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Ted Bundy Biography

(1946–1989)

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American serial killer and rapist Ted Bundy was one of the most notorious criminals of the late 20th century, known to have killed at least 36 women in the 1970s. He was executed in the electric chair in 1989.

NAME

Ted Bundy

BIRTH DATE

November 24, 1946

DEATH DATE

January 24, 1989

DID YOU KNOW?

Ted Bundy was a 1970s serial murderer, rapist and necrophiliac.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair in 1989.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bundy admitted to 36 killings of young women, but experts believe he could've actually killed more than 100 people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Murder is not about lust and it's not about violence. It's about possession.

PLACE OF BIRTH

Burlington, Vermont

Who Was Ted Bundy?

Ted Bundy was a 1970s serial murderer, rapist and necrophiliac. He was executed in Florida's electric chair in 1989. His case has since inspired many novels and films about serial killers.

Ted Bundy's Parents and Siblings

Eleanor Louise Cowell, who went by Louise, was 22 years old and unmarried when she gave birth to her son Ted. Ted's father may have been Lloyd Marshall, an Air Force veteran and a Penn State graduate, according to Ann Rule, a coworker of Ted's and the author of the book *The Stranger Beside Me*. Other sources had Ted's father's name as Jack Worthington, while some rumors had it that his father was also his grandfather. Because Ted's birth certificate lists his father as "unknown," his biological father's identity may never be confirmed.

In 1951, Louise married Johnnie Bundy. While Ted took his name, he reportedly didn't have much respect for his stepfather, whom he resented for being too uneducated and working class. Johnnie and Louise had several children together.

Louise was working as a secretary at the University of Puget Sound and still married to Johnnie in the 1970s when Ted was accused of his crimes. She refused to believe the charges for years, although she changed her stance after he confessed.

Early Life

Bundy was born in Burlington, Vermont, on November 24, 1946. Bundy's started life as his mother's secret shame, as his illegitimate birth humiliated her deeply religious parents. Louise delivered Ted at a home for unwed mothers in Vermont and later brought her son to her parents in Philadelphia.

To hide the fact he was an illegitimate child, Bundy was raised as the adopted son of his grandparents and was told that his mother was his sister. Eleanor moved with Bundy to Tacoma, Washington, a few years later, and soon married his stepfather Johnnie.

From all appearances, Bundy grew up in a content, working-class family. He showed an unusual interest in the macabre at an early age. Around the age of 3, he became fascinated by knives. A shy but bright child, Bundy did well in school but not with his peers.

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As a teenager, a darker side of him emerged. Bundy liked to peer in other people's windows and thought nothing of stealing

Education



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Bumpy Johnson

emerge. Bundy liked to peer in other people's windows and thought nothing of stealing



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Bundy graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in psychology in 1972. He had been accepted to law school in Utah, although he would never earn his degree.

While a student at the University of Washington, Bundy fell in love with a wealthy, pretty young woman from California. She had everything that he wanted: money, class and influence. He was devastated by their breakup. Many of Bundy's later victims resembled his college girlfriend—attractive students with long, dark hair.

By the mid-1970s, Bundy had transformed himself, becoming more outwardly confident and active in social and political matters. He even got a letter of recommendation from the Republican governor of Washington after working on his campaign.

[READ MORE: How Ted Bundy's Education Facilitated His Career as a Serial Killer](#)

Victims

Bundy confessed to 36 killings of young women across several states in the 1970s, but experts believe that the final tally may be closer to 100 or more. The exact number of women Bundy killed will never been known. His killings usually followed a gruesome pattern: He often raped his victims before beating them to death.

While there is some debate as to when Bundy started killing, most sources say that he began his murderous rampage around 1974. Around this time, many women in the Seattle area and in nearby Oregon went missing. Stories circulated about some of the victims last being seen in the company of a young, dark-haired man known as "Ted." He often lured his victims into his car by pretending to be injured and asking for their help. Their kindness proved to be a fatal mistake.

How Ted Bundy Was Caught

In the fall of 1974, Bundy moved to Utah to attend law school, and women began disappearing there as well. The following year, he was pulled over by the police. A search of his vehicle uncovered a cache of burglary tools—a crowbar, a face mask, rope and handcuffs. He was arrested for possession of these tools and the police began to link him to much more sinister crimes.

In 1975, Bundy was arrested in the kidnapping of Carol DaRonch, one of the few women to escape his clutches. He was convicted and received a one-to-15-year jail sentence.

Prison Escapes

Bundy escaped from prison twice in 1977. The first time, he was indicted on murder charges for the death of a young Colorado woman and decided to act as his own lawyer in the case. During a trip to the courthouse library, he jumped out a window and made his first escape. He was captured eight days later.

In December, Bundy escaped from custody again. He climbed out of a hole he made in the ceiling of his cell, having dropped more than 30 pounds to fit through the small opening. Authorities did not discover that Bundy was missing for 15 hours, giving the serial killer a big head start on the police.

Chi Omega Sorority House Break-In

After Bundy's second escape from prison, he eventually made his way to Tallahassee, Florida. On the night of January 14, 1978, Bundy broke into the Chi Omega sorority house at Florida State University. He attacked four of the young female residents, killing two of them. On February 9, Bundy kidnapped and murdered a 12-year-old girl named Kimberly Leach.

These crimes marked the end of his murderous rampage, as he was soon pulled over by the police that February.

The most damning evidence connecting Bundy to the two Chi Omega murders at FSU were bite marks on one of the bodies, which were a definitive match to Bundy.

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Trial

Bundy's good looks, charm and intelligence made him something of a celebrity during his trial. Bundy fought for his life but was convicted and spent nine years on death row appealing his death sentence.

Conviction, Death Sentences and Appeals

In July 1979, Bundy was convicted for the the two Chi Omega murders at FSU. He was given the death penalty twice. He received another death sentence in 1980 for the murder of Kimberly Leach.

Bundy appealed, trying to take his case as high as the U.S. Supreme Court, but he was turned down. He also offered information on some of unsolved murders to avoid Florida's electric chair, but he could not delay justice forever and was executed in 1989.

Elizabeth Kloepfer, Ted Bundy's Girlfriend

In 1969, Bundy met Elizabeth Kloepfer, a young woman with a troubled relationship with her father, Willie Nelson, and a history of alcoholism. Bundy and she had a relationship that was described as "warm and loving."

By 1974, Kloepfer had become suspicious of Bundy's crimes. When she questioned him about her concerns, he denied her concerns.

Kloepfer secretly met with Bundy in 1975, but her suspicion of Bundy's involvement in prompt her to report him to the police. Although they grew distant when Bundy moved to Olympia the following year, she remained a key witness in his trial.



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Willie Nelson



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Bumpy Johnson



In 1975, Kloepfer went to police again, this time with evidence that helped them to arrest the serial killer. Bundy had confessed to Kloepfer over the phone from his prison cell that he had tried to kill her and couldn't resist his impulses when he felt "his sickness building in him," she later wrote. She broke ties with Bundy for good and wrote a book about her experience.

Wife and Daughter

In February 1980, [Bundy married Carole Ann Boone](#), a mother-of-two whom he'd dated before his initial arrest, in a courtroom during the penalty phase of his trial. He proposed and she accepted in the presence of the judge, making the marriage legitimate in Florida. The couple had met six years earlier when they both worked at the Department of Emergency Services in Olympia, Washington.

Boone gave birth to a daughter, Rose, in 1982, and she named Bundy as the father. Not much is known about Rose today.

Boone eventually realized Bundy was guilty of the crimes. She divorced him three years prior to his execution, according to Rule's book, *A Stranger Beside Me*. Boone stopped visiting Bundy during the last two years of his imprisonment.

Death

On January 24, 1989, [Bundy was executed](#) around 7 a.m. at the Florida State Prison in an electric chair sometimes known as "Old Sparky." Outside the prison, crowds cheered and even set off fireworks after Bundy's execution.

Bundy's body was cremated in Gainesville, and no public ceremony was held. Before he was executed he requested his ashes be scattered in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State, where he murdered at least four of his victims.

Bundy in Popular Culture

Movies

An infamous national figure since his Florida trials, Bundy's life has been the subject of countless books and documentaries trying to shed light on this brutal killer's crimes. Well-known movies include:

The Deliberate Stranger was a 1986 television movie featuring actor Mark Harmon as Bundy.

Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile debuted in 2019 at the Sundance film festival, with [Zac Efron](#) as Bundy and Lily Collins as Kloepfer. The film's title comes from Judge Edward Cowart's post-sentencing remarks to Bundy.

Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes was released that same year. The documentary features archival footage and audio recordings of Bundy made on death row along with present-day interviews.

Books

Several notable books have been published on Bundy's crimes, including:

The Stranger Beside Me: Ted Bundy the Shocking Inside Story, published in 1980 by Rule, a coworker of Bundy's at a crisis hotline. Rule describes how she gradually realized Bundy was a serial killer and then draws from their ongoing correspondence, which lasted until just shortly before Bundy's execution.

The Phantom Prince: My Life with Ted Bundy was written by Bundy's ex-girlfriend Kloepfer about dating and loving a serial killer. It was published in 1981, while he was on death row.

Ted Bundy: Conversations with a Killer, published in 1989 by author Stephen Michaud and journalist Hugh Aynesworth, this collection of stories was created from more than 150 hours of interviews with Bundy.

Defending the Devil: My Story as Ted Bundy's Last Lawyer, published in 1994, was written by Polly Nelson, a newly-minted lawyer who was offered Bundy's case pro bono by the Washington, D.C. law firm where she worked just weeks before he was scheduled to be executed.

I Survived Ted Bundy: The Attack, Escape & PTSD That Changed My Life, published in 2016 by Rhonda Stapley, who was brutally attacked by Bundy in Utah in 1974 but survived and, after battling PTSD, wrote a book about her experience.

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