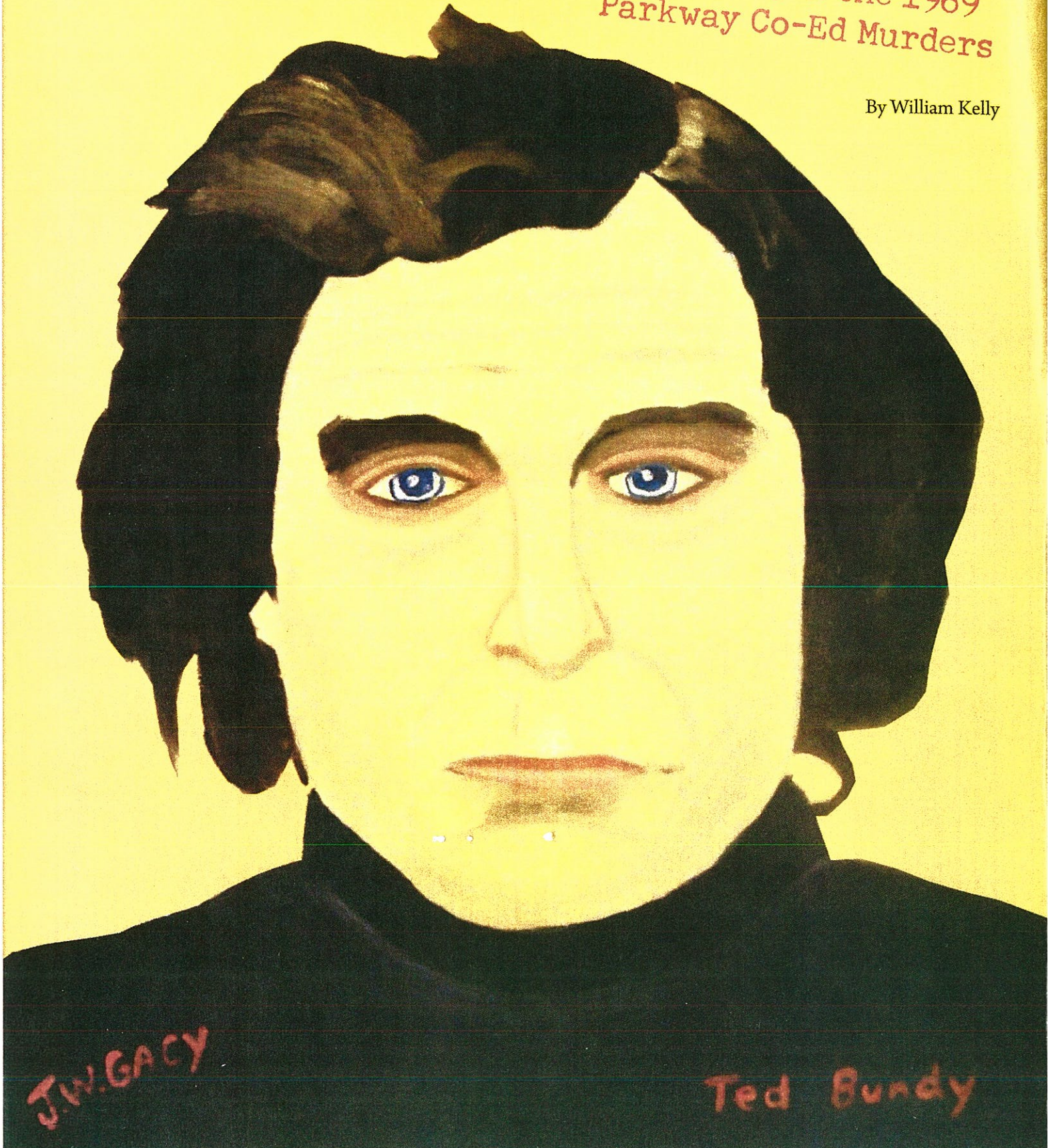


A COLD CASE HEAT'S UP

Ted Bundy & the 1969
Parkway Co-Ed Murders

By William Kelly



Whenever the bodies of young women are discovered and there's a suspected serial killer on the loose, it's easy for anyone who was at the Jersey Shore in the summer of '69 to remember the Memorial Day weekend Parkway Coed murders.

None of the original investigators on that case are still active. Those who have been assigned the Susan Davis and Elizabeth Perry cold case file have had to start from the beginning.

For most people, it was a typical Memorial Day weekend, the beginning of another summer season at the South Jersey shore. Then on Monday—Memorial Day—a parkway maintenance worker named Elwood “Woody” Faunce discovered the bodies of Susan Davis and Elizabeth Perry in secluded underbrush off the Garden State Parkway. The two 19-year-old college coeds had been missing since the previous Friday when they failed to return to Pennsylvania after a few days at the Jersey Shore. They had stayed at an Ocean City rooming house on Ninth Street. They'd toured the Boardwalk, they'd gone to the beach, and after dark they hit the Somers Point nightclubs. After leaving early Friday morning to beat the holiday weekend rush, Perry and Davis drove onto the Parkway never to be seen alive again.

When the girls failed to make it home on Friday night, their parents notified the authorities. Police searched for their car, a powder blue 1966 Chevrolet convertible. After a few days, the fathers of the missing girls rented a plane and flew over the route they knew they would have taken, looking for the car in the weeds off the road in case they'd had an accident.

Then Howard Blazer of Blazer's Garage on Tilton Road returned from an out-of-state fishing trip and learned about the missing girls from news reports. He had towed the convertible off the

Parkway on Friday. It was found with the top down on the side of the road around mile marker 31.9. A New Jersey State Trooper, Louis Sturr, had found the car abandoned early Friday morning when he first went on patrol. He'd called the tags in but there was no report of the car being stolen, so Blazer was called to have it towed to his Northfield garage. Blazer then went fishing and Trooper Sturr left the area for the weekend.

Everyone forgot about the towed car until the following Monday when the bodies were finally found. The delay gave the killer a three day lead before the investigation officially began. Despite a massive effort that lasted the entire summer, the case remains unsolved.

As the years stretched into decades, there were periodic peaks of media and public interest when a new suspect emerged or a mass murderer confessed to the crime. Both Gerald Eugene Stano and Ted Bundy, two of the most prolific mass murderers in history, claimed credit for the Parkway murders. The police took the Stano confession seriously enough to send two detectives down to Florida State Prison to interview him, but he didn't know any of the specifics of the crime. He had the murder taking place on the wrong side of the road.

As for Bundy, after being caught in Colorado for the murder of a number of young women and escaping twice, he moved on to Florida where capital punishment laws remained in effect. Captured again after going on a rampage of murder there, Bundy settled into Florida's death row. Before being executed on January 24, 1989, Bundy went through a series of taped counseling sessions with a court-approved forensic psychiatrist, Dr. Art Norman.

Because of patient-doctor confidentiality issues, Norman couldn't reveal what Bundy said until after Bundy was dead. Norman reported that Bundy had told him what it would have been like to have been the Parkway killer. Talking in the third person, Bundy spoke about leaving Philadelphia for California when he “decided to go back home to the west coast, sort of like a defeated state of mind. But before he does, he decides to take a little bit of a jaunt to what they call the Jersey Shore.”

Bundy told Norman, “This is early summer. So after being more or less detached from people for a long period of months, he didn't have many friends, didn't go anywhere, just more or less had school and walks on the beach. And he just gets a (mumble) sees young women lined up like a vision. Like, you know...eventually he found himself tearing around the place for a couple of days. So without really planning anything, he picked up a couple of young girls and ended up with...the first time he had ever done it. Sort of a spontaneous kind of something he hadn't planned, but something that had been building. That was the edge...so when he left for the coast, it was not just getting away; it was more like an escape.”

“Is this just an amazing coincidence?” Norman asked at the time of Bundy's execution. “That he just happened to be there on Memorial Day before he went back to the west coast and two girls disappeared in that area at the time? I believe this is where he really started.”

Robert N. McAllister, Jr., the Atlantic County Prosecutor at the time of the murders, kept the case open while he was in office. The next prosecutor, Jeffrey Blitz, took over in 1972 and he periodically reviewed the case over the course of two decades. He was in office when Bundy was executed.

Painting and description provided by Art Collector, Ray Layton

The Ted Bundy portrait was painted by John Wayne Gacy, another of history's most infamous serial killers, who is particularly remembered for his hobby of entertaining children as his alter-ego, Pogo The Clown. The painting was acquired after a year-long correspondence with Gacy, during which he painted a portrait of me as a birthday present. I suggested that he begin a series of True Crime paintings to sell to collectors and he embraced the idea with vigour.

He went on to do portraits of Charles Manson, John Dillinger, Ted Bundy and Ed Gein (the inspiration for Psycho and Texas Chainsaw Massacre and the character Buffalo Bill in Silence of the Lambs). These became his most valuable and sought after paintings, and in gratitude for the idea, he sent me the Bundy painting featured (widely recognized amongst collectors as the best of the 6 Bundy paintings he finally did).

Shortly before his death he also sent me his final painting, a portrait of himself done with heavy black shadowing across half of the face. The last in the True Crime series!



Ted Bundy's infamous
1975 Utah mugshot

Blitz said, "I spoke to Dr. Norman. He had come to the conclusion that Bundy was responsible for the (Parkway) coed murders. I asked him if Bundy said he did it and Norman said no. But based on what Bundy said, Norman believed he could draw the conclusion that Bundy was responsible. That's not satisfying."

What is convincing to a psychiatrist is not as satisfying to a lawyer. But according to Norman, more specific details did come out of his interviews with Bundy.

Bundy was a Temple University student in 1969 who said that instead of taking a professor's car to California right away as he had promised, he drove to New York City, visited the sex shops off Broadway, then drove down to Ocean City and looked at the girls on the Boardwalk and the beach. Most of the other girls Bundy murdered fit the same profile as Perry and Davis, and they were also found in the woods just off major highways.

While Bundy's fingerprints on the car or his DNA evidence at the crime scene could prove conclusive, the New Jersey State Police and the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office are both reluctant to pin him to the crime. If it was Bundy, then their failure to catch him led to the deaths of 50 more beautiful young women. No investigators from New Jersey even attended the Bundy Conference, a meeting of federal, state and local law enforcement officers who met at Quantico, Virginia to review unsolved crimes that could possibly be attributed to Bundy. Yet after local police were publicly criticized for the "tragedy of errors" that occurred during the initial phase of the investigation, Elizabeth Perry's father wrote a letter to the editor of local newspapers saying, "I comprehend their abilities quite more clearly than other residents who presume to criticize them. This is not to suggest that every last man on the force is a Sherlock Holmes, but it was apparent to me, and I'm sure I can speak for Mr. Davis, that they are dedicated and competent people trying to do a job against great odds."

While few officials today actually recall the details of the 1969 Parkway murders, the still unresolved nature of the case stands out as a reminder to local police detectives and state and federal investigators as they continue to pour over the evidence in other, similar crimes. The Parkway coed murders, if solved, could eventually lead to the resolution of other, similar cold cases.

The case has already served as a basis for more than one fictionalized account. Christian Barth, a Cherry Hill attorney, wrote a novel based on the 1969 Parkway coed murders. The plot presumes that Bundy was the perpetrator and tries to get inside his mind. The publisher's synopsis states that the book is "based on a true story." Barth's book, *The Origins of Infamy*, tells of Ted Bundy's alleged involvement in the murder of two coeds at the Jersey Shore on Memorial Day, 1969.

Ocean City historian Fred Miller has said, "Barth's novel is a spellbinding reimagination of one of the more disturbing unsolved cold cases in local history."

"Though I considered writing a non-fiction book," Barth said, "I felt that the story would be more realistically portrayed through Bundy's viewpoint, utilizing now-extinct Jersey Shore nightclubs such as Tony Mart's and Bay Shores Cafe for a backdrop so as to maintain an accurate degree of historical authenticity."



Drawing on details of the crime, Barth has developed a plausible scenario as to what really happened. But did Bundy do it? Pat LaWall thinks so, and she may have some photos to prove it.

The fortieth anniversary of the crime in 2009 sparked the publication of a number of news and feature articles. As so often happens, the media publicity generated some new witnesses.

Pat LaWall said, "I read an article on Bundy and the Parkway murders and I absolutely believe that Ted Bundy killed those girls. I'm from the Philadelphia suburbs and I stayed in Ocean City with my best friend and her family who owned a summer home there. We spent a couple weeks each summer beginning in 1968. One summer we spent our time at the Ninth Street beach by the jetty because that was the most popular spot. There was a guy who hung out at the beach each day who constantly tried to get us to go with him. The three of us were all scared of him because he looked strange with his bushy hair and beard and he was the only one who wore long jeans to the beach. He never wore a bathing suit or shorts and he looked very out of place. He had his arm in a sling. We would occasionally see him getting into his car which he parked on Ninth Street. It appeared as though he was living in his car. He seemed to have a ton of things in there. He drove a Volkswagen Bug. He told us he was from California and his name was Ted Bluchell and that he used to be in the band The Association.

"While we certainly knew The Association, we had no idea who the band members were. We all found him extremely creepy. His eyes were shifty. He did seem to favor talking to me and I found many excuses to get away from him. At that time, I had long brown hair parted in the middle, which was the style.

"It wasn't until 20-plus years later when I was watching a show on Ted Bundy and they showed a picture of him with bushy hair and a beard that I knew it was him. You don't forget someone who really scared you. In this same show, they mentioned the New Jersey coed murders. They said Bundy may have been involved and I was convinced at that moment that he was.

"It finally made sense, the way he was at the beach in jeans, looking so out of place, and so determined to get someone

to go with him. Everyone else was just hanging out enjoying the sun with friends. He was all alone. It also explains why he would tell us that his name was Ted Bluechel and that he was in the band The Association. I think he was making that up to impress us to go with him. But he used his real first name."

There is, in fact, a real Ted Bluechel who actually was with The Association. If Bundy was impersonating Ted Bluechel of The Association, a photo would certainly nail it.

Wayne Miller, who now works at Pleasantville Schools and sells insurance, also read the fortieth anniversary news coverage. He wonders if an accident report filed by the murdered girls a few days earlier was properly investigated.

Miller's office used to be on Tilton Road in Northfield, just down the street from Blazer's garage. He recalls that on Thursday, the day before that Memorial Day, he handled a car insurance claim for a fender bender between the two girls in the convertible and two young men in a blue and cream-colored Volkswagen van with New Mexico tags. Miller said that he notified the New Jersey State Police at the time and sent the accident report to their Absecon barracks. He told them that he saw the girls talking to the men across from his office, then they drive south on the Parkway, back toward Ocean City and Somers Point. Miller later saw the VW Van in Ocean City.

The New Jersey State Police said that while the Absecon barracks no longer exist, they have an investigator assigned to the case, the files are being reviewed, and any new leads will be pursued.

When Jeffrey Blitz retired and Theodore F. L. Housel took over the Atlantic City Prosecutor's Office in 2008, Housel assigned a new investigator to review the Parkway coed murders. Because of a heavy case load, they've had to give more recent crimes priority.

Forensic science has developed new investigative techniques and types of evidence, such as DNA, that didn't exist in 1969. So who knows if new evidence, a new witness or additional clues could lead to the perpetrator?



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