

PROFILE 5.16 Theodore Robert "Ted" Bundy, 1973-1978

In the end, society gave Bundy what he so eagerly sought throughout his life: infamy, notoriety, and the attention of millions of people. Even though the lives of 30 to 40 young women, including several teenagers and a 12-year-old girl, were sacrificed, the final price Bundy would pay was never a real issue for him. Like some other serial killers, Bundy found his fortune in the recognition and celebrity status he acquired through his involvement with the judicial system of the United States.

Bundy was born out of wedlock in Burlington, Vermont, in 1946, to Louise Cowell. During the next few years, Bundy and his mother lived with Louise's parents. Some relatives believe it was during this period of time that Bundy was deeply traumatized by his violent grandfather.

At age four, Bundy and his mother Louise relocated to Tacoma, Washington. Within a short time, his mother married an army cook, Johnnie Bundy. Bundy was forced to live a meager lifestyle and grew up deeply resenting not having money or respectable social-class affiliations. He nurtured feelings of inadequacy, of being unable to compete with others who possessed upper-middle-class standing. Michaud and Aynesworth (1983), who later interviewed Bundy, also discovered that he was deeply class conscious. As Leyton (1986b) explained in his profile of Bundy, "The status anxiety seemed particularly intense in his relationships with women" (p. 98). He dated infrequently while in high school and, as Leyton points out, "he ultimately captured and killed sorority girls, or their idealized models, for it was an obvious way in which his class-scarred soul could conceive of the possession" (p. 99).

His quest for identity served as a catalyst for constantly presenting himself, especially in physical disguises, to be somebody else. One person he truly did not want to be was Ted Bundy, the Nobody. Yet Bundy seemed to lack the ability to comprehend the dynamics of social life, of being able to fit in, and admitted to his interviewers: "I didn't know what made people want to be friends. I didn't know what made people attractive to one another. I didn't know what underlay social interactions" (Michaud and Aynesworth, 1983, p. 68). Consequently, Bundy created a series of social fronts and disguises to help him blend into the "right groups." In truth, Bundy became the "mirror image" of himself. He lived to portray an image that he so desperately wanted to be but could never attain.

His decision to begin killing, however, was spurred only in part by his social-class paranoia. Bundy later explained, using the third person, that he was eventually overcome by an internal force or an "entity" that constituted a "purely destructive power." In essence, Bundy began to delve deeper into a world of sexual fantasy that became increasingly violent in nature. He consumed quantities of pornographic material depicting sexually violent acts. Bundy explained pornography "as a vicarious way of experiencing what his peers were experiencing in reality. Then he got sucked into the more sinister doctrines that are implicit in pornography—the use, abuse, the possession of women as objects" (Winn and Merrill, 1980, pp. 116-117).

He fed his sexual fantasies through voyeurism. For years, he peeped through windows to watch women undress. Combined with his increasing appetite for alcohol, Bundy was gradually preparing himself to begin his killing career. During this time he established what appeared to be an impressive record. He had been in the Boy Scouts, worked as an assistant programs director at the Seattle Crime Commission, and wrote, ironically enough, a booklet for women on rape prevention. He was even accepted to the University of Utah Law School, but attended only a few classes. This was all part of the image, the illusion he maintained in order to move freely about in fulfilling his growing deviant sexual fantasies.

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His efforts to "fit in" vanished as he dealt with the sting of rejection. Each setback was perceived as devastating, regardless of its true magnitude. Like some other serial killers, Bundy began to act out his fantasies by first stalking his women and then attacking them. As Leyton (1986b) observed, "He decided to commit himself to another career ... having failed at social mobility" (p. 106). Like Ed Kemper, Bundy had already picked out some dumping sites for his victims. It is unlikely we will ever know exactly how many victims Bundy accrued, but there exists sufficient evidence to link him to at least 30 homicides, though many people believe he killed nearly 40.

The victims were all young, attractive females who appeared to come from middle- or upper-middle-class families, and many were students. He killed victims in at least five different states between 1973 and 1978, usually leaving the bodies in secluded wooded areas.

Several bodies were not found until all that remained were a few bones scattered by animals. Some victims were never recovered. Robert Keppel, a former detective who investigated eight Bundy killings in the Seattle area, believes he may have murdered over 100 victims. Bundy was usually able to lure the intended victims to his car by asking them for assistance. He was always polite and friendly and sometimes wore his arm in a sling to appear as a harmless, well-bred young man simply in need of help. At other times he was known to lurk in dark shadows and attack women who were alone. An early victim was abducted from her basement apartment where she was sleeping.

Bundy usually attacked his victims with a blunt instrument, such as a tire iron or a wooden club, and rendered them unconscious. Some of them died quickly from having their skulls crushed, whereas others would linger for hours or days until Bundy strangled them. Once Bundy had maneuvered his victim into a position that allowed him to be in control, the woman's fate was inevitable. Only one victim managed to escape death after he had placed her under his control. He raped most, if not all, of his victims; several were subjected to sodomy and sexual mutilations. Some of the victims had vaginal lacerations caused by foreign objects. In the Chi Omega sorority house killings in Tallahassee, Florida, Bundy left teeth marks on the breast and buttocks of at least one victim. In some instances, Bundy would keep the body for days and is believed by some investigators to have shampooed the hair of and applied makeup to more than one victim.

Bundy also liked to match wits with law enforcement personnel, and on two occasions he was able to escape from a jail and a courthouse in Colorado. Bundy was able to avoid apprehension because of his degree of mobility. Moving from state to state, he drew in dozens of police agencies, all wanting to capture him.

In the end, Bundy's own psychopathology appeared to have caused his downfall. Before his last kill, Bundy drank heavily and resorted to frequent thefts of wallets and sprees of shoplifting. In his last few days of freedom he was overcome with desperation, paranoia, and the inability to make and act on decisions that would allow him to remain free. His frequent and excessive use of stolen credit cards and his impulsive purchases of clothing, especially socks, were not the actions of the "old" Bundy who had been in control. Fueled by his paranoia, fetishes, and constant intake of alcohol, perhaps he foresaw or even wished his inevitable capture. Bundy's final victim, Kimberly Leach, whom he randomly selected from a grammar school, was only 12 years of age. A few days after murdering her, Bundy was pulled over by a suspicious patrol officer, and eventually police discovered that he had been placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list.

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Bundy was convicted of three murders and sentenced to die in Florida's electric chair. Reveling in the notoriety, he defended himself in court and used his trial to bask in the light of national TV and newspaper coverage. He finally gained the prominence and self-validation he so desperately sought. In an interview with Dr. Ron Holmes of the University of Louisville, Bundy discussed the classic characteristics of serial killers but could not recognize those traits in his own personality (author's files). He continued to the very end to employ legal maneuverings to avoid the electric chair. His trial and appeals cost approximately 9 million dollars. Bundy's court record was one of the longest in Florida's history, more than 28,000 pages, or about the size of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. For Bundy, that was also a way to satisfy his desire for revenge on a society he believed had maligned him. For Bundy there was no guilt, and as he declared on one occasion, "I don't feel guilty for anything ... I feel sorry for people who feel guilt" (Winn and Merrill, 1980, p. 313). As his interviewers, Michaud and Aynesworth, came to realize, Bundy did not act under some irresponsible uncontrollable urge; rather, he consciously used his free will, his agency, to create the killer within himself. Bundy's fame attracted many young female followers who continued to send him letters of love and support. During his incarceration in Florida, Bundy married and even managed to father a child. He had absolutely no remorse for his crimes. As Bundy so aptly observed, "I'm the coldest mother-fucker you'll ever put your eyes on. I don't give a shit about those other people" (author's files).

But in the end, Bundy decided to confess his crimes, possibly to buy additional time for himself. The consummate psychopath lived out his image until the very end, when he allowed a well-intentioned minister to interview him. The meeting was vintage Bundy. The minister wanted Bundy to explore the role of pornography in his life and its influence on him in committing the murders. Like a master craftsman, Bundy controlled and molded the interview. In the end, Bundy gave the minister what he wanted without ever scratching the veneer of his own image. Finally, his confessions, his efforts to show he was insane, that he did not receive a fair trial, that he could take authorities to more burial sites, all faltered.

As Bundy's execution hour drew near, the nation watched with increasing interest. Talk shows, newscasters, and newspaper editors all began exploring the life of Ted Bundy and the phenomenon of serial murder in general. Some individuals and groups eagerly awaited his last moments. T-shirts with slogans such as "Fry-Day" and bumper stickers that read "I'll buckle up when Bundy buckles up" were common in Florida and other states where the killer had murdered young women. Radio stations played a song parody, "On Top of Old Sparky," and an Indianapolis station fried bacon on the air and held a "Bundy countdown" an hour before his execution. Dances and cookouts called "Bundy-Ques" were held in several locations. The execution in many respects took on the atmosphere of a circus. Even those strongly opposed to capital punishment were few in number at the Florida State Prison in Starke as dozens of people anxious to see him die cheered, set off firecrackers, and chanted "Burn, Bundy, Burn" as the appointed hour approached. Indeed, it was a disgusting end to a disgusting life. On January 24, 1989, at 7:00 A.M., Theodore Robert Bundy died in the electric chair. His last words before a black hood was placed over his head were "Give my love to my family and friends." The following statements by Bundy attempt to add a rational note to his murderous career.

- "Sitting there in a cell, I could convince myself that I was not guilty of anything."
- [Regarding confession] "Walking right up to the edge is a thrill, but I can't do it. I haven't allowed myself to choke."
- "They [society] will condemn Ted Bundy while walking past a magazine rack that contains the very things [pornography] that send kids down the road to being Ted Bundys."

Ted Bundy's Victims

Date of Murder or Disappearance	Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Method
1/31/74	Lynda Ann Healey	21	Student	Wash.	Clubbing
3/12/74	Donna Gail Manson	19	Student	Wash.	?
4/17/74	Susan Rancourt	18	Student	Wash.	Clubbing
5/6/74	Roberta K. Parks	22	Student	Ore.	Bludgeoning
6/1/74	Brenda C. Ball	22	Unemployed	Wash.	Clubbing/strangulation
6/11/74	Georgeann Hawkins	18	Student	Wash.	?

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6/1/74	Georgeann Hawkins	18	Student	Wash.	?
7/14/74	Janice Ott	23	Probation officer	Wash.	Bludgeoning
7/14/74	Denise M. Naslund	19	Secretary/student	Wash.	Bludgeoning
8/2/74	Carol Valenzuela	20	—	Wash.	Strangulation/clubbing
8/2/74	Unidentified victim	17-23	—	Wash.	?
10/2/74	Nancy Wilcox	16	Student	Utah	?
10/18/74	Melissa Smith	17	Student	Utah	Strangulation/fractured skull
10/31/74	Laurie Arnie	17	Student	Utah	Strangulation/fractured skull
11/8/74	Debbie Kent	17	Student	Utah	?
1/12/75	Caryn Campbell	23	Nurse	Colo.	Fractured skull
3/15/75	Julie Cunningham	26	Ski instructor	Colo.	Fractured skull
4/6/75	Denise Oliverson	25	—	Colo.	—
1/15/78	Lisa Levy	20	Student	Fla.	Fractured skull
1/15/78	Margaret Bowman	21	Student	Fla.	Clubbing/strangulation
2/9/78	Kimberly Leach	12	Student	Fla.	Strangulation/slashed throat

SOURCE: Bundy also confessed, or is believed by investigators, to have also murdered: 1973, Rita Lorraine Jolly, 17, Clackamas County, Oregon; 1973, Vicki Lynn Holler, 24, Eugene, Oregon; 1973, Katherine Merry Devine, 14, Seattle, Washington; 1974, Brenda Joy Baker, 14, Seattle, Washington; 1975, Nancy Baird, 21, Farmington, Utah; 1974-1975, Sandra Weaver, 17, Utah; 1974-1975, Sue Curtis, 17, Utah; 1974-1975, Debbie Smith, 17, Utah; 1975, Melanie Suzanne Cooley, 18, Nederland, Colorado; 1975, Shelly K. Robertson, 24, Denver, Colorado.