed just after 8 P.M.

The storm awakened the parents throughout the night, as did their dog, **Barney**, who kept barking at the storm in intervals until finally settling down.

Indeed, **Barney** had been barking through the night for several weeks, and whenever they awoke, the **Burr** parents had heard noises outside as though someone were sneaking around the house.

Neighbors corroborated that they had spotted someone peeping in the late evening.





Photo on the left: Courtesy of the Burrs; on the right: Beverly Burr, courtesy of seattletimes.com

This night, however, the **Burr's** eldest daughter, 8-year old **Ann** (*12-14-1952), had taken her 3-year old sister **Mary** to the parents' room. **Mary** had a broken arm and often woke up at night, crying.

Beverly Ann (née **Leach**) and **Donald** comforted the girl for a while and then instructed **Ann** to take **Mary** back to her room to try and sleep.

Shortly after 5 A.M. **Beverly Burr** descended the stairs of her home on 3009 North 14th Street to find the living room window and front door wide open, although she and her husband Donald later stated to police that both had been locked.

Upon investigating her four children's bedrooms, she discovered that **Ann** was nowhere to be found.

She did discover that the garden bench had been moved from the back of the house to underneath the window of the room **Ann** occupied with her sister **Julie**, other than on the previous night when **Mary** had slept in the room with her.

Moreover, there was a footprint in front of the bench and in the back yard of the property, too. Due to the heavy rainfall the night before, it's unclear which size it originally was.

The police report states it was a size 6 or 7 upon discovery.

Now starting to panic, **Beverly** began perusing the neighborhood but once it became evident no one had seen her daughter, she and **Donald** called the police.

Police and the national guard combed the neighborhood, the case, which was investigated as an abduction from the very beginning, was reported on by every single news outlet large and small.

The detectives assigned to this case and who first arrived on scene were **Anthony**

Zatkovich and Theodore Strand.

About 1.5k people were questioned by law enforcement within the first two weeks of the disappearance.

To help the police rule them out as suspects, the **Burrs** took a polygraph test, which they passed.

Seattle P.I.

They'll Hunt A 'Lifetime' For Ann Marie **145 Days Of Heartbreak**



Detective Team Talks With Missing Girl's Parents

FACOMA POLICE DETECTIVE Teoy Zatkovich points to calendar showing 145th day Ann Marie Burr has been missing from the home of her parents (center), Mr. and Mrs. Donald B. Burr.

At left is Detective Ted Strand. The two detectives have been working on the case since the 8-year-old girl disappeared last August 31.

BY STAN REED



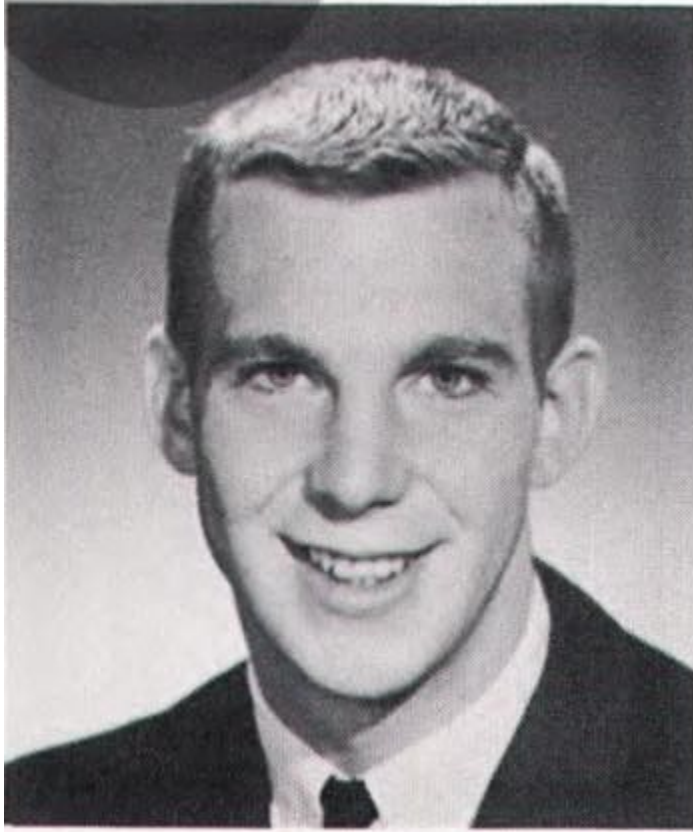
Above: News clipping from the Tacoma Tribune. Left to right, **Don & Bev Burr**, Detectives **Zatkovich** and **Strand**. Courtesy of Rebecca Morris.
To the right: Police academy photo of **Zatkovich**. Courtesy of findagrave.com

Don Burr insisted to ride along in a patrol car to help search for his daughter. And he noticed a young man in his teens kicking up the mud at the construction site nearby. While he may certainly have remembered correctly, **Don** did not assign any significance to this sighting until many years later, when **Ted Bundy** was named as a suspect. Only then did he insist he had “recognized” the killer, believing he may have buried **Ann** at the construction site. Perhaps, one may assume, to regain a false sense of closure after over a decade of anguish.

Suspects

Long before **Ann Rule** first suggested **Ted Bundy** as a viable suspect, the police had liked two males in particular for the abduction:

- One 15-year old **Robert Bruzas** (* 9-30-1945), who lived two doors down from the **Burrs** and according to author **Rebecca Morris** allegedly spent so much time with little Ann that she referred to him as “*lover boy*,” and he called her “*his girl*.”
Being aware how much stock **Morris** puts into dubious **Bundy** wayfarers such as **Sandi Holt**, I must recommend to take some of **Morris** with a grain of salt.



ROBERT BRUZAS
Reserve Swimming . . .
mural Swimming . . .
Choir . . . Castle Playe
Club . . . Water Ski Cl
School Play . . . Choru
side Employment . . .
Plans: College

1964 High School Yearbook Photo of Robert Bruzas, courtesy of Classmates.com

Polygraph tests are known to be unreliable, yet it should be mentioned that while **Bruzas** passed his second test, he failed the first one.

There are no records of arrest for **Bruzas**, he was never throughout his adult life suspected of inappropriate contact with children and continues to live a quiet life with his wife in Tacoma.

Keeping in mind that the majority of child molesters are never caught, the above may not mean much necessarily.

The second suspect was **Ralph Everett Larkee**:

Warrants Issued In Disappearance Of Tacoma Girl

TACOMA, Aug. 1. — (AP) — Two warrants, one federal and one city, were issued today for Ralph Everett Larkee, 48, in connection with the July 20 disappearance of 10-year-old Gay Lynn Stewart.

The Police Department warrant charged kidnaping. The other, issued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, charged unlawful flight to escape prosecution.

Gay Lynn left home in fear, she said, of a scolding. Three days later she reappeared and told police she had been on a trip with a man she called Bob Brown. A week ago police sent out a circular bearing a picture drawn from Gay Lynn's description. Spokane police provided a photograph resembling the drawing and Gay Lynn identified it as the man.

Spokane Man Shot as F. B. I. Knocks on Door

PORTLAND, Sept. 10. — (UPI)—Ralph Everett Larkee of Spokane was reported in serious condition in a hospital today after he was shot yesterday as Federal Bureau of Investigation agents closed in.

Larkee, 48, was sought by Pierce County, Wash., authorities on a kidnap charge in connection with the abduction of a 10-year-old Tacoma girl on July 20. He also faced a federal charge of unlawful flight to avoid prosecution on the Washington charges.

A F. B. I. agent said Larkee shot himself in the head with a small-caliber pistol as officers knocked on the door of his motel room.

member of The Ted Bundy Research Group

Additionally, the “*neighborhood nudist*” was cleared by police early on, as were known sex offenders in the area.

A ransom demand was made by a man who turned out not to have anything with the **Burr** disappearance and thus he was charged only with disorderly conduct.

Ted Bundy

Author **Ann Rule** was among the first who insisted upon a connection between **Burr** and **Bundy**.

In her book, “*The Stranger Beside Me*,” she writes that that the boy had a paper route that went right past the **Burrs**, and lived close by, although **Beverly** admitted that she had never seen **Bundy** deliver the paper.

He lived “close by” in terms of measuring the distance by car – approximately 10 minutes – but 14-year old **Bundy** could

- not drive yet
- possessed no car
- had not begun engaging in auto theft
- and his paper route was 3 miles away from the Burr household

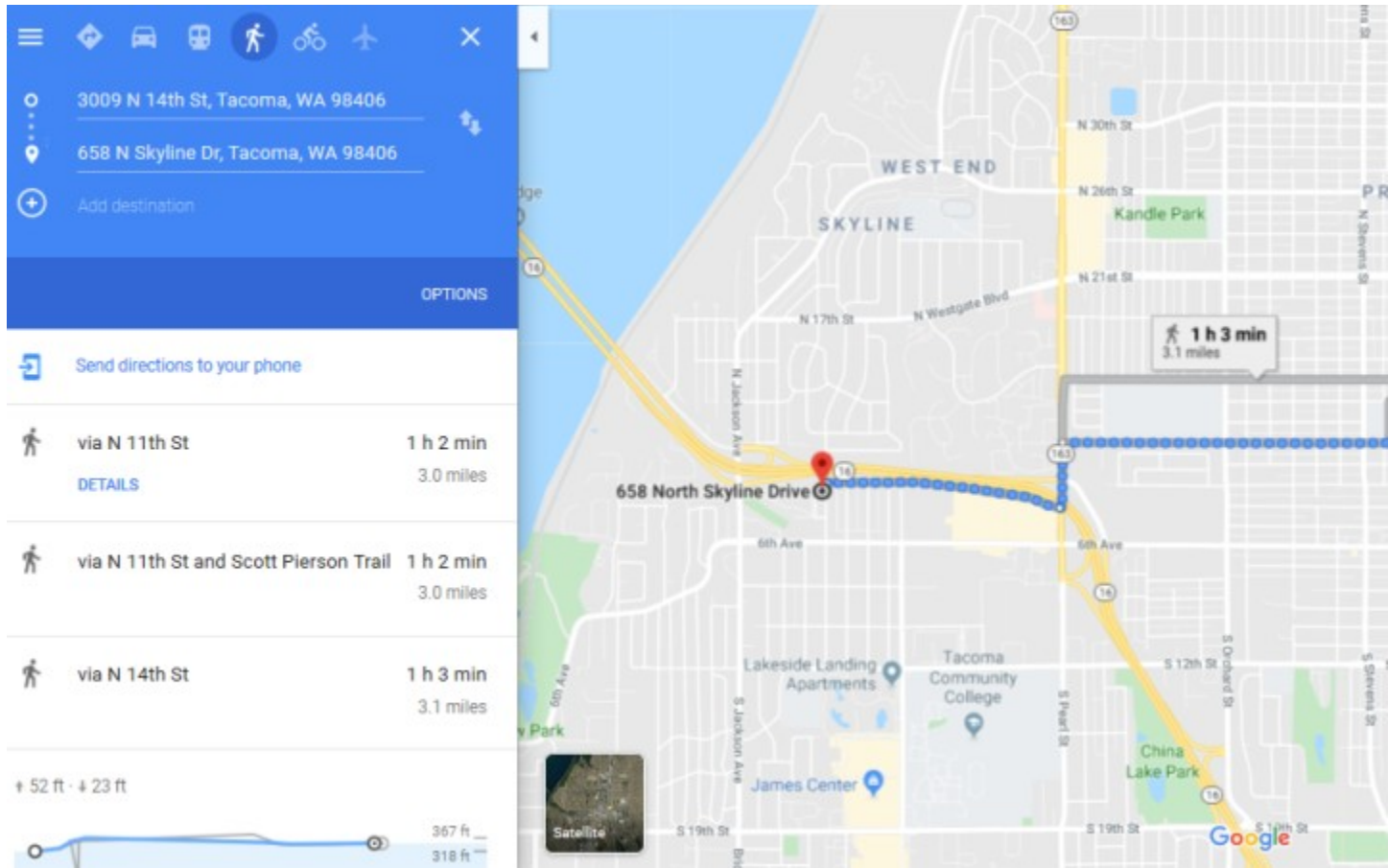
Hence he would have either had to walk the distance – 1.2 hours – in the middle of the night, or taken a bicycle which would have taken him about 20 minutes.

While the latter seems like a likelier option, the logistics of a bicycle abduction are problematic, to say the least.

It was estimated that **Burr** was abducted briefly before mother **Bev** arose around 5 A.M. but it is in fact unclear at what time of night or morning the girl disappeared.

Sunrise occurred around 6.27 A.M. — A boy walking with or driving a girl half his age around on a Thursday while many shift workers and early risers may and would have spotted them would have been spotted, and certainly, considering the era, stopped to inquire what they were doing out and about at this hour.

That is, if **Ann** even went willingly. Had she not and **Bundy** would have had to render her unconscious, his only option would have been to carry the girl if he was on foot. Or transport her on the back of his bike.



The statement that **Burr** took piano lessons next door to **Bundy's** favorite great-uncle **Jack Cowell**, the latter of whom he frequently visited, is yet another **Rule**-ism.

Rule further claims that **Ann** followed **Bundy** around “*like a puppy*.”

The **Burrs** never corroborated that **Bundy** ever met or knew their daughter on a personal level.

That a neighbor boy like **Bruzas** had access to **Ann** is plausible, but how would **Bundy** have justified inserting himself into the little girl's life?

Did **Rule** confuse **Bundy** with **Bruzas** perhaps? The intensity of **Robert Bruzas'** interest in **Ann Marie** is strange, but the latter also spent much time at the **Bruzas** home because she had bonded with his sister **Frannie** over their love for budgies.

Al Carlisle's “speculative interview” in his book “*I'm Not Guilty*” poses further issues. Although I appreciate **Carlisle's** insight into **Bundy's** psyche and his incredible body of work, the decision to conduct an interview with basically himself and “speculate,” based on his impressions, what **Bundy** WOULD answer to questions he usually avoided, is unfortunate.

This passage has haunted the online **Bundy** community for years:

“... For a short while, he would be paranoid. When someone looked at him in a strange manner, he would wonder if they suspected him. After all, he had a paper route there...”

Carlisle took this statement directly from **Rule**, not **Bundy** – as did **Morris**.

Another Bundy curiosity

Ann Marie Burr's mother's maiden name is Leach.

If Ann was his first victim, then it is eerily coincidental Bundy's final victim's last name was Leach as well.

Psychology

In interviews with Dr. **Al Carlisle**, **Bundy** admitted to having begun withdrawing into fantasy life early in life, around 8 years old.

These fantasies were centered around rescuing girls he had developed a crush on but did not know how to approach or who rejected him.

As he grew older the fantasies grew more sinister; now he was imagining endangering the young women in order to rescue them.

The next step, fueled by a combination of the consumption of *True Crime Detective Magazines*, late night peeping and the violent atmosphere at home, **Bundy** crossed the line to mentally harming the objects of his desire.

By 1969, aged 23, he began losing control in separating fantasy and reality:

He broke into a Seattle woman's basement apartment he'd spied into previously, jumped onto her bed and began suffocating her with a pillow.

The woman began screaming and he fled.

In the same year, **Bundy** had rented a cheap motel room while visiting his family before starting at *Temple University* in Philadelphia.

His plan had been to overwhelm and rape a woman unlocking her room but he did not succeed.

Lastly, **Bundy** walked up to women on the street, one unlocking her car and one unlocking her front door, beating them over the head, escaping yet again after the began screaming.

All of the above shows that **Bundy** acted rather clumsily in his early stages, and it took years until being prepared enough to kill, emotionally as well as logistically.

So are we to believe that a 14-year old boy, who at that time harbored no murderous or harmful urges yet, was a criminal mastermind bar none?

Who let vanish **Burr** without any practice or expertise, but afterwards he not only halted

his kill urge for over a decade but could not be equally successful as he started up again?



A teenaged Ted Bundy

Did he or didn't he? Things to consider

Bundy grew up in a home of seven. Indeed, mother **Louise** was pregnant with the fifth child, **Richard**, during the time **Burr** was abducted.

She reported having woken up and walked around the house frequently throughout the night.

Moreover, the **Bundy** children all shared rooms with each other which were located on the first floor.

Even if **Bundy** had attempted to avoid **Louise** or waking the other members of the family as he snuck past their rooms by climbing out of the window, would it truly have been enough not to wake the siblings in the room?

On the other hand, **Bundy** allegedly did sneak out of the house "at night" to "run around in the woods naked" as a teenage boy.

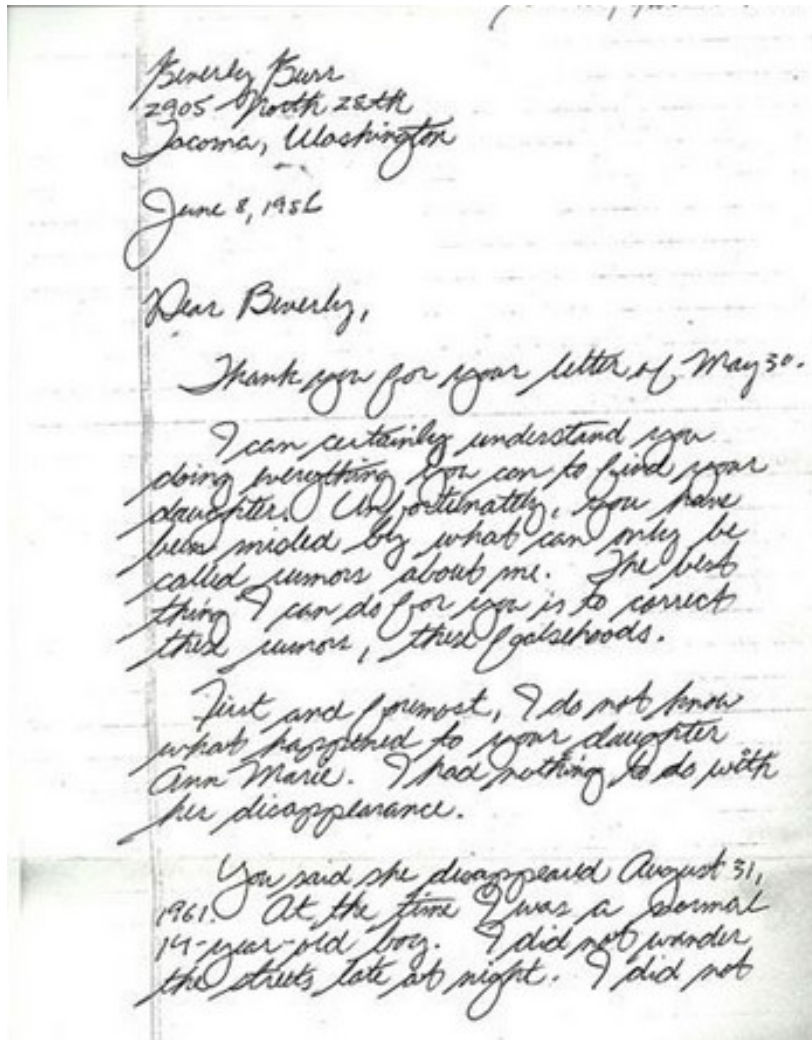
One commenter in one of our groups remarked,

*"[B]oth [my parents] remember when **Ann** went missing. It was a huge deal. The Army National Guard was storming the golf course, your back yard, the streets. They were everywhere.*

*[...] Ask any Tacoma native older than 65 about **Ann Marie**, they'll talk your ear off about it!"*

In her view, the fact that **Bundy**, while already incarcerated, denied knowing about the **Burr** incident, is highly suspicious, and I would agree.

When **Beverly Burr** inquired herself, he responded with a brief letter of denial. But respond he did:



Beverly Burr
2905 North 25th
Tacoma, Washington

June 8, 1956

Dear Beverly,

Thank you for your letter of May 30.

I can certainly understand your doing everything you can to find your daughter. Unfortunately, you have been misled by what can only be called rumors about me. The best thing I can do for you is to correct these rumors, these falsehoods.

Just and foremost, I do not know what happened to your daughter Ann Marie. I had nothing to do with her disappearance.

You said she disappeared August 31, 1961. At the time I was a normal 14-year-old boy. I did not wander the streets late at night. I did not

He never responded to **Eleanor Rose Naslund**, however, and we know most certainly that **Bundy** killed her daughter **Denise**.

Likewise, upon being given a wide array of names to ascertain whether **Bundy** had murdered them, **Bundy** was truthful in his last days leading up to the execution.

Kathy Devine turned out to be **William Cosden, Jr.**'s victim in 2003. On the other hand **Bundy** would have not had to confess to **Lynnette Dawn Culver's** murder as he was not even suspected in her disappearance.

There appears to be a pattern here. And thus his denial of **Burr** appears more credible.

RK: There's a little girl in Tacoma.

TB: Which one?

RK: Ann Marie Burr.

TB: No. Absolutely not. And one thing I'd like to do on some of these, I mean, on all of this if it's possible, and I think it's important. It's important for me. It's important for credibility because there's so much question about my credibility. You know, I would like, I would like to be polygraphed, have a polygraph examination if that can be done in these kinds of things. Do something to enhance the credibility. Not just, you know, specifics, I mean, of the specifics of course, but of my overall account of these things. Cause I want it to be believable. I just don't want it -- I don't want to get into a Henry Lee Lucas kind of deal on my -- I have precious little going for me now, but what I do have is I've got to build some credibility.

Detective Robert

Keppel's interview with Bundy

Alternative Theories

The case was immediately treated as an abduction but a classic abduction doesn't make much sense:

Barney barked at the thunderstorm, but not at the intruder.

Ann's sister **Mary** had a light sleep due to her broken arm, kept waking up. Yet she did not observe anyone entering the home to violently take **Burr** from her bed.

And **Burr** would have made at least some noise. —

A child being awoken to perhaps find a hand over her mouth, would trash and gasp or struggle for air; noise not to be underestimated in the dead of night where any sound is amplified.

There is of course the possibility that the abductor incapacitated her before silently removing her from the bed and home.

Did he drug her in some form? Push a pillow down on her face until she lost consciousness?

Someone else in the group posited,

"[W]hat if this little one wasn't a murder victim? [W]hat if she was taken and moved elsewhere and was/is alive?"

Elizabeth Smart came to mind and even though the circumstances of her abduction and subsequent escape are much different, it was just a thought my mind was tossing around."

That is a fair question and police pursued a lead to a child trafficking ring in Canada for a while, believing that they may have kidnapped and sold **Ann**.

The suspicion could never be proven.

Decades later, another woman claiming to be **Ann** surfaced but was found to be a hoax.

It's truly unclear whether a murder had been the perpetrator's prerogative. If the kidnapper had been a young man she knew well, and who was possibly attracted to children, perhaps he sought to sexually abuse rather than to murder.

If something went awry however, or he realized **Ann** might talk about the inappropriate

encounter, he may have snapped to relieve himself of the “problem.”

While discussing the case in the group, one commenter said she also believes the abduction may have involved a pre-arranged meeting, which would be congruent with some of the above ideas.

She believes that the perpetrator not only knew **Ann** and – due to the layout of the crime scene – the **Burr** home, but that he may have offered or promised the little girl something to coax her into leaving the house on her own rather than being forcefully taken from it.



NEWS TRIBUNE FILE PHOTOS

The front page of The News Tribune on Sept. 2, 1961, is a backdrop for photos, above and left, of extensive search efforts being organized for Ann Burr, 8.

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A Concrete Issue (Pardon the Pun)

Many Washingtonians believe that **Ann** was embedded in cement at the construction site.

In the 2010's, there was a study conducted in the course of which pigs were buried in cement, so as to study the delay and changes in decomposition.

Because decomposition involves gases and fluids, it creates air pockets, impacting the structural integrity of the concrete, causing it to collapse over time.

So there is a relatively slim chance for **Ann** to be buried underneath the former construction site, although we can, of course, never rule it out completely.

Author Opinions

Kevin M. Sullivan

“Well, when I was interviewing **Bob Keppel** years ago, he told me that he believed **Ron Holmes** was **Bundy's** “golden boy”, and the one he planned to confess all his crimes to.

[...] In [a May 9, 1987] article **Bundy** speaks of a person “*involved in a series of murders in Washington near Lake Sammamish State Park,*” (where **Bundy** would later abduct two of his victims) and goes on to explain how this person may have started killing much earlier in life, with a first victim possibly being a girl as young as eight or nine.

By mentioning Lake Sammamish in this context, **Ted Bundy** is linking himself to the abduction and murder of **Ann Marie Burr**.

[...] I interviewed **Ron Holmes** in his office in Louisville, and he reiterated to me the very same story.

The argument, some have said, is that **Bundy** later denied having made the confession

to Holmes.

But this isn't unusual for **Bundy**, as he did admit to crimes only later to deny them. And more to the point (and especially to the point), these denials came after **Bundy** and **Holmes** had had a falling out, which may very well have propelled **Bundy** into the denial heard later by others.

“After luring the child from the house, the other person took the child to a nearby orchard and strangled her and then probably raped her, Holmes said Bundy told him. The Burrs, who have since moved to another North End neighborhood, said a former neighbor maintained a small fruit orchard. The opened window found the day Ann Marie disappeared faced the orchard and was on ‘the dark side of the house.’”

Tacoma News, May 9, 1987 article about the Holmes/Bundy interview

JT Townsend, True Crime author and journalist from Ohio, writes about his impressions on the case in his article

[“**Ted Bundy’s First Victim? The Vanishing Of Ann Marie Burr.**”](#)

He permitted me to share what he had added to **The Ted Bundy Research Group**, a “missing person” poster that **Beverly Burr** once provided to him in 2004 during one of their interviews:

Tacoma Police Dept.

MISSING PERSON

Ann Marie BURR - White Female, 8



Missing from her home
this city, since approx. 5:
ANN MARIE BURR,
born 12-14-52; Height: app
medium build, hazel eyes,
hair, medium comp. Subj
face and little finger, left
and bad fingernail from fu
known to be wearing night
flowered, light blue in col
and had silver I. D. brace
ress and phone number; al
around neck with two relig

Photograph at left is re
this subject.

ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PRESENT
ABOUTS OF THIS MISSING CHILD SHOULD BE REP

D. G. HAGER

The case remains unsolved.

The **Burrs** adopted another girl a while after **Ann's** disappearance and by all accounts led a quiet life without further disturbance.

Don passed in 2003, **Beverly** in 2008.





Photos courtesy of Tacoma Tribune, Seattle Times, Rebecca Morris, findagrave.com

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Header image: Burr family.

For further photo credit that I may have forgotten to give, please contact me via the blog, thank you.

Sources:

“Ted and Ann” by Rebecca Morris; “The Bundy Murders” by Kevin M. Sullivan; “The Only Living Witness” by Stephen Michaud & Hugh Aynesworth; “Ted Bundy: A Visual Timeline” by Robert Dielenberg (& silent authors); “The Stranger Beside Me” by Ann Rule, The Doenetwork, Findagrave, The Charley Project, Tacoma Tribune, Seattle Times.