Ted Bundy Essay, Research Paper

Ted Bundy

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The name Theodore Bundy, more commonly known as Ted Bundy, is a household name. Not only is Ted Bundy a household name, it is one that sends chills through the bodies of those who hear it mentioned. This bone gnawing effect is felt more so through those who have daughters away from home, in college. For over two decades now, the mentioning of his name has gotten this exact reaction and will continue to do so for decades to come.

Over the course of his killing career, Ted Bundy made himself one of the most notorious serial killers of all time, while going undetected for years. “He hid his murderous ‘hobby’ from all those who knew and loved him,” (Faces of Ted 1). He was a very deceiving man, through his actions, his speech, everything about him. It was very easy for Ted to deceive his victims. “He was described at various times as the perfect student, a genius, as handsome as a movie idol, a sensitive psychiatric social worker, and ‘a young man for whom the future could surely hold only success’,” (Sears 1). All of these are traits that are incredibly dangerous in a serial killer.

Serial killings have been one of the most terrifying, violent crimes in the United States for a great deal of time now. Serial killers “Typically commit their murders over a considerable span of time – sometimes years,” (Serial Killers). Serial murderers tend to have a bit of down time between murders. They also tend to target a certain type of victim and commit their murders in similar places (Serial Killers). “Serial murder has become one of the central concerns in homicide investigation?” (Keppel 3). There are two distinct reasons for this. One is because it happens so frequently. The other is because it befuddles investigative agencies with its unique problems (Keppel 3).

Ted Bundy grew up in what today’s society would call “a dysfunctional home.” For the first 23 years of his life, Ted believed that his grandparents were his parents and his mother was his sister. He was born Theodore Robert Cowell on November 24, 1946 to 22- year-old Eleanor Louise Cowell (Bell 2). Throughout his entire life, Ted never knew his real father, Lloyd Marshall.

The confusion that Ted lived his life through came into play shortly after his birth. He and his mother moved back to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to live with her parents. Soon enough, Ted began referring to his grandparents as mother and father, not knowing the truth. His mother allowed this because it aided her in escaping “?any harsh criticism and prejudice for being an unwed mother,” (Bell 2). Not knowing otherwise, Ted only knew and thought of Eleanor as his big sister, not his mother like she truly was.

Ted did not get too much time to settle in his new surroundings in Philadelphia. He was just four years of age when he and his birth mother moved again. This time, the move was across the country, to Tacoma, Washington. Ted was severely distraught by leaving his beloved grandfather, who he thought was his father. This “was a traumatic experience, from which Ted never quite recovered,” (Sears 2). Again they moved in with relatives, except this time they changed their names. “Ted became Theodore Robert Nelson and his mother Eleanor became Louise Cowell,” (Bell 2). It was here, in Washington, where Eleanor would wed again. She married a man “?by the name of Johnnie Culpepper Bundy, whose last name Ted would assume for the rest of his life, a name that would later become synonymous with murder,” (Bell 2).

Ted never really liked the idea of being a Bundy, “?he thought of himself as more of a Cowell?” (Bell 2). Ted attributed not feeling socially adept to what he referred to as, “?the ‘lack of IQ’ of the entire Bundy clan,” (Sears 3). He grew up as a very shy child. During gym classes in junior high, “?he insisted on showering in privacy,” (Sears 2). He was often teased and bullied (Bell 2). However, unlike most adolescents who are continuously tormented, Ted was able “?to maintain a high grade average that would continue throughout high school and later into college,” (Bell 2). His high grade point average was fueled by an overwhelming interest in politics. Ted constantly kept up on current events and religiously read up on political events. In fact, some of those who knew Ted while he was in school, thought he would one day aspire to be governor.

Around the age of twenty, he seemed to develop “?a preoccupation with sex and violence and sought out pornographic materials that centered on the use, abuse, and possession of women as objects,” (Sears 3). During the same time period, Ted broke out of his social enclosure and took part in his first sexual experience. The woman’s name was Stephanie Brooks who attended the University of Washington along with Bundy. It was obvious that Ted was overcome by her beauty and was “?deeply infatuated?” with her (Sears 3). However, these feelings were not exactly mutual. Following her graduation from the university, Stephanie broke off the relationship with Bundy and basically crushed him. Ted’s life would never be the same.

The only other true love that Ted had had by his side throughout his life was school, but now, without Stephanie, even school seemed insignificant to him. It was only a matter of time before he dropped out of the University of Washington. Ted vowed to change his life style and win back Stephanie by impressing her as this new man with morals and goals. Eventually, he did become a different person, “He changed from a shy and introverted person to a more focused and dominant character,” (Bell 3), but that was not necessarily for the better.

By the time Bundy was 23, he finally learned of his “true parentage” (Bell 3). He was now on a mission, attempting to prove himself to the world (Bell 3). With his new-found drive and compassion for life, Ted “?re-enrolled at the University of Washington and studied psychology, a subject in which he excelled,” (Bell 3). This time around professors at the university liked Ted Bundy, and they liked the honor student that he had become.

Ted never did get over Stephanie completely, yet that did not stop him from seeing other women. His next serious relationship was with a woman named Meg Anders. This lasted for a period of about five years, although Bundy did keep in touch with his true love, Stephanie, unbeknownst to Meg. Ironically, this particular relationship was practically the exact opposite of Ted’s relationship with Stephanie. This time, Bundy was the one who was loved deeply, while his feelings for her were not quite as strong. “Although he claimed that he loved her, he confessed that he could not stop thinking about Stephanie,” (Sears 4). In a conversation with a close friend of his, Ted stated that “Stephanie was the one woman, the only woman I ever really loved. It’s different from the way I feel about Meg,” (Bell 3).

Bundy eventually did win Stephanie back in a way. She was impressed with what he had become, “?a mature, successful, handsome young man who was charming and articulate,” (Sears 4). However, there was to be another disturbing outcome of their relationship. This time though, it was Ted who made the decision. In December of 1973, Ted put quite an unexpected end to their relationship. Something was different with Bundy, “His whole attitude toward her had somehow changed, and he was uninterested in and even hostile toward Stephanie?” (Sears 4). Stephanie reacted to this situation as expected to, she was extremely shocked and even heart broken. It was almost as if Ted had planned this sort of revenge ever since Stephanie had hurt him, and he worked out his plan to perfection.

Prior to these hurtful actions towards Stephanie, it seemed as though Theodore Robert Bundy had his life headed in the right direction. For a period of about three years, 1969-1972, it was apparent that Ted had gained self-confidence and was striving towards a successful future. He took numerous steps in order to better himself and the level of his education. He sent out numerous applications to law schools. During this time period, his interest in politics continued to grow immensely as he became involved in them (Bell 3).

Bundy was not always on the wrong side of the law when it came to the police, in fact, Ted was commended by the Seattle police department on two separate occasions. The first time, in 1970, Ted was commended for “?running down a purse snatcher and returning the stolen bag to its owner,” (Sears 4). The second time Bundy was commended was for his heroic actions in which he “rushed into Green Lake?and saved a three-and-one-half-year-old toddler from drowning,” (Sears 4). During this same time period, he took a job as a counselor at a crisis clinic where he specialized in the area of rape.

Out of all the numerous applications that Ted sent out, he only received one acceptance letter, to his surprise. Ted had his heart set on being swamped with acceptance letters and thought he would have to decide on which school to pick. Instead, it was the other way around, Ted really did not have a choice. The only school that accepted him was the University of Utah College of Law there was no choice to be made. Only being accepted to one of the many schools was “a major setback for his ego?” (Sears 5). Ted decided against attending the University of Utah College of Law once it came time to start his first semester there. He contacted the admissions office through the mail, telling them that injuries from a horrible auto accident would not permit him to attend school. This was just another of Ted Bundy’s infamous lies.

Bundy continued to personify the “boy next door” or the “all-American boy,” (Sears 5), yet slowly, he edged his way out of his shell, towards the killer he really was. It all started innocent enough, “By chance one evening he observed a woman undressing through an open window,” (Sears 5). Immediately he became hooked on prowling through the streets at night as a voyeur (Sears 5). He continued these acts, and only these acts, for a number of years. However, after a while, Ted became a bit bored with only being a spectator. Soon his actions escalated into personal interaction and then physical contact. Bundy never expressed any remorse for his first assault on a woman with a club. The only thing he admitted to being worried about was being seen, discovered, or caught. In order to avoid this, he panicked and ran (Sears 5). By constantly participating in these actions, he eventually mastered the art of luring and beating women. Just like before, he reached the point where doing what he was doing began to bore him. He felt the need to graduate to the next level, and did so in a huge, disturbing way.

On December 6, 1973, the first of many bodies was found in McKenny Park, Washington. The body was that of Kathy Devine, a 15-year-old girl who “?was last seen by her friends on November 25th hitchhiking to Oregon, trying to run away from home,” (Bell 4). Decomposition had made it hard to determine the exact cause of death of the tall, willowy teen who had long dark hair (Victims 1). However, “evidence suggested she’d been sodomized, and she had been strangled. It’s possible that her throat was also cut,” (Victims 1). It would be nearly a year and a half before another body would be found. Bundy did strike again within this time period, however, his victim survived, somehow. In early January 1974, an eighteen-year-old named Joni Lenz was severely beaten in her basement bedroom in her home, while she slept one night. Later the next day, “after she hadn’t appeared all morning, her housemates went to check on her and found her lying in her bed, her hair and face matted with dried blood,” (Victims 1). Joni was badly beaten with part of her own bed. Bundy broke off a metal rod from the bed frame, beat her over the head with it repeatedly, and to top it all off, her housemates looked under the covers and found that “?the rod had been brutally jammed into her vagina,” (Victims 1). Amazingly, poor Joni Lenz lived through this attack, although she suffered severe brain damage and “irreparable damage to her internal organs,” (Victims 1). Luckily for Joni, due to the severity of her brain damage, she had no recollection of the attack.

Ted Bundy continued these practices for years to come. Over and over, he lured attractive young women to him, beat them, killed them, and raped them, both alive and dead. Over time, police were able to put together the leads and the facts they were receiving about murders in the states of Washington, Oregon, and Utah. There were unbelievable similarities that linked these cases together. Of course, the similarity that stood out the most was the fact that all the murders were women. In order to seriously tie these cases together, there needed to be overwhelming similarities in each one. These were found in the fact that, “All the girls were white, thin, single, wearing slacks at the time of disappearance, had hair that was long and parted in the middle and they all disappeared in the evening,” (Bundy). Therefore, according to the definition of a serial killer given before, the police immediately knew what they were dealing with.

Looking back on all the information that is available now that details Ted Bundy’s life, it is easy to associate Bundy’s preying on beautiful women with long, dark hair parted in the middle directly to his first love, Stephanie. Stephanie hurt him deeply and basically helped to send him on his path to become a serial murderer. It is almost as if Bundy’s motive was to get back at every attractive young lady who had long, dark hair, parted in the middle. All of his victims:

Were young Caucasian females, most between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. All had long hair parted down the middle, and all were slim, attractive, and highly talented in some respect. Each was single and had more than average intelligence. They were shy girls who gladly would help someone in need. A majority was attacked at night, and all were left unburied, wearing little or no clothes. Most were first struck on the head with some type of blunt instrument and then further attacked, either by strangulation, stabbing or cutting, or sexual assault. Very few were raped, although several were sexually assaulted with various instruments?Many were college students, although none?knew Bundy personally. Many were disposed of in a park or wooded area, and no physical evidence of the killer was found at any of the murder scenes (Sears 14).

Ted was a very sly individual. Being a handsome man himself, being sly was not a difficult task. Bundy often lured his victims by donning a fake cast on one of his extremities, usually either an arm or a leg. He would pretend to fumble with his books and he would pick out a woman nearby and ask her for her help (Bundy). There are not too many women that would ignore a man of his looks, especially one struggling in a cast. Ted Bundy knew this and used it to his advantage.

The majority of his attacks started out in an unalarming manner. He had several different methods that he used in order to lure his victims. First and foremost was his whole charade with the cast. Secondly, he would disguise himself as a mall security guard, a police officer, a fireman, or some other sort of law enforcement, and attempt to persuade his victims to come with him through some sort of lie or act. Once he had won his victims trust, he soon turned violent on them, beating them, or attempting to tie them up, threatening to kill them.

The list of Ted Bundy’s victims goes on and on. In all, Ted Bundy is suspected to have murdered some 36 women. Yet, he was only convicted for three of those murders. Only being convicted for three murders was by far enough to have him sentenced to his death, but it just did not equal justice for the families of the other 33 girls that he was suspected to have murdered. Bundy continuously stayed off execution by repeatedly appealing the courts’ decisions, and in a last ditch effort, confessing to numerous murders, hoping this would intrigue investigators and again delay his death. His last attempt failed, and Bundy was executed.

On January 24, 1989, Theodore Robert Bundy took his last breath. He was pronounced dead at 7:16 a.m. Bundy was executed in a Florida State Prison, where he sat on death row for nearly eleven years (Sears 17). While in court, Bundy insisted that he represent himself. However, in doing so, he did not exactly attempt to defend himself, instead “?he succeeded in emphasizing the gruesome crime scenes and the horror of his acts,” (Sears 17). Bundy expressed no remorse for his actions. He was put to death through means of the electric chair. Many feel as though he did not suffer enough for his actions.

It’s true that Ted Bundy did not exactly have an easy life, but by no means is that an excuse for his behavior. Bundy suffered many traumatic experiences as a child. First off, he never met his real father. This can severely damage a child mentally. Never seeing your father can definitely leave an empty feeling inside. Secondly, he moved around a lot as a child. His mother, Louise, dragged him all over the country right from birth. The first place they went to live was with Louise’s parents in Philadelphia. Once Ted was old enough to associate names with faces, he began associating his grandparents as his parents and his mother as his sister. His mother allowed this, thus misleading the child greatly. Ted formed a special bond with his grandfather, whom he thought was his actual father. And then, just as fast as he had been thrown into all of this confusion, he was pulled out of it.

This time, his mother and he moved to the other side of the country, Tacoma, Washington. At this point, Ted was only four years old. It was here in Washington when they legally changed their names. So now, Ted Bundy is a four-year-old child who has spent most of his life on the road with his mother, whom he thinks is his sister. He has never seen his real father, although he did live with his grandfather for a while and thought he was his father. Then he was pulled away from a home where he thought he lived with his parents, brought across the country to live with different relatives, and forced to change his name. Granted, at the age of only four, Ted might not be able to grasp all that has been going on, but he must have been a bit confused. Ted then grew up and went to school, only to be made fun of and bullied. He then grew older and moved on to college, only to have his heart broken, an event that would lead directly to his twisted ways.

So right from the day he was born, Ted Bundy was basically living a false life. He was not Theodore Robert Cowell as he was at birth. Nor was he Theodore Robert Nelson as he was when his name was legally changed. The entire time, he was Ted Bundy, the demented serial killer who got his thrills through brutally torturing and tormenting beautiful, young women. Now, the name Ted Bundy will forever be synonymous with murder (Bell 2).