

Interview With Parents of Slain Child Beauty Queen

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NATALIE ALLEN, CNN ANCHOR: And Brian is here, he conducted an exclusive interview today with the child's parents, John and Patricia Ramsey.

BRIAN CABELL, CNN CORRESPONDENT: First of all, from a newsstand point, a couple of item's came out, the Ramsey are going to be putting together their own investigative team, they say, private investigates. This is not meant as any disrespect, they say, for the Colorado authorities. They just want the best mind possible, they say, looking into this crime.

Secondly, they will be offering a reward perhaps as much as \$50,000 starting next week. It has been a very difficult week as you might expect for the Ramsey family, a very difficult interview as well, we talked to them for about 45 minutes.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CABELL (off-camera): Why did you decide you wanted to talk now?

JOHN B. RAMSEY, JONBENET'S FATHER: Well we have been pretty isolated -- totally isolated -- for the last five days, but we've sensed from our friends that this tragedy has touched not just ourselves and our friends but many people. And we know that there's many people that are praying for us, that are grieving with us. And we want to thank them, to let them know that we are healing, and that we know in our hearts that JonBenet is safe and with God and that the grieving that we all have to do is for ourselves and for our loss, but we want to thank those people that care about us.

PATRICIA RAMSEY, JONBENET'S MOTHER: We have just been overwhelmed by the cards and letters and visits and people we haven't seen for years have come to call and be supportive in their -- many of them are parents, and they know and can feel our grief.

RAMSEY, J: But the other -- the other reason is that -- for our grief to resolve itself we now have to find out why this happened.

CABELL: There has been some question as to why you hired a defense attorney.

RAMSEY, J: I know. Well, we were fortunate from almost the moment that we found the note to be surrounded by friends, our minister, our family doctor, a personal friend of mine who is also an attorney, and we relied on their guidance almost from that moment on and my friend suggested that it would be foolish not to have knowledgeable counsel to help both us and with the investigation.

RAMSEY, P: And if anyone knows anything, please, please help us. For the safety of all of the children, we have to find out who did this.

RAMSEY, J: Not because we're angry, but because we have got to go on.

RAMSEY, P: We can't -- we can't --

RAMSEY, J: This -- we cannot go on until we know why. There's no answer as to why our daughter died.

CABELL: Are you fully convinced that your daughter was kidnapped by some outsiders outside your family or circle of friends?

RAMSEY, J: Yes. I -- we don't -- you know, it's just so hard to know, but we are -- our family is a loving family. It's a gentle family. We have lost one child. We know how precious their lives are .

CABELL: Mrs. Ramsey -- you found the note. Was it a handwritten note, three pages?

RAMSEY, P: I didn't -- I couldn't read the whole thing I -- I just gotten up. We were on our -- it was the day after Christmas, and we were going to go visiting, and it was quite early in the morning, and I had got dressed and was on my way to the kitchen to make some coffee, and we have a back staircase from the bedroom areas, and I always come down that staircase, and I am usually the first one down. And the note was lying across the -- three pages -- across the run of one of the stair treads, and it was kind of dimly lit.

It was just very early in the morning, and I started to read it, and it was addressed to John. It said "Mr. Ramsey," And it said, "we have your daughter." And I -- you know, it just was -- it just wasn't registering, and I -- I may have gotten through another sentence. I can't -- "we have your daughter." and I don't know if I got any further than that. And I immediately ran back upstairs and pushed open her door, and she was not in her bed, and I screamed for John.

CABELL: John, you subsequently read the note. Was there anything in there that struck you in any sense?

RAMSEY, J: Well, no. I mean, I read it very fast. I was out of my mind. And it said "Don't call the police." You know, that type of thing. And I told Patsy, call the police immediately. And I think I ran through the house a bit.

RAMSEY, P: We went to check our son.

RAMSEY, J: Checked our son's room. Sometimes she sleeps in there. And we just were --

RAMSEY, P: We were just frantic.

CABELL: How did you happen later to look in the basement?

RAMSEY, J: Well, we'd waited until after the time that the call was supposed to have been made to us, and one of the detectives asked me and my friend who was there to go through every inch of the house to see if there was anything unusual or abnormal that looked out of place.

RAMSEY, P: Look for clues I guess.

RAMSEY, J: Look for clues, asking us to do that, give us something more to do to occupy our mind, and so we started in the basement, and -- and we were just looking, and we -- one room in the basement that -- when I opened the door -- there were no windows in that room, and I turned the light on, and I -- that was her.

RAMSEY, P: She was --

(END VIDEOTAPE)

CABELL (on camera): Mr. Ramsey did confirm that duct tape was found on his daughter's mouth. I asked him about a cord found around her neck, that was a report out of Colorado today, he said he didn't see, it could have been there but he was panicked at that point. He picked up the body, ran screaming upstairs, hoping she was still alive, of course she was not.

There was also a reference to another child that was lost. They lost his daughter -- his adult daughter -- about four years ago in an auto accident. This is the second child they have lost.

Coming up in just a few minutes, we address the question -- I address the question -- to them of their being suspects themselves. That's natural in a case like this and we'll ask them about that coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

LOU WATERS, CNN ANCHOR: At this hour we're concentrating on the murder of JonBenet Ramsey which has shocked and saddened many in her home town of Boulder, Colorado.

ALLEN: CNN's Brian Cabell this afternoon had exclusive interview with her parents and he's here again with more of the emotional interview after the killing.

CABELL: As you know in cases like this it's very normal police procedure to look at the family first of all as possible suspects in this case. The Ramsey's say they understand this, they're well aware of the Susan Smith case of a couple of years ago, they understand that possibly they would be looked at suspiciously and they say they accept this.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CABELL (off camera): You were asked shortly thereafter for a hair sample and writing sample, blood sample. Who else was asked for this?

RAMSEY, J: Well, Patsy and I, Burke, our son, who is nine, every family member.

CABELL: Including your two elder children?

RAMSEY, J: Uh-huh.

CABELL: Any friends?

RAMSEY, J: I don't know.

CABELL: Now, did you give the samples?

RAMSEY, J: Uh-huh.

CABELL: Oh, really? Because the word was that they thought you were too grief stricken. So both of you, you gave samples?

RAMSEY, J: Yes.

CABELL: Were you offended by that?

RAMSEY, J: No.

RAMSEY, P: It was difficult. But, you know, they need to know -- I mean our hand prints are all over our home, so they need to know if there's -- if there are other ones --

CABELL: The police said a couple of days ago, to assure other residents of Boulder there is no killer on the loose here, you can be assured everything is under control. You believe it's someone outside your home.

RAMSEY, P: There is a killer on the loose.

RAMSEY, J: Absolutely.

RAMSEY, P: I don't know who it is. I don't know if it's a he or a she. But if I were a resident of Boulder, I would tell my friends to keep -- keep your babies close to you, there's someone out there.

CABELL: An FBI spokesman was quoted as saying at this point they don't regard it necessarily as a kidnapping. You think that's a wrong assumption?

RAMSEY, J: I don't know. I mean, there is a -- a note that said -- your daughter has been kidnapped. We have your daughter. We want money. You give us the money; she'll be safely returned.

RAMSEY, P: It seemed like kidnapping to me.

RAMSEY, J: I guess that's what concerns me because if we don't have the full resources of all the law enforcement community on this case, I am going to be very upset.

CABELL: Inevitably, speculation on talk shows will focus on you. It's got to be a sickening --

RAMSEY, J: It's nauseating beyond belief.

RAMSEY, P: You know, America has just been hurt so deeply with the -- this -- the tragic things that have happened. The young woman who drove her children into the water, and we don't know what happened with the O.J. Simpson -- and I mean, America is suffering because have lost faith in the American family.

We are a Christian, God-fearing family. We love our children. We would do anything for our children.

CABELL: Do you truly think the perpetrator will be found?

RAMSEY, J: Yes. Yes. Has to be found.

CABELL: Do you think it's a single individual?

RAMSEY, J: Yes. In my heart I do.

CABELL: Do you take some comfort in believing that JonBenet Ramsey is in a better place.

RAMSEY, J: Yes. That's the one thing we want people dealing with us to know, to believe that, we know that in our heart.

RAMSEY, P: She'll never have to know the loss of a child . She will never have to know cancer or death of a child.

RAMSEY, J: We learned when we lost our first child that people would come forward to us, that sooner or later everyone carries a very heavy burden in this life. And JonBenet didn't carry any burdens.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

CABELL: The Ramseys are staying here in the Atlanta area with family right now. They say they intend to go back to Boulder within a few days, precisely when they're not quite sure. They say when they go back they will sit down with the Boulder police. They will talk. They will tell them anything they want to know.

ALLEN: Brian, are police saying anymore about the investigation? Leads or evidence from the home?

CABELL: Police have not been particularly forthcoming about leads perhaps deliberately so, but they have said very little as to forced entry, anything like that we simply do not know. The police are keeping that to themselves at this point.

WATERS: What's intriguing to me is the Boulder cop said -- assured the public -- there was no killer on the loose. Now, that suggests they may have a line on who did this. Isn't that what --

CABELL: You start to question that, but keep in mind this was the first and only murder in Boulder this year so there was a bit of panic, a bit of alarm in the community. I think the police were simply trying to tell them: Don't worry we have everything under control, we have police out in the streets. They did step up their surveillance, so perhaps that's the way to explain that.

ALLEN: When was the last time they saw JonBenet Ramsey?

CABELL: When they put her to bed Christmas night, as a matter of fact, and sometime between the time they put her to bed and 5:50 or so the following morning she was apparently abducted from her bed.

WATERS: Did I hear the Ramseys are putting out some money to hire private investigators?

CABELL: They will be assembling their own private investigative team, exactly how many individuals we don't know, but private investigators, attorneys, they say they want the best investigative minds in the country. They want to coordinate this with the authorities in Boulder and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. But they are hiring their own people and offer a reward starting next week.

WATERS: What kind of reward?

CABELL: Fifty-thousand dollars was the figure he tossed out there. He wasn't absolutely certain but he thought it would be at least \$50,000.

ALLEN: Was there something that struck you the most from your conversation with them?

CABELL: It's just looking at two parents, myself being a parent. It's very difficult to conduct an interview, very difficult to be interviewed about losing a six-year-old child especially in such a violent way.

WATERS: Did you try hard to get them to sit down and talk? Most folks, in this kind of situation, I would think, would be very reluctant to sit in front of a television camera.

CABELL: They said that they had to get over this five or six days of grieving and burying their daughter, now they want to get on with this new stage of their life, and that is: finding the killer. They wanted to get this off their chest, they want to get this in motion.