

THIS IS A BOX SET EDITION OF  
**JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET:  
THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH**

**BOOK ONE: FINDING THE KILLER**

*Was the man in the mall  
the most notorious murderer in history?*

AND

**BOOK TWO: FINDING THE VICTIM**

*The body identified as Adam Walsh is not him.  
Is Adam still alive?*

**BY ARTHUR JAY HARRIS**

Smashwords Edition

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**BOOK ONE**

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: THE FLEDGLING SERIAL KILLER

CHAPTER 2: THE DISAPPEARANCE

CHAPTER 3: THE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

CHAPTER 4: THE DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 5: MAN IN A BLUE VAN

CHAPTER 6: DAHMER ON A RAMPAGE

CHAPTER 7: THE DRIFTERS

CHAPTER 8: THE DRIFTER'S STORY DRIFTS

CHAPTER 9: THE DRIFTER RECANTS

CHAPTER 10: "HE'S STILL OUT THERE"

CHAPTER 11: COLD CASE

CHAPTER 12: THE CASE FILE OPENS

CHAPTER 13: FIRST PERSON

CHAPTER 14: JOHN WALSH'S RAGE

CHAPTER 15: TRACKING DOWN A FLEDGLING SERIAL KILLER

CHAPTER 16: THE BLUE VAN

CHAPTER 17: CALLING THE COPS

CHAPTER 18: 25TH ANNIVERSARY

CHAPTER 19: WAS WILLIS MORGAN RIGHT?

CHAPTER 20: THE DAHMER STORY BREAKS

CHAPTER 21: RESOLUTION

## **BOOK TWO**

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK TWO

CHAPTER 22: 2009-10:

REVISITING EVENTS OF THE WEEK OF AUGUST 10, 1981

CHAPTER 23: A FACEBOOK FRIEND REQUEST

CHAPTER 24: CORPUS DELICTI (BODY OF THE CRIME)

CHAPTER 25: UNDER WATER

CHAPTER 26: ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS...

CHAPTER 27: ROTTEN TO THE CORE

CHAPTER 28: FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

CHAPTER 29: THE SHROUD OF TURIN

CHAPTER 30: POTTERSVILLE

CHAPTER 31: DAHMER ON A SPREE

CHAPTER 32: A GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH

CHAPTER 33: A HASTY IDENTIFICATION

CHAPTER 34: THE DNA LAB REPORT

CHAPTER 35: WHO KILLED ADAM WALSH?

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**ARTHUR JAY HARRIS**

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# JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET

THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH



**BOOK ONE: FINDING THE KILLER**

**Was the man in the mall the most  
notorious murderer in history?**

*A True Story*

## ARTHUR JAY HARRIS

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*Was the man in the mall  
the most notorious murderer in history?*

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JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET: THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH is a journalistic account of the abduction and reported murder of Adam Walsh in Hollywood, Florida in 1981. The events recounted in this book are true. Names that have been changed are noted in the text as such. Research has been done using author interviews, law enforcement and other public records, published and broadcast news stories, and books. Quoted sworn testimony has been taken verbatim from transcripts.

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### **DAHMER'S SLIP OF THE TONGUE?**

IN THE SUMMER OF 2002, in the true crime section of a used bookstore, I found a 1997 book by former FBI serial-killer profiler Robert Ressler titled *I Have Lived in the Monster* that included a transcript of an interview he'd conducted with Jeffrey Dahmer in January 1992. Browsing it, Dahmer was talking about finding his last Milwaukee murder victim and had made light of a coincidence, that Konerak Sinthasomphone was the younger brother of Somsack Sinthasomphone, who he'd been arrested for sexually assaulting three years earlier:

He was the brother of the one that [I'd photographed]. I was just walking in the mall, ran into him, didn't know him from Adam—how many are the chances of that happening? Astronomical.

When I read this, I stared at it. Was this a slip of the tongue by a serial killer who severed heads, who'd admitted being in Miami when the Walsh child was reported lost—and who trolled for children to abduct in a shopping mall?

*Didn't know him from Adam?*

In 1991, Hollywood police seemed to have decided that Dahmer's movements here would be too difficult to trace 10 years after the fact. Despite the handicap of another 11 years since then, I decided on the spot in the bookstore to do the legwork Hollywood hadn't done and learn everything I could about Jeffrey Dahmer—and especially his time in Miami.

### **WOULD THE OPENING OF THE FILES HELP SOLVE THE CASE?**

IN 1996, AT THE REQUEST OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS but over the bitterest objections of Hollywood Police and the Walsh family, a judge ruled that Florida law required that the long-unsolved murder case file of Adam Walsh, killed in 1981, must be made public.

In advance of the exposure of the files, charges flew:

“The city of Hollywood and its police department lacked the experience to conduct an investigation of this magnitude.”

—Richard Witt, in 1996 the chief of police, Hollywood, Florida

“Now, details previously known only to the police and the killer will be known to all—making it almost impossible to find out who the real murderer is.”

## [Introduction](#)

*DAHMER, JEFFREY—SERIAL KILLER WHO LIVED IN THE MIAMI AREA at the time Adam Walsh was abducted.*

In 1994, a Hollywood, Florida cold case detective reviewing the never-solved Adam Walsh murder case of 1981 wrote that in a seven-page master summary of 70-plus people who over the years had been briefly suspected of the crime or who had given information regarding it. His purpose was to organize the huge, rambling case file and see if in the passage of time some neglected lead might leap off the page, requiring a fresh look.

The case was the largest in the history of the low-rise seaside city of Hollywood, and a festering sore besides because police, despite monumental work, had never made an arrest. It was all the more notorious because a child's severed head had horrifically been found and identified as Adam, and the boy's father, John Walsh, afterwards had crusaded to change American laws and awareness regarding missing children and then had become the long-running host of a hyper-aggressive crime-fighting television show, *America's Most Wanted*.

Unfortunately, the Dahmer line the detective wrote got no rise out of him.

As Hollywood Police had quickly learned after Dahmer's capture in Milwaukee in 1991, he'd lived and worked about 15 minutes by car from where six-year-old Adam was last seen alive, the toy department of Sears in the Hollywood Mall, where his mother had left him alone on a summer Monday around noon for no more than 5-10 minutes, she said. Although Hollywood Police never found anyone who remembered Dahmer in South Florida, Dahmer himself had admitted being here then. He even said later he remembered seeing the story on the news. But he denied killing Adam—so convincingly that the cold case detective hardly bothered to retrace the previous investigation. To the original lead detective, Dahmer said that summer he didn't have a vehicle—essential for a kidnapping. He wasn't attracted to children that young. He didn't know where the Hollywood Mall was. He was busy working 12-hour days every weekday and most weekends. Besides, he'd already admitted to more murders than Milwaukee police had evidence of, so why would he lie about this one? Dahmer looked him straight in the eye when he denied it, the detective said—and he believed him.

Yet two separate witnesses had come forward to Hollywood Police within days of when Dahmer was arrested and his photo was all over the news. They both reported encountering Dahmer at Hollywood Mall that day 10 years earlier when Adam disappeared.

That's not all. Within days of the original event, both witnesses initially had told Hollywood police what they'd seen—without knowing Dahmer's name. Through the media, the police had asked for anyone with information to come forward. A flood of tips ensued. But in that flood their statements—and as it much later turned out, potentially crucial statements of others too—had been lost, ignored, or filtered out before they reached detectives.

One witness said that Dahmer, drunk, disheveled, menacing and hovering, tried to pick him up. When the witness refused, Dahmer shot him an evil stare, then stormed away. Scared but expecting Dahmer would approach someone else, who'd need help, he followed Dahmer at a safe distance through the mall, into Sears, then into its toy department.

The other witness saw Dahmer in the parking lot outside Sears grab a struggling, protesting child he thought was Adam and hurriedly throw him "like a sack of potatoes" into a blue van that then screeched away. That witness stood shocked, he'd never seen anything like that before. How could anyone do that to a small child?

Another witness, who was initially believed, had also described Adam's kidnapper stealing him into a blue van that sped away. For a month, the blue van was Hollywood's best lead.

But Hollywood Police were never bowled over by the Dahmer witnesses. Although Dahmer had volunteered the names of the places where he'd worked and lived in nearby North Miami Beach, both establishments were gone by 1991. He left no police records—that is, that the Hollywood detectives found. Without supporting witnesses or records, and a suspect's denial, how could a murder case be made?

On the other hand, Jeffrey Dahmer was a noted convincing liar, especially to law enforcement. He severed his victims' heads—and there was a severed head in this case. He'd already killed his first victim (by his count) and severed his head in 1978, three years before Adam disappeared. Plus, all the murders he admitted to were in states that didn't have the death penalty. Florida famously did and still does. He also had a conviction for masturbating in a public place in front of two 12-year-olds and another for indecent exposure, and he admitted to such behavior often.

Hollywood Police didn't interview Dahmer until a year after his Milwaukee arrest and then only after John Walsh insisted. In a Wisconsin prison, the lead detective spent just an hour with Dahmer. When he returned to Florida, he convinced Walsh that Dahmer was innocent.

Dahmer was murdered in prison two years later. Had Hollywood done as much as I did, considering my handicap of arriving 11 years after them, they would have had a chance to try Dahmer for Adam's murder. Now it is too late. We can only speculate whether a jury would have sent Dahmer to Florida's electric chair, his richly deserved fate. Then we would have had a legal conclusion instead of a vigilante lynching by a prison inmate.

One item Hollywood police never found was Dahmer's name on a Miami police report 20 days before Adam disappeared. He reported a dead homeless man, who'd already turned blue, lying next to a dumpster—a dumpster Dahmer was seen eating out of about a week before. A few feet away was an electric meter room where the dead man apparently had slept—and afterward maybe also Dahmer, then homeless himself. He said he'd stepped over the dead man for days—although it was more likely he'd just dragged him out of the meter room, because the dumpster was in a well-trafficked alley, behind a pizza shop.

In the next 20 days, with the help of his new employer—whom police also never bothered to find—Dahmer apparently rented his motel-apartment room. The last time he'd lived alone in his own place, three years earlier at home in Ohio after both his

parents had briefly abandoned him, he'd picked up a hitchhiker, then killed and dismembered him.

They also never found a number of supporting witnesses who had seen Dahmer's evil eye stare exactly as the mall witness reported describing it.

One was the man who probably knew Dahmer best, his roommate on a U.S. Army base in Germany, who immediately recognized his banal pickup line to the witness. He also thought Dahmer possibly had killed a few times in Germany—German *polizei* had later suspected him of serial murders of women, although Dahmer admitted killing only men. The roommate had found blood- and mucus-covered buck knives in his room, and once Dahmer returned wearing blood-encrusted clothes after a night out.

He also knew that Army M.P.s had arrested Dahmer a few times for masturbating in front of German children in a local park, although they never entered charges and had merely brought him back to his room, with a brief explanation.

An Army nurse who had taught him anatomy also had seen Dahmer's evil eyes. She thought he might have been a serial rapist. When both she and Dahmer were on the base in Germany, on three occasions badly sodomized men were rushed to her hospital, one close to death.

For his alcoholism, the Army kicked out Dahmer early—dumped him back home on an unsuspecting America, really—but without a dishonorable discharge to blot his record. From Germany he came to Miami. His Miami employer, who also saw his evil eye, said Dahmer would occasionally come to work, weekdays in the mid-morning, drunk and disheveled and he'd send him home. He also disputed Dahmer's statement about his hours; they were only part-time, weekdays only. As well he contradicted Dahmer regarding his hair length. One of the mall witnesses insisted to the detective it was long, Dahmer said it wasn't, and the detective believed Dahmer, reasoning that he'd recently left the military, therefore it couldn't have been long. But the employer said it *was* long. So did the bunkmate, who saw Dahmer on his last day in the Army.

The police didn't know that at Dahmer's place of work, or its nearby sister store, was an unmarked blue pizza delivery van, easily accessible to employees, that often disappeared for hours and even days without documentation or consequences.

Even when I told the cold case detective most of this information in 2002, he still wasn't much interested. After I broke the story in a newspaper and on television in 2007 and then the national media picked it up, Hollywood police claimed they'd since re-interviewed the two mall witnesses—but it wasn't true; they hadn't done even that. John Walsh's reaction was inconsistent. Initially he said on camera that the local state attorney needed to examine the new evidence. But days later his show issued a statement that he trusted the police's word that they had done a full investigation of my work and correctly dismissed it.

This although Walsh had once said the Hollywood Police in this case was guilty of “incredible incompetence,” and his lawyer suggested they were “the biggest bunch of bungling idiots since the Keystone Kops.”

This was the same Hollywood police force that at a dramatic late Friday-night press conference, two years after the murder, had announced they'd solved the crime: a Jacksonville drifter named Ottis Toole had confessed. The police chief claimed that he knew things that only the slayer could have known. Everything he'd told them had checked out, said an interviewing detective from Jacksonville.



Actually, Toole was a serial false-confessor who Hollywood and Jacksonville detectives needed to guide with the facts during repeated grillings over a period of days. On his own he got the simplest of facts ridiculously wrong—beginning with the statement that the child was wearing mittens—in South Florida—explained only by his thinking that the kidnapping took place in January, not July. After luring the child into his car on the premise of candy and toys inside, he hit the power door lock button to ensure that the child couldn't easily escape—except that his car was discovered not to have power door locks. He also initially blamed the murder on his drifter-partner—until the partner was proven to be in jail in another state that day.

As shown in the transcripts, released 13 years later, when it became clear Toole needed help, the detectives dropped him obvious hints, showed him photos of the case, and gave him heavily weighted multiple-choices—which he *still* didn't always answer correctly. Step by step they unfolded the entire case. But as the process went on, he repeatedly tried to recant. That's when the detectives double-teamed him into continuing, hoping he'd eventually produce at least a single relevant true fact on his own. He never did.

To Hollywood's further embarrassment, before the press conference they hadn't conferred with the state attorney, who the next Monday refused to accept the case without corroboration. Detectives wasted months trying to establish that on the day Adam disappeared, Toole had been at least in the same county. In fact, they couldn't prove where he was that day, and never established he'd *ever* been in the county. Meanwhile, largely depending on whether the Jacksonville detective was in the room, Toole recanted—and re-confessed—and re-recanted over and over.

All of this could have been avoided because it was obvious at the start. Toole and his partner Henry Lee Lucas were already in a crazy competition to admit to the most killings—hundreds, between them, suggesting, had their statements been true, they were the most sociopathic killing machines in the history of police work. Meanwhile, less-than-skeptical detectives from all around the country embraced them to clear out their unsolved cases. They similarly told the pair their facts and accepted their confessions. The game finally ended when a Texas prosecutor timelined their claimed murders and realized they couldn't have been in distant states at nearly the same times.

Even before Toole's confession, Hollywood police already had wasted more months' effort trying to bully the Walsh family live-in nanny into confessing. Although his circumstances were irregular he didn't come close to the criminal profile of someone who would have murdered a child and severed his head. In truth he was anything but a criminal.

Years later, John Walsh blamed Hollywood police for trying too hard to solve the crime by forcing the facts. He called the investigation into the live-in nanny an "easy out" for the cops, a "dead-end lead" and "their first big mistake." Reve added, "It's almost like they're trying to frame him. The detectives are getting pressure from the top to solve this case."

John also said for publication that Toole's confession was beyond contempt. But four years later in 1996, just before Adam's police case file up to that point was made public, Walsh decided, after all, that Toole most likely *was* Adam's killer. By then even the Hollywood Police had long given up thinking he had committed the murder.

Since then, Walsh has continued to say that Toole killed his son, even after, in summer 2007, the ABC News show *Primetime* revealed that inside the electric meter room behind the sub shop where Dahmer worked a crime scene investigator had discovered a pattern of blood spatter she thought indicated a homicide, and a rusty axe and sledgehammer next to it. Dahmer had admitted using a sledgehammer on a victim before 1981, and the axe was no less grotesquely suggestive. Before broadcast, ABC had offered to present Walsh its facts, but Walsh declined and as well refused their invitation of an interview. Instead he sent an ex-cop who insisted, still, that Toole killed Adam, and promised a presentation of new evidence he'd found which *America's Most Wanted* would air within a month. It didn't.

As the chief of Hollywood police in October 1983 had announced at a surprise press conference that the case was solved, Toole killed Adam Walsh, a new chief in December 2008 did the same. Live on cable news, the Walshes were present, teary, and grateful for this day of closure, and national media followed in agreement.

But in 2008 Chief Chadwick E. Wagner offered no new evidence and certainly no smoking gun. "If you're looking for that magic wand or that hidden document that just appeared," Wagner answered a reporter's question, "it's not there."

Case now officially closed, the police offered to media CD-ROM copies of the complete case file. (After the 1996 court-ordered opening of the file, the police had denied all public record requests to see material they'd generated since then, and no one had again challenged them in court.)

As it turned out, Wagner was wrong. In the newly released part of the case file, police did have the smoking gun evidence that solved the case.

Only he didn't realize it.

The police had had it since 1996. Worse, it had been offered to them in the first week or weeks of the case, in 1981. They hadn't taken it. Had they, the case would have been solved in 1991, correctly, not in 2008, wrongly.

That evidence proved the case against Jeffrey Dahmer.

## [1](#) The Fledgling Serial Killer

### **JULY 1991**

#### *THERE'S A FUCKING HEAD IN THE REFRIGERATOR!*

Whether or not that was shrieked by a Milwaukee police officer first on the scene in Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment—a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter wrote it, though not in the newspaper—there *was* a fucking head in Dahmer's refrigerator. It was not alone, either. Inside the rooms, as best as such things can be hidden, the police as they searched through the overnight found ten more: three in the freestanding freezer, two on a shelf in the hall closet, two in a computer box, and three more in a filing cabinet. Four still had flesh remaining on the skulls. Some were painted gray. Police also found a collection of detached male—yes, private parts.

Being discovered by law enforcement with 11 severed heads on your premises—especially considering you live alone—places you in one of the more compromising

positions imaginable. So Jeffrey Dahmer, hardly a dummy and likely a genius, on the spot changed life strategies: the lonely serial killer became a serial talker to a rapt audience of detectives.

Although the cops searched Dahmer's apartment without his consent or with a search warrant, Dahmer's nightmarish confessions eliminated the similarly nightmarish possibility that everything the cops found in his apartment could have been tossed out in court as illegally obtained. So maybe he wasn't so smart after all.

He admitted seventeen murders, total, including some for which there was no evidence in his apartment. Of the remainder, the one that stood out was the one he claimed was his first, in the Ohio township rancher house on a country road where he'd grown up. Why did he volunteer it? Maybe he wanted to come completely clean, as he claimed. Or maybe he figured that the cops in his hometown would search missing-persons records and discover it themselves.

Dahmer was captured in 1991. The Ohio murder was thirteen years earlier, in 1978.

He told Milwaukee detectives he couldn't remember the victim's name. It didn't really matter to him, so he hadn't committed it to memory. They were the same age. He'd met him in an Akron bar, brought him home, and they'd had sex. Days later, when the Summit County, Ohio, Sheriff's Department did search its records and showed Dahmer a photo, he said he recognized him. He even recalled his name as Steve.

Steven Mark Hicks, the Ohio detective told him.

Although they hadn't known each other, both boys had just graduated rival high schools—Revere for Dahmer, Coventry for Hicks—in the same county, which includes Akron. It was a Sunday—June 18, 1978.

Dahmer then changed his story. No, he didn't find Steve in a bar. Instead, it was late that afternoon, around five, he was driving his father's Oldsmobile back from a bar where he'd been drinking, and he saw Steve hitchhiking in front of the Bath Township Police Department, at the intersection of Cleveland-Massillon Road and West Bath Road, about a mile from the Dahmers' house. It was a warm day and the hitchhiker was shirtless.

For the previous two years, Dahmer had been fantasizing about meeting a good-looking hitchhiker and "sexually enjoying him," he said. This was his chance.

Jeff passed him in the car then stopped. Should he do it? Nobody was home, his father had separated from the family and was living in a motel, and his mother had taken his little brother and left for Wisconsin about a week before, he said. Steve said he'd been to a rock concert. When Jeff asked if he could buy some pot from him, Hicks agreed to go to Dahmer's house, where they'd smoke, drink some beer, and listen to music.

He realized Steve wasn't gay, and no, they didn't have sex.

After a few friendly intoxicants in his bedroom while music played, Steve wanted to get back on his way, but Jeff wanted him to stay longer. Desperately. They fought, with their fists—until Jeff lifted a barbell rod and smacked Steve in the back of the head. Then he used it to strangle him to death.

You never forget your first kill, he said.

That's assuming, of course, it was his first kill, for which we only have the word of Jeffrey Dahmer. At first he'd claimed he'd met his victim in an Akron bar. Should law enforcement have taken Dahmer's word on anything that couldn't be proved by physical evidence or what someone else said?

Whether or not it was his first, Dahmer still had to dispose of the body. Later that night, with Steve already late for both his family and his friends, Dahmer dragged him into the gravel crawl space under his house. At 5'11, 160, Steve was only slightly smaller than himself. Dahmer masturbated over him. Upstairs, unable to sleep, he decided to get rid of the evidence.

The next day he bought a hunting knife, and waited until that night to slit open Steve's belly. Seeing its viscera, he masturbated again. He cut off one arm then created other pieces. He severed his head. "Bagged each piece. Triple-bagged it in large plastic trash bags," he said. He loaded the bags in the back of the Olds then at three A.M. drove back roads with the idea of going to a ravine ten miles away, where he was going to toss them.

Halfway, he said, a police car pulled him over, suspecting him of DUI because he'd crossed the median. The cop called for backup and administered a drunk test—which he passed. One cop shined his flashlight into his car and saw the bags.

"What's this stuff?"

"Just garbage," Dahmer answered. He said he'd meant to take it to the dump earlier. "And they believe it, even though there's a smell," Dahmer told the homicide cops in 1991. They gave him a ticket.

He returned home, abandoning his plan. He put the bags back in the crawl space, except for the head, which he took to the bathroom, washed on the floor, and then masturbated over. Then he put it back with the rest of the body. The next morning he placed the bags outside in a ten-foot long buried drainage pipe, smashed down the front of the pipe, and left them there.

In another version he said he buried the bags in his wooded backyard.

Six days after the murder, Steve's mother, Martha, filed a missing-persons report with the Summit County Sheriff. He had long brown hair, and she'd last seen him wearing blue jeans and blue tennis shoes. The Sunday before, his brother had dropped him off near their home so he could hitchhike about 20 miles to Chippewa Lake, which had a wooden roller coaster, where he spent the day with friends. A logical route to there went through Bath. Although Martha bugged detectives for years, and the family offered a reward for information, until 1991 nobody had reported anything.

Nature or nurture? Was Jeffrey Dahmer born a killer, or did his environment shape him toward who he became? The few known details of his home life paint a bleak picture. In his initial confession to Milwaukee police, he said his parents were "constantly at each other's throats." His Army roommate, who knew him as a 21-year-old, said he couldn't stand to talk about his mother, and could barely manage to talk about his father. "I don't have a mother and my father is a bastard," he once said to him. Much of his family story comes from his father, Lionel Dahmer, a Ph.D. chemist who wrote a book. Unsurprisingly, considering their divorce, Lionel speaks unkindly of Jeff's mother, Joyce Flint Dahmer. Lionel's own sins, he wrote, were largely of omission, failing to connect with his son and his wife or recognize the evil his eldest became capable of.

Lionel described arguments with Joyce that turned physical: "On some occasions, when I would fight back vigorously, [she] would seize a kitchen knife and make jabbing motions." Several times the police had to break up arguments, said a neighbor, mother of four, child playmates of the eventual killer. "At the time I knew him, there was something

devastating going on in his life, and there wasn't anybody there to help him. I feel bad about that." Another neighbor said, "He always seemed to be alone." A third neighbor described Joyce as "a very hyper person."

Days after Lionel appeared on *Dateline NBC* to promote his book—and Stone Phillips had blindsided her on camera with Lionel's published quotes about what he said was her postpartum depression after having Jeffrey—Joyce attempted suicide, by pills and gas from her kitchen oven. On a handwritten will dated two years earlier, wrote the *Fresno Bee*, she added a note that descended into illegibility: "It's been a lonely life—especially today." Also, she wrote, since the beginning of her marriage, Lionel "has physically and mentally abused me. Now he [is] reaping financing [sic] rewards for continuing to do so. He is evil in conade [sic] and is the real monster."

Jeff and his mom largely lost contact with each other between 1978 and March 1991, when she called him. In the next four months—was it coincidental?—he killed at least eight people. In prison, Jeff seemed to ask for forgiveness. "Mom, you must hate me," he told her during a visit. She didn't, though she was horrified by his crimes. "When I think of what [Jeff] did, I stop breathing," she told a Milwaukee newspaper writer she trusted. Another time, to the same reporter, in what must have been at least an attempt at a joke, she said she was considering writing her own book: *What To Do If You Ever Become A Serial Killer's Mother*.

In Lionel's family biography, when Jeff was small, "almost every week seemed to bring another round of illness. He often contracted ear and throat infections that would keep him crying through the night. Over and over, he was taken to the university clinic for injections, and after a time, his little buttocks were covered with injection lumps, and he began to lash out at the nurses and doctors who labored to treat him." At four, he needed surgery for a double hernia. When he awoke from sedation, in pain, he asked his mother if the doctors had removed his penis.

That same year Jeff first became fascinated with dead animals. To know where this is going, you don't need a degree in child psychiatry. There had been a terrible smell under the house. Lionel found the source—rodents killed and picked clean by other wild animals. After he collected them into a bucket for disposal, Jeff stuck his hand into it, to play with the bones.

At age six, Jeff broke several windows of an abandoned building. When Lionel took him fishing, he seemed captivated by fish entrails. Games Jeff played with other children involved stalking and concealment. His first grade teacher noticed he was shy, reclusive, unable to communicate with other children, and profoundly unhappy.

In third grade, Jeff killed his first animals. He caught tadpoles and brought them as a gift for a favorite teacher. The teacher gave them to another classmate, and after he showed them to Jeff, in disappointment Jeff later snuck into his classmate's garage and dumped motor oil in their water.

According to Lionel, Jeff was molested at age eight by an older boy in the Bath neighborhood where they'd just moved. In 1991, Jeff vehemently denied it to police.

After age ten Jeff's posture grew rigid, especially when others approached him. He preferred to be alone in his room or to blankly watch television. By early high school, undetected by his parents, he began drinking heavily and smoking pot. A neighbor perceived his budding homosexuality and told her child to stop associating with him.

On his bicycle, carrying a supply of plastic garbage bags, Jeff collected road kill—mainly dogs and foxes. After cutting into them to reveal their internal organs, he burned their flesh with acid and bleached their bones—his father anxiously had wanted him to learn chemistry, and although Jeff didn't let on to him, he did in fact have an interest. Since the animals were already dead, it didn't matter, he reasoned. Then he buried them in an animal cemetery he created on a neighbor's property. Or, as neighbors asserted, he kept their skeletons in a backyard shed. Once, on a tree branch in the woods, enshrined by a cross of sticks, he nailed a skinned and gutted dog's head. Neighbors added that they also found impaled cats and frogs. He also brought home a pig's head from science class and kept its skull. When neighboring children found ashes from a series of small fires he set, they thought it was evidence of cult worship.

Asked later if he enjoyed dissecting animals, he said he did not. Nor did he get pleasure from killing animals, although he claimed he had a friend who did. As the passenger in his friend's car, he'd watch along the road for dogs to hit. One day they killed six. Once he watched a beagle puppy fly over top of the car. "I've never seen such a look of terror in an animal's eyes. It was sickening," he recalled under questioning.

He managed only a C and D average in high school, although many recognized his very high intelligence. Often he was drunk in class on scotch or gin, and he kept a bottle in his locker. A classmate who first knew Jeff at age 12, later a sociology professor who wrote her Ph.D. thesis about him, said, "If a 16-year-old drinking in an 8 A.M. class isn't calling out for help, I don't know what is." She added, "Anyone who met him would say, he was the most bizarre person they'd ever met."

He encouraged a reputation for taking dares to do stupid stunts. Once, for 20 bucks, 10 classmates took him to Summit Mall in Akron for a spastic tour de force—witnessed by the future sociologist. For courage, he drained a six-pack of beer. At the Woolworth's lunch counter, he used an umbrella to knock over water glasses, as two patrons barely avoided a soaking. Leaving, he bleated like a lamb—a signature effect, according to his buddies. In a health food store, he sampled wheat germ then spit it out and screamed, "I'm allergic! I'm allergic!"

"We always saw him as the type to commit suicide, not harm somebody else," said a woman who had been his prom date. For the record, at the conclusion of that evening she remained unknissed. Nor had they danced together. In fact, he left her alone for an hour; when he returned, he said he'd gone to McDonald's. They parted with a handshake.

As he later admitted, Jeff first fantasized about killing a man in his senior year. He'd seen a jogger taking the same route, and his plan was to lie in wait, club him with a baseball bat, then drag him into the woods and have sex with him. One day he actually did stalk the man's path, he said. But the man never passed. In March of that year, drinking alcohol and smoking pot at home with a classmate, he pointed at six stuffed animals he said came from a taxidermist. "I always wanted to do that to a human," he said.

When his parents' marriage was at its nadir, Lionel slept in another room in the house and rigged a string tripwire with keys attached, to awaken him should Joyce enter. According to Lionel, Joyce filed for divorce; the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote that Lionel filed for it, in November 1977, although Joyce had first suggested the thought to him. They both alleged "extreme cruelty"—a detail unsaid in Lionel's book, although he did say Joyce had had an affair. Lionel left the house for a motel. By July 24, 1978, the date

the marriage was dissolved, Jeff was already 18 and therefore not the object of any custodial dispute—unlike his 13-year-old brother David. Lionel argued that Joyce shouldn't have custody of him because of her "extensive mental illness". She won anyway. He had to pay \$625 a month in alimony and child support.

That summer, Lionel stayed in touch by telephone with his sons, but by mid-August his calls to the house were no longer answered. After seven days of calling, then three of driving past the house without stopping, he knocked on the door.

Opening it, Jeff looked embarrassed. Where's your mother? Lionel asked. Where's your little brother?

"Gone. They moved out." He wouldn't say where or when they'd left.

Jeff wasn't alone. Friends, whom Lionel described as stoned, were in the midst of a séance trying to contact the dead. A chalk pentagram had been drawn on a round table. Lionel chased them away. He also discovered that the refrigerator was broken.

During that summer, Jeff said in his police confession, he'd had his first feelings of abandonment.

Immediately, Lionel moved back into the house, but with his girlfriend Shari, who would become his second wife—step mom to a child who, unknown to her, had already killed. During the next month Lionel confirmed that Joyce had taken David to her family's home in Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, Jeff was scheduled in about a week to leave for college, Ohio State in Columbus. One afternoon Shari caught Jeff drunk one afternoon, and Lionel followed by reading him the riot act. Until then Jeff had successfully hidden his drinking from his father.

At Ohio State, Jeff's alcoholism continued. Living in the 23-floor student residence hall Morrill Tower, in his first semester he earned a grade point average of 0.45. Jeff's best grade was a B-minus in riflery. When Lionel came to bring him home for winter break, he found a trophy row of beer and wine bottles at the top of his closet. His roommates told him Jeff drank daily, usually until he passed out, and he wouldn't get up until the middle of the afternoon. To get drinking money, he regularly sold his blood to a blood bank. His roommate from Cleveland later told the Ohio State student newspaper, the *Lantern*, that he "used to take bottles to class with him and came back drunk." He had no friends and got no mail. The high school classmate, later the sociology professor, saw him her last time "passed out on the street in Columbus. I remember thinking he was gone then."

At home, Lionel gave his son an ultimatum: get a job or join the military. For a few mornings he dropped him off at the mall to look for work. One afternoon he picked him up "dead drunk," Lionel wrote. Instead of taking him home, he told him to sober up and then call him back.

The call never came. Late that night, Lionel returned to the mall, couldn't find him, then called police. They'd picked him up hours earlier for drunk and disorderly.

Lionel married Shari on Christmas Eve, 1978. Five days later, he escorted Jeff to an Army recruitment station, where he enlisted for three years, to be followed by three additional years in the Army Reserves.

Jeff began service in January 1979. He spent four months at Fort McClellan, Alabama, in basic training and specialty instruction to be a military policeman. During a furlough home Lionel thought the Army was straightening him out.

They were not. His M.P. career ended when two privates beat him bloody while he was drunk, and his entire unit got in trouble. The Army then transferred him to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to train as a medical specialist.

In June 1979 the Army sent him to Baumholder, Germany. His room commander, twelve years later, called him an obnoxious drunk and a passionate racist. Another soldier said Jeff would spend weekends on his bunk, headphones on, listening to heavy metal music like Black Sabbath, drinking martinis he mixed in a nifty bar-in-a-briefcase kit, until he passed out.

Beginning in May 1980, Jeff was written up about a dozen times for disobeying orders and reporting for work late, drunk or in improper uniform. In February 1981 the Army put him in alcoholic rehab but within weeks a counselor recommended he be declared a "failure." Dahmer's commander then initiated a Chapter 9 discharge.

Returned stateside to Fort Jackson, S.C., Dahmer was discharged on March 26, 1981, ten months short of his three-year commitment. He was discharged honorably, but with mention on his record of "alcohol or other drug abuse". Lionel didn't even know Jeff was out of the Army until his trunk arrived on his doorstep. Inside were his fatigues, but nothing to suggest where he'd gone.

As a parting gesture, the Army had offered him a one-way commercial air ticket anywhere in the country. Not wishing to face the music from his father, Jeffrey Dahmer chose to fly to Miami, Florida.

## [2](#) [The Disappearance](#)

**MONDAY, JULY 27, 1981**

**INCIDENT REPORT  
INCIDENT NUMBER: HW-81-056073  
POLICE DEPARTMENT—HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA**

**INCIDENT TYPE: MISSING PERSON JUVENILE  
LOCATION: 300 HOLLYWOOD MALL  
TYPE PREMISE: RETAIL STORE CHAIN STORE: Y  
DISP: 7/27/81  
TIME AND DATE OF INCIDENT: 1355 7/27/81  
DAY: MON SUBJECTS: 2 VEHICLES: 0**

**STATUS SUBJECT: REPORTEE  
NAME: REVE WALSH  
RACE/SEX/DOB: W-F, 7/24/51  
ADDRESS: 2801 MCKINLEY STREET**

**STATUS SUBJECT: MISSING PERSON—JUVENILE  
NAME: ADAM WALSH  
RACE/SEX/DOB: W-M, 11/14/74**



ADDRESS: **2801 MCKINLEY STREET**  
HEIGHT: **3-06** WEIGHT: **045** HAIR: **SANDY, BL**  
EYES: **HAZEL** BUILD: **THIN** COMPLEX: **MEDIUM**  
FURTHER DESCRIPTION: **SEE NARRATIVE**

**JUVENILE WAS LAST SEEN WEARING A RED AND WHITE STRIPED SHIRT WITH GREEN ADIDAS GYM SHORTS, CREAM COLORED CANVAS CAPTAIN'S HAT WITH A BLUE RIM AND YELLOW RUBBER SANDALS.**

**REPORTEE ADVISES THAT THE ABOVE MISSING PERSON WAS LAST SEEN IN THE TOY DEPARTMENT OF SEARS DEPARTMENT STORE. MISSING PERSON WAS TO MEET REPORTEE WHEN SHE WAS DONE WITH HER BUSINESS IN ANOTHER PART OF THE STORE, NAMELY THE LAMP DEPARTMENT. REPORTEE RETURNED TO TOY DEPT APPROXIMATELY TEN (10) TO FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES AFTER SHE LEFT THE MISSING PERSON AND THE MISSING PERSON WAS NOT TO BE FOUND. REPORTEE LOOKED FOR MISSING PERSON FOR APPROXIMATELY FORTY (40) TO FORTY FIVE (45) MINUTES BEFORE CALLING POLICE.**

**UPON ARRIVAL, THE UNDERSIGNED OFFICER TOOK INFO FROM THE REPORTEE AND THEN NOTIFIED NCIC/FCIC AND REPORT WAS TAKEN BY BADGE #617. THE UNDERSIGNED, REPORTEE, AND THE GRANDMOTHER THEN CONDUCTED A STORE TO STORE SEARCH OF THE MALL WHICH PROVED FRUITLESS. THE UNDERSIGNED OFFICER CONTINUED SEARCH AND AT APPROXIMATELY 1700 HOURS HANDED THIS INVESTIGATION OVER TO LT. WALSH. NO FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME.**

**REPORTING OFFICER: CSO M DONAHAY, SQD 5**  
**BADGE: 1334 ENTRY: 0310 07/29/81**

Sears, in the Hollywood Mall, was a mile and a half from the Walshes' home. Adam's mother Reve Walsh said she parked her gray Checker—a passenger car version of the famous oversized cab—just outside the door of the catalog desk and entered hand-in-hand with Adam. Although the initial police report narrative does not mention the time, she later told the first police officer who arrived that it was about 12:30 in the afternoon.

Right in front of them was the toy department. To sell what was the first generation of home video games, Sears had a display where kids could play for free. Passing it, there was a small crowd of kids, three deep, already playing. It was July, summer vacation, and Adam wanted to play too. "That was our ritual," Reve wrote in John's book (published in 1997), entering by that door of Sears "[a]nd Adam begging me to let him play the video game."

She relented. "Okay. I'm going to the lamp department for a minute. Right over there. You stay here and I'll be right over there."

"Okay, Mommy. I know where that is," he answered.

Sears had bronze lamps on sale, 20-40% off, as advertised in *Good Housekeeping*. Yet the one Reve wanted she couldn't find, and a young clerk told her it wasn't in the store. The department manager was at lunch, she said, and Reve told her she'd come back.

When she returned to the videogames, at most ten minutes later, she thought, Adam wasn't there.

Nor were any of the kids she'd just seen.

She looked through some aisles, including in the lamp department, then found another clerk. "Have you seen my son? He was just here a minute ago." The woman hadn't. Nor had anyone else she asked.

"I kept saying, 'you don't understand. My son is a little boy who does not wander off.' And all the while, a horrible, cold fear was building. I knew something was wrong. Really wrong. I was absolutely convinced of it."

Outside the garden shop entrance she spotted Jean Walsh, her husband John's mother, who also lived in Hollywood. Seeing her was a relief. "Do you have Adam?" "No, what's the matter? Why are you crying? Oh, my God, let's find him."

Both of them started searching the rest of the store and the mall. Reve showed around a wallet photo of Adam. It was his first-grade school picture in which he wore the same shirt he was wearing that day—an Izod Lacoste with thick red and white stripes, thin green stripes and a sewn alligator emblem.

Still, nobody recognized him.

Reve asked a woman at the catalog desk what she should do, thinking she should call the police. The catalog clerk told her not to get excited, children commonly got lost in the store. She gave Reve the house phone, which connected to the switchboard operator. Reve asked that Adam be paged to the toy department, but store policy, the operator apologized, was to only allow pages to the customer service desk.

"Adam Walsh, please come to customer service."

"Customer service?" she wrote. "How was he supposed to know where that was, or how to get there? That was how much they were prepared for what was happening." A little later, at Reve's insistence, a second announcement: "Adam Walsh, please meet your mother in the toy department."

No boy appeared.

The catalog clerk suggested maybe the child had gone into the mall. Reve answered that Adam wouldn't do that, but she checked anyway, running up and down the mall.

"I was crying. I couldn't help it. I was so scared. We had looked everywhere, in the store and the mall. I had run out to the parking lot and checked the car, twice. I had asked everyone in sight if they had seen my little boy."

The Hollywood police arrived. Besides issuing a Be On the Lookout radio call to their officers, they didn't know what to do. They suggested maybe he'd left the store, become disoriented, and started walking home. Impossible, Reve insisted. It wasn't a pedestrian-friendly walk, and he was only six years old.

Nevertheless, she called the home of Adam's best friend, Clifford Hofman, certain he wasn't there. Clifford's parents immediately came to Sears to help look. She walked back outside, looked in dumpsters, looked inside every car in the parking lot. "I spotted a man who was loading things into a camper, bags of groceries, camping supplies. I started

screaming that he must have taken my son. But it turned out that he was just some guy going on a camping trip.

“By that point I was grasping at straws. I would try any suggestion at all. Anything. Because by now everything was already so far from reality that nothing made sense. It was like a bad dream, one where you can’t get there from here... I was trying to reach my child, but he couldn’t hear me... It was like the life was being sucked right out of me.”

At some point, she wrote, a teenage female plainclothes store security guard approached her. She was upset because, she said, she had kicked some children out of the store. She wasn’t sure whether Adam was one of them.

A policeman suggested that Jean Walsh drive to her grandson’s McKinley Street home and see if he was there. She did that. First she knocked on neighbors’ doors to check with them. None had seen him. Nor had anyone at the playground nearby. Then she entered the house and went through it room by room. The phone rang, and her son John was calling. In his book, she wrote, “I told him we had been up at the mall and had lost track of Adam.” John followed that with his recollection that he first learned about it when Reve called him from a pay phone. He quoted Reve: “John, something is wrong here. Really wrong. Adam is missing and I need you to get here.”

John immediately left his office, in Bal Harbour, 20 minutes south of Hollywood. In his car he took his younger brother Joe, who worked with him, and they stopped on the way in Sunny Isles to tell their friend Jimmy Campbell. In his own car came his business associate and mentor, John Monahan.

Arriving at Sears, John wrote: “I walked in and saw the back of Reve and called her name. She turned around. Her face was white, absolutely ashen, and it was obvious that she had been crying. A terrible, desperate look was in her eyes... But the only words she spoke were, ‘It’s Adam, John... I can’t find Adam.’”

Initially, officers spread out from the store to cover a radius they thought a little boy in rubber sandals was able to wander. But as afternoon became early evening, they realized they needed help. Every available Hollywood police officer was asked to search for Adam Walsh. The entire detective bureau turned out, plus 22 patrol officers requested overtime after their shifts ended so they could keep looking. Police boats combed canals. With searchlights aimed at the ground, the Broward County Sheriff’s helicopter search team hovered over fields and golf courses.

At 7:30, police asked for help from Jack Simons, head of the Hollywood Citizens’ Crime Watch. Prepared for such occasions, Simons spread the word through phone chains. They’d already carved a city map into 97 neighborhoods, and everyone in advance had assigned sections in which to look. Volunteers walked streets and alleys near their homes, calling out Adam’s name. They searched dark places, dumpsters and under garbage can lids, and asked others on the street if they’d seen him.

No one found any clues at all.

When the Walshes and their own search party finally left the mall, they decamped at the Hollywood Police station, directly across the street from Sears. They left Reve’s Checker where she’d parked it, in the second spot from the store’s corner, unlocked the door, and Reve made Adam an impromptu bed, with his blue blanket and toys and books. They wrote a note and propped it inside the windshield: “Adam, stay in the car. Mommy and Daddy are looking for you.”

By 10 o'clock, police asked Simons to set in motion his group operation's second phase: again, he started his phone chains, and by 11, about 60 volunteers arrived at the Hollywood Police station, ready to comb everywhere Adam might have reached on foot. Meanwhile, other members called radio and television stations, asking them to publicize the search.

At three in the morning, without any success, they quit for the night, pledging to return to the police station the next morning.

## **Tuesday July 28**

By nine o'clock Tuesday morning, more than a hundred Crime Watchers had gathered at the police station. Simons asked them to cover the same areas, then return every three hours. By now people were searching all over the city, the airport, bus station, on the beach, and in other shopping areas. Riders on horseback surveyed fields. Three people monitored citizens' band radio frequencies. Meanwhile, police cadets and off-duty officers searched wooded areas and swamps.

At 10, Reve Walsh and her husband John appeared before television news cameras at the police station, teary-eyed and exhausted from lack of sleep. Their appeal would be broadcast on the noon news. They hoped either Adam would be watching or someone who had seen him.

"Adam, we're looking for you, and we miss you. We love you," said his father. "Look for landmarks, Adam. Look for landmarks and you'll be able to find your way home."

Police printed a missing flyer with a photo of Adam in a white V-neck T-ball team shirt and red cap, a Louisville Slugger gripped in his baby fingers with chewed-down nails. Smiling for the camera, he showed off his mother's big hazel eyes. His two front teeth were missing, and his brown hair was sweaty and tousled. His nickname was Cooter. Police distributed the flyer to Florida Power and Light workers, Southern Bell telephone crews, letter carriers, and taxi drivers.

### MASSIVE SEARCH LAUNCHED FOR BOY, 6 ADAM WALSH DISAPPEARED FROM SEARS MONDAY AFTERNOON —*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

That was the headline in the *Hollywood Sun-Tattler* in its home-delivered afternoon edition. By the time its reporter, 26-year-old Charlie Brennan, arrived, the Walshes had already consulted a psychic named Dr. Fisher—Brennan didn't get her first name or credentials. She thought Adam might have left the mall heading south. Brennan didn't mention that if he had, he would have walked smack into the police station.

The evening *Miami News* mentioned the search in a brief on their local news page, quoting a police spokesman. While raising the possibility of a kidnapping, he said it wasn't suspected. "The kid is probably trying to get home and is probably lost somewhere, and we're searching the city for him."

With the publicity came a shower of phone tips. Since the department was already stretched thin—on the case were 54 officers and detectives, many of whom had volunteered their off-duty time—the police allowed John, Reve, and their family members and friends to sit in the third-floor detective bureau and answer and log those

incoming tips. The arrangement was highly irregular, and it reflected the trust the police had in the Walshes' innocence.

An employee of a convenience store near Hollywood Mall told John's brother Joe Walsh he'd seen Adam get into a white car that went west on Hollywood Boulevard. A mall bakery worker said she'd seen him wandering the mall. Someone else said he'd seen him at St. Matthew's Catholic Church in nearby Hallandale. Other reports had him spotted as far away as Miami Beach and West Palm Beach.

Finally at 8:30, Jack Simons called off the Crime Watch search. Everyone was exhausted, and since all areas of the city had been searched at least twice, further efforts would be futile, they felt. Simons went home but couldn't fall asleep.

## **Wednesday July 29**

### SIX-YEAR-OLD WAS KIDNAPED, POLICE BELIEVE

—*The Miami Herald*

Haggard and bleary-eyed from the all-night search for his six-year-old son, John Walsh burst into tears.

"He was an immensely loved little boy and we will go to any lengths to get him back," said Walsh, announcing a "substantial" reward for the freckle-faced Hollywood boy with a missing tooth.

Later in the day, in the *Sun-Tattler's* home edition, Walsh expanded on that theme: "He's either dead, or someone has him. He's probably in a dead panic to reach me. Somebody's hopefully got him. If he's outside the county, there's not much we can do about it."

Police spokesman Fred Barbetta suggested they begin searching the area's many waterways, a system of canals that drained the Everglades. "If he's in the water, this is when he'd come up." Jack Simons shared a similar pessimism. "We're not looking for someone walking around right now. We're looking for whatever is left."

Also irregular was the fact that John Walsh had emerged as the story's primary spokesman, speaking from the police department. The press found him far more compelling than the usual police public information officer or press release.

"The worst thing that could happen is that he's in a canal somewhere," the *Sun-Tattler* quoted Walsh, his voice reported as shaking. "Nobody at the police department believes that's what happened. Nobody wants to believe it."

Later in the day, Walsh offered to pay a reward of \$5,000, which he put on a new "missing" flyer. Apparently as a guide to how much they could afford, he described himself as vice president for marketing for the \$26 million Paradise Grand Hotel resort in Nassau, Bahamas, then under construction.

Referring to the fight between the four kids, the *Herald* reported it happened about the same time Reve left Adam at the video game. But a store security guard broke it up and ordered the combatants out of the store. Later interviewed by police, the boys "remembered seeing Adam heading towards the lamp department where his mother was."

## **Thursday, July 30**

NO CLUES  
BOY, 6, STILL MISSING  
—*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

The *Sun-Tattler* reported that Adam was Broward County's biggest missing-child mystery since the 1976 disappearance of eight-year-old Lisa Lynn Berry. She'd last been seen at a Hollywood bowling alley, and the community had gathered to search for her. Within a day volunteers found her pink pants and green sweater. Days later her body was found. It turned out Lisa Berry's kidnapping and murder hadn't been random. Her mother's friend was convicted for the crimes.

Police were asking people who'd seen anything unusual at Sears on Monday to come forward. They also wanted to question the four boys—two white, two black, all between 10 and 12—who'd fought over the Atari games and had been thrown out of the store by security guard Kathy Shaffer, "on the chance it happened at the same time Adam disappeared," said Sgt. Dennis Naylor.

"He respects authority. Maybe he thought he was responsible for something. Maybe he followed them out of the store for some reason."

At nine in the morning at the Hollywood police station, Willis Morgan arrived to report what he'd seen. By then police had already listened to hundreds of tips. Trying to help, citizens called in names of people down the block who they thought were child molesters, wives suggested their ex-husbands, and others had just thought they'd seen Adam. The lobby receptionist pointed Morgan to an officer at a special desk the department had set up to receive walk-in tips.

Morgan said he'd been in the Hollywood Mall around noon on Monday. He was browsing at Radio Shack when a man approached him, wanting to talk. The man was large, drunk and disheveled, and had shaggy hair and a crappy grin.

"Hi there, nice day, isn't it?"

Morgan, 34, looked like a powerful man but because a motorcycle accident had left him with a prosthetic leg, he couldn't walk away quickly. He was scared. He tried to look away, but then the man's eyes turned angry, demonic, and piercing.

He stared for a number of seconds, then finally he got the message and left. At first Morgan was relieved. Then he thought, maybe the guy would approach someone else who'd need help. From a safe distance, Morgan followed him. The man walked through the mall and entered Sears. Staying behind him, Morgan saw him go into the toy department. But that led nowhere else, and since Morgan didn't want the man to double back and see him, he abruptly left. He did, not feeling safe until he got into his car, locked the door, and drove away.

That night he saw on the late local news that a child was missing from Hollywood Mall. When he arrived at work, Wednesday evening as a pressman at the *Miami Herald*, he told his buddies, who insisted he go to the police. His workday ended at 5:30 A.M., and he'd stayed up so he could get to the police station by nine.

The officer asked if he had a receipt from a purchase at the mall that Monday to prove he'd been there. He hadn't. Had he seen a tag number of a getaway car? He said

he'd only seen the man inside the mall. The officer took his name and phone number and said they'd call him if they needed him. Morgan felt like a jerk for coming.

While some were criticizing Hollywood police for not doing enough, police responded that they'd never had a week like this one. Besides Adam, in the past five days they'd also had a rape of a five-year-old girl and the discovery of a dead woman in a canal.

Meanwhile, the *Sun-Tattler* reported, a secretary at an asphalt company had organized at least three hundred truck drivers to search fields, walking together ten feet apart, in undeveloped southwest Broward.

John Walsh said he'd been having trouble eating the past two days. "I tried to have some soup, but I can't hold anything down. I just gag it back up." Nor had he or Reve been able to sleep, he said.

"Everybody—psychics, police, friends, family—they all say they're sure he's still alive," he said. But at other moments Walsh conceded anything was possible. "I don't need to tell you how many people are walking around out there who just don't think straight."

Just peeking into Adam's room and seeing his toys and clothes was crushing to Reve, he said. However, he was comforted by the support of those around him, especially his younger brother Joe and a friend, James Campbell, who since Monday had devoted all their time to following every lead from the psychics, or just staying close to him.

The article wrote glowingly of John and Reve's strength and endurance, how they were always ready to give another newspaper interview, go on TV, or answer tipsters' calls:

Wiping tears from his eyes for what seems like the hundredth time this week, running his hands through jet-black hair flecked with silver, Walsh sums up what Hollywood Police have discovered—"It's like he disappeared from the face of the earth."

"I can't tell you how much I love that boy," he adds. "He's such a joy."

Meanwhile, state Marine Patrol officers were searching canals, which, since drug smuggling had become such big business locally in the past five years, were now common places to dump bodies. Sometimes fishermen would find them. 1981 would be the historical peak year for homicides in South Florida. If Adam had been murdered and dumped in water Monday, the day he disappeared, then Wednesday was the day to look because bodies underwater start decomposing after 36 to 48 hours. Then they surface.

## PSYCHIC AIDS SEARCH FOR LOST BOY

—*Fort Lauderdale News*

Her hands touching the controls of Sears's Atari game to sense its "vibrations," Micki Dahne, a psychic with a local radio show, told Reve that Adam was scared, but okay.

Dahne also met Kathy Shaffer, the Sears security guard, in tears. The *Fort Lauderdale News* reported Shaffer had since told the police she ordered Adam as well as the four other boys to stop fighting over the video game and leave the store.

**Friday, July 31**

YOUTH MIGHT HAVE SEEN BOY BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED

—*The Miami Herald*

POLICE BELIEVE BOY ALIVE; REWARD NOW \$25,000

—*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

Had Adam been fighting, and was he one of five boys ejected from the store? Or was he a passive spectator of a fight, confused as to whether he as well had been ordered to leave the store?

The police and the Walshes were expounding the spectator theory. “It’s possible Adam was standing there watching and was shooed from the store with the other kids,” Lt. Richard Hynds told the *Miami Herald*. Lost in all this was Shaffer’s change of story, to where she now she thought she *had* thrown Adam out of the store. A new detail apparently from Shaffer was added: she sent the white boys out the store’s north door, and the black boys out the south.

But how many white boys had she expelled, two or three? Police were still saying two.

The 12-year-old Hollywood boy who said he’d played video games with the boy he thought was Adam told police he’d last seen Adam between 1:30-2:00. Because that changed the timeframe, the *Sun-Tattler* reported, police were now speculating that Adam was still alive. However, to believe that Adam had been seen in the toy department even at 1:30 contradicted Reve’s timeline of events. She said she’d left Adam at 12:30, returned for him no more than fifteen minutes later, then searched 45 minutes before calling police.

*The Miami Herald* interviewed the child, but at his parents’ request didn’t publish his name. They quoted Lt. Hynds saying the child had offered the best information so far in the case. “This boy is a really credible source and the son of a prominent citizen. His family is very religious. I know he’s telling the truth.”

The boy told the *Herald* that a little boy matching Adam’s description watched him playing the video spaceship game with a girl. Then he asked the smaller boy to play. They played two rounds, the older boy winning both. Then two 12- to 13-year-old boys demanded a turn, grabbing the game’s controls from the smaller boy, who held on and told them, “It doesn’t belong to you.”

To the boy speaking to the *Herald*, one of the bullying kids looked as if he was going to punch the smaller kid in the face, so he told the smaller boy to leave so he wouldn’t get hurt. Relinquishing the joystick, the smaller boy watched nearby for a few moments, then left.

The boy thought Adam’s missing photo looked like the child he saw, but it wasn’t an exact match. “This kid was a different size. He wasn’t exactly skinny but he wasn’t a blob either.”



During their game, the boy also remembered, while the on-screen rockets and missiles were flying, the little boy had said, “Oh, wow,” and “Oops! You missed one.” Reve had told police that Adam said things like that. But the Hollywood boy didn’t say anything to the *Herald* about a security guard breaking up a fight, or kids kicked out of the store. Adam had simply walked away, he said, the fight averted.

In the *Herald*, Lt. Hynds nonetheless connected the fight and Shaffer’s ejections, which might incidentally or unintentionally have included Adam. But in the *Sun-Tattler*, the detectives held to Shaffer’s original story that she’d removed only four children. Adam wasn’t in the fight, he was merely watching, they said.

Left unsaid in the already conflicting stories was that if the Hollywood boy was accurate, there may have been no connection between Adam and the fight—and if his recollection of the time was right, he might have seen Adam at least a full hour after Reve first left him.

The *Herald* also reported the Walshes were now convinced Adam had been kidnapped, and that they’d raised their reward to \$10,000. By that evening the *Sun-Tattler* reported it was \$25,000.

## **Saturday, August 1**

### MISSING BOY WAS SEEN BY 3 —*The Miami Herald*

Police also thought 10-year-olds Timothy Pottenburgh and his cousin, and their grandmother, were credible when they reported seeing Adam apparently enter a blue van outside Sears on the day he disappeared.

Without naming them, police told the *Miami Herald* they’d seen Adam walking near the toy department Monday about 1:30—after they’d heard the store intercom page him. The grandmother said the boy they saw fit Adam’s description: slight build, striped shirt, green sandals.

They next saw Adam outside the store’s north exit—the same one Reve said they’d entered. He turned left toward the parking lot. From the same exit they saw a man run, enter a blue van, and drive toward the boy, nearly hitting the Pottenburgh clan. Adam fled around the side of the building, chased by the van. Curious, Timothy looked around the corner. From 25 yards away, he spotted the van, parked, its door open, then watched it speed away. He didn’t see Adam.

The family described the man as white, about six feet tall, muscular, with dark bushy hair, wearing jeans and a T-shirt. The van, they said, was shiny dark blue, late model, with mag wheels, dark-tinted windows, and a chrome ladder in the back.

On Friday, through the local news media and radio, police had started asking the public to be on the lookout for blue vans. They also called Hollywood Crime Watch, and its members began driving their assigned areas, calling police with their sightings.

“We’re more sure now that he’s probably been kidnapped,” Lt. Hynds said.

In its news pages, the *Sun-Tattler* reprinted Adam Walsh’s Missing handbill, offering the \$25,000 reward. As well, a local direct advertiser stuffed copies in its regular mailing to 50,000 homes. The handbill had Adam’s T-ball photo, Hollywood police phone

numbers, a “non-police” number in Miami (likely Walsh’s office), the Walsh family home address, and toll-free numbers so anyone in Florida or the rest of the U.S. could call. It also read:

We are willing to negotiate ransom on ANY terms. Strict confidentiality. DO NOT FEAR REVENGE! We will not prosecute. We only want our son. If desired, contact any radio or T.V. station, newspaper or any other media as a neutral party for negotiations or information. Do not fear revenge. We want Adam home.

At Sears’s parking lot, a few hundred people met to distribute another hundred thousand copies.

A Hollywood city commissioner suggested the city contribute \$5,000 to the reward. John Walsh said people across the country had been sending money—five to several hundred dollars. He also wanted to spread the word via TV.

He promised Ralph Renick, Miami’s Walter Cronkite, “If you put me on, I won’t break down. I won’t.” The *Herald* wrote that WTVJ’s Renick didn’t think Walsh could handle live TV, so he’d instead suggested a taped interview. But Walsh convinced him, so he and Reve went on the Friday 4:30 newscast for three minutes. With Adam’s stuffed animal in Reve’s lap, holding hands, the Walshes did fine. The *Herald* reporter followed them to the Hollywood police detective bureau, where a Tarot card reader insisted she do their reading. John Walsh told the reporter they’d already met with 15 clairvoyants, 13 of whom said Adam was alive.

Now that searches of canals, swamps, and undeveloped areas hadn’t produced his body, the Walshes thought Adam was probably in the hands of an abductor. And since that person hadn’t responded to offers to pay ransom, he or she likely was someone who wanted a child.

John also talked about finding Reve in Adam’s bed, crying. Since then he’d locked the door to the child’s room.

## **Sunday, August 2**

### **BOY’S REWARD FUND RISES, BUT LEAD VANISHES**

—*Fort Lauderdale News*

The Walshes increased their reward to \$50,000, but the Pottenburghs, who hadn’t wanted to get involved in the first place, were refusing to let police hypnotize Timothy to help him recall what he saw.

By herself, police said, the grandmother wasn’t a good witness because she was partially blind. All she could say for certain about the incident was that a van had almost run them over.

Days later, Walsh was quoted in the *Fort Lauderdale News*: “If it wasn’t going to hurt the child, well, maybe the woman can put herself in my position. What if it were her little boy who was missing?”

## **Monday, August 3**

## POLICE CHECKING VANS FOR MISSING 6-YEAR-OLD

—*The Miami Herald*

As a result of their request to the public for help spotting late-model shiny blue vans, police had received “tons” of calls. They’d checked 50 of them but without success.

“One lady called in this morning who said she had a dream that Adam was in a wheelchair being pushed down a long white corridor by a black male,” said a police spokesman. “Now, you tell me how we’re going to start looking for black males going down long white corridors.”

**Tuesday, August 4**

## THE ORDEAL OF ADAM’S PARENTS

—*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

The entire week, *Sun-Tattler* reporter Charlie Brennan had stuck to the Walshes. He wrote that John and Reve had become almost as familiar to South Floridians as their missing son. In a media blitz, they’d appeared on local TV “morning, noon, and night,” as well as on the front pages of all the area’s newspapers. They’d refused no media request. Often they were crying, and always they pleaded for someone to bring them back their boy.

“Most couples are fortunate enough never to have to open up their hearts—their lives, even—before millions of people at a time when the core of their family is ripped out without warning. And most couples would not be doing it so well.”

The late edition reported that after stopping “hundreds” of blue vans, police were now downplaying the lead. “Some of them have been stopped twice. It’s hardly safe to drive a blue van in South Florida these days,” said Lt. Hynds.

**3**

## [The Billy Goats Gruff](#)

IN THE DAYS AFTER JEFFREY DAHMER’S CAPTURE, the press discovered that Billy Joe Capshaw had been his bunkmate in the Army, the 2d Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment, 8th Infantry Division, stationed in Baumholder, Germany, through 1981—before the Army discharged Dahmer early for alcohol abuse and he came to Miami. They were both trained as medics—nurse’s assistants.

In 1991, Capshaw was serving six months for negligent homicide in the Garland County Jail, in his native Hot Springs, Arkansas. He explained that while he went into a bar, he’d left the keys in his car so a friend’s 15-year-old stepdaughter could listen to the radio. Without his permission she drove away, wrecked his car, and accidentally killed someone. The state had held him liable.

Capshaw told *The New York Times* that he and Dahmer drank together. But drunk, Dahmer would become “stony-faced” and violent with him.

“You could tell in his face that he wasn’t joking. It was for real. That’s why it bothered me. It was a whole different side. His face was blank. It was kind of like he was cross-eyed-like. An expression like he just wasn’t there. I’ve never seen it on anyone else’s face.”

I read this quote to Willis Morgan, the Hollywood Mall witness who’d told police Dahmer had tried to pick him up. “I could say those words verbatim,” he replied.

I’d anticipated difficulty finding Capshaw, but he’d posted a website:

“I was roommates with Jeffrey Dahmer for 18 months during my time in the military. I was age 17 when the abuse started and 19 when it finally stopped. I was raped, molested, tortured, drugged, daily beat with an iron pipe, stabbed. Jeffrey also tried to remove my prostate. I’ve been in therapy for many years now.”

That sounded crazy. Was it credible that a U.S. soldier could become, in effect, someone’s sex slave? When I reached him, Capshaw explained that at the time, the Army didn’t want to deal with homosexual rape. He’d just entered the service days after his 17th birthday—“I didn’t know what to do.” All the other soldiers were older, including Dahmer, by at least two years. And Capshaw had never before traveled more than a few miles from home.

He’d been in psychotherapy since he came home, in November 1981, and a doctor named Eugene Watermann had helped him tremendously. For the first five years, he said, “I couldn’t get out of bed.” Even for the first 20 years, he described himself as Rip Van Winkle, asleep or not participating much in the rest of the world. Dr. Watermann had helped him reawaken. Meanwhile, for post-traumatic stress disorder, citing in a document that “he was tortured by a roommate,” the Army had given him a disability pension, eventually in 1998 granting him 100 percent disability, and a substantial lump sum.

As I spoke with Capshaw, he was calm and reasonable, not the “country bumpkin” as another bunkmate had described him in a 1991 *Arkansas Gazette* story. He agreed his story sounded difficult to believe. He hadn’t mentioned his rapes in the 1991 stories because until very recently he wasn’t ready to admit them. He did tell the *Hot Springs Sentinel-Record* that Dahmer “was violent” and “drunk all the time.” Of his decision to talk about the rapes now, he said, “It’s not much of a life keeping that stuff inside.”

On the Internet I found corroboration. Linda Sue Swisher, a retired licensed practical nurse who’d served at the same time, wrote on her own web page:

The saddest part of my time in the army came after I was out for a few years. Jeffrey Dahmer, the cannibalist/murderer, was one of the medics that I had trained for ER work during my tour in Baumholder, West Germany, just north of Landstuhl. There were 3 young, slender, dark complected men who were so seriously assaulted that: a) They could not crawl away from where they were found (needing serious surgery); b) In spite of collecting rape kit evidence against whomever had hurt them, the MP’s would not start a case of any kind (just a lover’s argument); and c) The one man who had emergency surgery to save his life had to get a permanent colostomy, but still would not press charges or tell anyone what had happened. Out of approx. 18,000 men on post these were the only men who even came close to reporting being raped.

I found Swisher's phone number, in Washington State. When I told her why I was calling, I heard her gasp. It took most of a long conversation before she finally caught her breath. She was elated that someone wanted to listen.

When she saw Dahmer's photo in the newspapers in 1991, she said, "Oh shit. I taught this guy anatomy." She'd had recurring nightmares since. "Out of all the people who came through the ER as patients or went through the medic refresher program, you could show me their pictures and I wouldn't have a clue." But Dahmer's she remembered instantly.

"There was something totally wrong about him. Something anti-social." As a nurse, she pointed out, her most basic skill was observation.

The three male rapes had occurred within months of one another, she said, and during the time Dahmer was stationed on base. She'd been assigned there between September 1977 and November 1980. According to Dahmer's Army records, he served there from July '79 to March '81.

She only matched the rapes and Dahmer when she saw his newspaper photo. "I was staring at his picture in the paper," she said. She thought the Army could have stopped him.

All three men had been badly sodomized, suffering several anal tears, she said, but one, a Hispanic man, had a rupture much higher—of his sigmoid colon, above his rectum and anal pouch. He was found screaming in pain, and had lost so much blood he would have died in 30 minutes had they not stabilized him.

Because the base hospital essentially acted as an emergency room and transported the traumatized patients to the larger army hospital in Landstuhl, Swisher didn't get to learn much about the victims. But she said they were all "fairly short men, not particularly well-built." She knew that all three survived, and when she asked a JAG officer whether the incidents would be prosecuted and the rape kit evidence she'd preserved used, her answer was, "Boys will be boys, it was a lover's spat."

The Army was then prosecuting rapes against women, she said, but "I never once saw a woman who required immediate surgery. I never, ever saw the kind of damage that happened to these men."

What especially stuck in her mind was a snapshot of Dahmer during a training class she gave. The program was six weeks long and contained 20 students. Along with classes, trainees did practical work on the emergency room day shift at the base hospital—the 56th General Hospital. Dahmer didn't make it to the next level. "It didn't seem he was paying attention in class, he didn't ask questions, he wasn't doing anything more than just showing up," Swisher said. As an instructor, she was looking for enthusiasm and pathos as well as ability. Many of her trainees had only the equivalent of a sixth grade education plus a high school equivalency diploma.

The snapshot occurred on the day they worked on a human anatomy model. It was plastic but life-sized and didn't have ribs to cover its internal organs. Like in the child's game Operation, Dahmer was to use forceps to replace its liver where it belonged.

Clutching the liver, Dahmer's "eyes were like ice." But he smiled—the first and only time she'd ever seen him smile. "His eyes didn't match his smile," she said. "In that minute of time, it was so clear to me, the violent evil I was looking at in his eyes. From all those people I saw there, how come I'm so haunted by that one snapshot?"

It was also ironic, she thought, that Dahmer, who lacked anything close to normal human empathy, had been assigned by the Army as a medic.

Swisher's description of Dahmer's eyes matched Morgan's, even to use the word evil. When I read her a book quote from Shari Dahmer, Jeff's stepmother, that she'd seen the violence behind Jeff's "dull, unmoving mask," Swisher said, "That describes him in class to a T."

Swisher's mention of the word liver recalled Capshaw's similar observation. In their room, he said, Dahmer had a small refrigerator on which he kept a combination lock. When Capshaw asked what was in it, Dahmer answered, "I got some liver in there. I don't want anybody to take it." Since they were stationed in Germany, Capshaw had assumed he meant liverwurst. In his 1992 prison interview with Hollywood Police lead detective Jack Hoffman, however, Dahmer volunteered that in his Milwaukee apartment, he'd removed at least one human liver—as well as other organs and body parts—and cooked and eaten them.

The room, Capshaw described, had three beds, but except for one week, he and Dahmer were the only two in it. It had a double-decker bunk; Capshaw slept on top, Dahmer the bottom. The room's door could be locked from either side, and Dahmer took away Capshaw's key, so as a result, when he was inside, Capshaw was Dahmer's captive. When Dahmer left, he locked Capshaw in, sometimes overnight.

"I jumped out the window the first couple times," Capshaw said. But when he landed, from the second story, he hurt himself badly. He stopped doing that, he said, because it left him weaker and less able to resist.

When Capshaw did leave the room, he was nearly always within Dahmer's sight, even in the lavatory and mess hall. "He had me completely covered," he said. He wasn't assigned to work duty. He described a non-regular Army, post-Vietnam tour, where work assignments could be permanently ducked and "everyone's doing their own thing" under poor or absent supervision.

When he had the chance, "I asked, begged, pleaded, bargained for a room transfer," but his superiors—his room commander, his sergeant, and his lieutenant—refused him. "I was locked in the room with a fucking serial killer, and they did nothing."

On the one occasion he pulled guard duty, he begged the lead officer in charge to help him. His response was, "So the baby wants out of his room." Capshaw reacted by taking the superior's .45 pistol from his holster then tried to kill himself. When he pulled the trigger there was no bullet in the chamber. Capshaw was subdued and the gun was removed from him. He was taken to the guard shack for the rest of the shift, but afterwards was returned to the room with Dahmer. "I was surprised I didn't kill myself at that guard duty," Capshaw said.

One barracks mate, David Rodriguez, remembered that Capshaw "would hang out with Dahmer." He described Capshaw, then, unflatteringly, as an illiterate hillbilly [actually, Capshaw had scored high enough on his Army intelligence test to qualify to select medical training, as must have Rodriguez], and Dahmer as a loner who only caused trouble when he was drunk. Dahmer was also a slick liar, he said, but he'd never have guessed he'd become—or was already—a serial killer. He didn't note any evil in his eyes.

Another barracks mate, Michael Masters, told the Associated Press in 1991 he did see “sinisterness” in Dahmer. “He was on a steady decline in life. He was on a losing skid and didn’t know how to pick himself up.” On *Larry King Live*, he said he thought Dahmer had killed someone in Germany, although he declined to elaborate. When he first saw the stories about Dahmer’s murders in Milwaukee, he told King, “It put chills up my spine.”

Masters told a Knight Ridder reporter that Dahmer never revealed anything homosexual. But in his Hollywood police interview, although he denied any homosexual sex before he lived in Milwaukee, Dahmer did recall an encounter in Germany when he said he was assigned to the hospital in Landstuhl, which would have been before he met Capshaw:

One of the sergeant majors, I think he was either the type of sergeant with two bars underneath or three, he had his own apartment and one night I was drinking in the local NCO [non-commissioned officers] club, he approached me, said he had a party going on back at his place, asked me if I wanted to go back. I said sure. And we went back, turned out there was nobody in the apartment, just him. And he lights up this bowl of hash, smoked some hash, drank some beer, he goes, takes his shower, comes back and tries to get me to hop in bed with him. I said, No thanks, so I just go walking out, staggering out after that hash, that was good hash, and uh, so that was the first time I’d been approached.

To Milwaukee police a year earlier, Dahmer had said that in the Army he hadn’t time or opportunity for sex that might have led to murder because he was busy and living among a group of men.

But most weekends, Rodriguez said, Dahmer would disappear from the camp, and no one would know where he went.

As for him being busy, assigned to the motor pool, Dahmer would “crawl into a vehicle and go to sleep. He was like, Hey, fuck you, I don’t have to do that stuff.” In his Milwaukee police confession, Dahmer had said he’d liked the structure of military life.

Rodriguez was initially skeptical about Capshaw’s story. But after a discussion, he conceded, “maybe he’s telling the truth.”

Capshaw was incensed at the report of Rodriguez’s interview. He didn’t remember Rodriguez’s name but later thought he recalled him by a nickname. “I was a little short fat boy, young and dumb. But I’m not dumb anymore,” he said. Nor was he fat. One of the few things he did in his first five years home was pump iron every single day; at his peak he could lift 385 pounds. At his most buff he had a 19-inch neck and a 34-inch waist. As for short, he said he was about two inches shorter than Dahmer, and in 1981 maybe 30 pounds lighter. There was also a two-year age difference. Capshaw was 17, and thought he looked 14 or 15 because he had hardly any hair on his body, and just stubble on his chin. “Plus he was insane. He was different than just a regular person.”

As for those who knew what was happening to him but wouldn’t help, “I don’t know why they picked on me like that, those dirty sons of bitches.”

He recalled a time he’d escaped the room during a terrible beating, but in the hallway others helped Dahmer hold him down and drag him back, even hitting him themselves. Although to the others he may have seemed drunk, Dahmer had drugged him, probably

by slipping something in his drink. From the drug and his beating he'd urinated in his pants and on his mattress, which his barracks-mates laughed at. Capshaw was even written up for failure to obey an order and for being drunk and disorderly in quarters, and has an incident date for it: May 30, 1980.

"There was more than one person keeping me in that room," he said. "They're calling me pussy, and I'm getting the hell beat out of me."

Capshaw went to the hospital numerous times—documented by Army medical records he's since received—for, among other things, a broken foot, hip, and a nervous breakdown. "I always had a cast on—an arm, a leg," he said. He said he's still got scars all over his body from cuts and stabs from knives and ice picks, and from being hit by a metal pipe—part of the bed frame.

The most painful of all was being struck on the tips of his fingers. He learned after a while that the less he resisted, the less his abuse. These many years later he remains in chronic pain and often has trouble walking and getting out of bed. In 2007, his sergeant, in a public Internet forum, denied knowing about any of his trips to the hospital.

"The pain brings back the past," Capshaw said.

But the worst Dahmer did to Capshaw was a quarter-to-half-inch incision he made under Capshaw's scrotum while he was drugged and rope-tied. When he awoke, still dazed, "I remember blood and tugging" and Dahmer over him, cutting, he said. In the emergency room—three or four days later, still bleeding—the doctor asked, "Man! What happened?" He still gets treatment for that wound.

He also thought he was one of the badly sodomized men Swisher spoke of, though not the worst-off of the three. Dahmer would take him to the hospital, but after every incident, he was returned to his room, with Dahmer.

The prostate story had sounded implausible—until Swisher mentioned the anatomy model liver. Swisher said one of the basic skills she taught medics was how to suture with an ordinary scalpel. Although suturing was to repair wounds, using a scalpel was a skill Dahmer had put to use, as evidenced in his Milwaukee apartment.

In July 1991 the *Boston Herald* quoted Rodriguez saying they received six weeks of first aid training, including how to perform tracheotomies and splinting. He said Dahmer showed no particular interest. Rodriguez also mentioned that the course taught anatomy. "It didn't look like he ever took an interest in the anatomy."

In Jack Hoffman's 1992 interview, conducted alongside Milwaukee-based FBI Special Agent Dan Craft, Dahmer impressed them with his knowledge of how to autopsy the people he'd killed. Hoffman asked where he'd learned it, or if he'd had any books.

**DAHMER:** No, it was trial and error, I really didn't know that much about the anatomy at that time.

**CRAFT:** You were a medic.

**DAHMER:** Right. But that was just general field, real general knowledge. Probably had as much knowledge as either of you would.

But Capshaw said Dahmer knew anatomy very well, and in fact taught Capshaw, who later became a paramedic. The class may have bored Dahmer because it was so elementary, he thought. He covered their room's walls with anatomy posters stolen from



the hospital dispensary and kept a collection of anatomy books. “Jeffrey Dahmer was a smart guy. A lot smarter than the press gave him credit for,” he said. That agreed with what Michael Masters had told *The New York Times*: “If you were to test his I.Q., I’m sure it would be 145 or above.”

Capshaw said he knew Dahmer better than anyone else, even his father. He saw Dahmer’s dualities, which depended on whether or not he’d been drinking, or more specifically, whether his drunkenness had reached critical mass. “The real Jeff was a stunning person. He was very likable, good to be around.” In contrast, “the drunk Jeff will kill you,” he said, briefly employing the present tense. “After a certain amount of alcohol, he got that look in his eyes, and you knew it was coming.”

As a medic, Dahmer had access to the infirmary’s drugs, he said. The routine was, Dahmer would drug him, tie him up, and assault him with a sharp object. When he assaulted him sexually, sometimes it was violent, other time it was more like molestation. But afterwards, “he’d cuddle me, pet me, like he loved me, like a wife. Jeff loved me, in his own special way.”

Similarly there was a difference between Dahmer in public and Dahmer inside Capshaw’s room. When Stone Phillips had interviewed him in prison on *Dateline NBC* in 1994, Capshaw said, “He sat like a little innocent kitten. Behind closed doors he was a completely different person.”

But Capshaw had never imagined Dahmer was a killer until the 1991 story broke. However, he did recall seeing, as he said others did as well, about five times when Dahmer had bloodstains on his clothes, usually under his jacket, or scratch marks on his face, hands, and forearms, and blood on his legs and feet.

Once, when Dahmer returned from staying out overnight, the whole front of his shirt and pants was bloody. When he removed his shirt, encrusted blood ripped skin from his stomach. Dahmer explained only that he’d gotten into a fight. “I knew something worse than a fight had happened,” Capshaw said. He knew the blood wasn’t Jeff’s, but Jeff was angry so Billy was afraid to ask. Billy remembered when that was—Thanksgiving Day.

Other times, when Capshaw broke into Dahmer’s wall locker, he found six-inch buck knives, which he’d dispose of but Dahmer would always replace. One time he found a knife stained with blood and mucus. He also found vials of a drug called ketamine hydrochloride, an anesthetic which Swisher said was then available at the infirmary. Now only legally used on animals, in humans it produces hallucinogenic effects as well as a detachment from bodily sensations, amnesia, and coma. It’s considered a “date-rape” drug, close in family to PCP, another animal tranquilizer, and in recreational or club settings has been called “Special K” or “Vitamin K”.

Dahmer may have used hallucinogens himself. He once asked Capshaw if he’d ever had his eyes dabbed with LSD. Capshaw hadn’t. But ketamine is significantly more powerful a mind-altering drug than LSD, writes Jay Stevens in his book *Storming Heaven*. He quotes a ketamine “user’s report” published in *High Times*: “I’m moving through some kind of train tunnel. There are all sorts of lights and colors, mostly in the center, far, far away... and little people and stuff running around the walls of the tube, like little cartoon nebbishes.”

At least twice that summer, Capshaw said, Dahmer called him from Florida. The calls were a form of stalking, he thought. He didn’t want to take them, but did. Dahmer sounded like he’d been drinking. The first call, he said he’d been sleeping on the beach,

like a beach bum, but he'd found a job and a girlfriend. "He told me he had sex with a girl. That was his main objective for calling me. He was awful happy. He wanted me to know he was getting better." At the time, however, Capshaw was scared and got off the phone as soon as he could.

When Capshaw was later able to check his Army medical records, he found two infirmary reports of a panic attack that included chest pains, heart palpitations and shakiness. He'd gone to the hospital the first time about an hour after the call, he remembered. The first report was dated nine P.M. July 26, 1981, and the second was 6:30 the next morning—July 27. Later that Monday, Eastern time in the U.S., Adam Walsh disappeared from Hollywood Mall.

Dahmer had told Jack Hoffman that when he arrived in Miami he'd only had enough money to last a week at a hotel, and that he hadn't planned very far ahead. As a result he had to sleep in the open, on the beach, until he got a job a month or so later. Capshaw didn't believe Dahmer ever didn't think very well ahead, and disputed that Dahmer left the Army short of money. When Capshaw was discharged, the Army gave him \$1400 in mustering-out pay, and he thought Dahmer would have had a similar amount, plus other money he'd saved—and likely stolen from Billy.

After two months in Germany, Capshaw said, he stopped getting paid. As well, he stopped getting mail. Billy had designated some of his pay to go to his sister in Arkansas, to help pay her medical bills. When those checks stopped, and his family stopped hearing from him, they desperately tried to reach him, by mail and telephoning Germany, only to be told he was AWOL. They couldn't afford to go there themselves. Not until he was discharged and sent home, escorted, did they know where he was.

Beyond Dahmer, Capshaw blamed his sergeant, the one who denied knowing he'd spent any time in the hospital. It was his responsibility, Billy argued, to get his soldiers paid. However, the sergeant had become friendly with Dahmer, he said. And the sergeant, at the time, had little oversight, he thought, because of a stretched-thin command.

Another dereliction of responsibility, Capshaw said, was the Army's failure to charge Dahmer after arresting him for masturbating in a public area, at least twice. Base military policemen returned Dahmer to his room after catching him in a place Capshaw thought was named Family Park. The M.P.s told Billy he'd done it in front of children. One of the times, even though it was snowing, Jeff was wearing just his boxer shorts. He'd left the room in his uniform. Another time he was returned, his pants were around his ankles.

Capshaw said the park was a 30-minute walk from the barracks. "He took me there. He got me drunk on Paul Masson wine. He made one of his first assaults on me. I was one scared dude." In general Dahmer masturbated a lot in front of Capshaw, before or after tying him up and beating him. He also masturbated in the barracks shower and got in fights when other soldiers caught him.

In his Hollywood police interview, referring to his 1982 arrest in Milwaukee for lewd and lascivious conduct in front of others, Dahmer added that he'd done similar things that whole year. "But there was no assault on any children or anything, it was just masturbation," he said.

Whether or not Dahmer was an out-and-out pedophile of small children, he did collect and read young children's books, Capshaw recalled. One of his favorites was "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," a folk tale about goats, a bridge, and a troll. The first billy

goat passes over the bridge and is seized by the troll, who wants to eat him. He saves himself by persuading his captor that coming next is a fatter billy goat, which will make a better meal. The story repeats for the second goat. When the third, and fattest, billy goat crosses, he's able to butt the troll into the water, and all three goats pass freely.

"The Billy Goats Gruff, comin' to get ya," Dahmer would threaten jokingly, Capshaw said.

Did this story contain a moral for Dahmer, the cannibal? Pick an unwieldy victim in a moment of greed and stupidity and it would be he—the troll—who'd be victimized.

Yet "The Billy Goats Gruff, comin' to get ya" suggested a role-reversing sequel, *The Return of the Billy Goats*. Whereas in the children's story the smaller goats could only survive by practicing deception, now, grown up, gruff *in extremis*, they were no longer at a disadvantage. That would make Dahmer a billy goat and Capshaw the troll. In his mind, was Jeff replaying someone's victimization of him when he was smaller? Was Capshaw a convenient substitute for that person, whom he felt justified in revenging through torture, deception, control—and nearly, murder? Was there even, deep in his mind, a thought of doing good by stopping or eliminating somebody bad? Was he assimilating both roles of victimizer and victim, troll and billy goat?

Linda Swisher said she didn't remember details, but there were a lot of abducted children around Baumholder when she was serving. She thought they were local Germans. The children were terrified, but not killed.

She remembered the park Capshaw mentioned, around a lake that was off-limits to American soldiers, who too often made trouble for the locals. The park had a lot of kids because it was the only place they could swim.

She better recalled a murder investigation at the time, of a black American woman whose burned body had been found stuffed into the trunk of an abandoned car—a Mercedes, she thought. There were posters on roads for hundreds of miles around. The German *polizei* had never been able to identify her, and on the poster was a picture of a distinctive gold cross, part of a necklace, left on her body.

Later, a German-speaking resident of Switzerland discovered for me the poster showing the gold cross and a drawing of the woman. In September 1980, a German television reality show called *Aktenzeichen XY... ungelöst* [translation: File Reference XY... unsolved] had broadcast a segment about the case. Like *America's Most Wanted*, which was modeled after it, the show requested the public to come forward with tips to help solve the crimes. Old episodes had since become viewable on YouTube.

Swisher was wrong about how the body had been found; it was in a field, burned, apparently twice. The location was near Bosenbach, a village about ten miles southeast of Baumholder, and midway to Kaiserslautern, which had a number of dancehalls where American soldiers frequented. German police had believed the victim was a prostitute who may have met men at the dancehalls.

The date of the discovery of the body was October 28, 1979. That was within Dahmer's dates of service assignment in Germany, according to his official records, released by the Army as a public record: June 22, 1979 to March 24, 1981.

Capshaw did not arrive in Germany until February 1980, and remembered that he was warned to be careful when leaving the base. A month before, a man had been found mutilated nearby, his entire trunk sliced. Capshaw's bunkmates knew the man; his name was Hans, he was a hitchhiker from close-by Idar-Oberstein who'd partied at their

barracks and was friends with Jeff Dahmer. A night or so before he was found dead, he was seen leaving with Dahmer.

Swisher as well remembered the body of a black soldier fished out of the Family Park lake and brought to the hospital. She referred to him as “the pond man,” and she thought he’d been murdered, possibly in the summer of 1980. Capshaw said he also remembered that, he’d been in the hospital at the same time, for his broken hip.

The German newspaper *Bild* had reported in 1991 that German federal police had five unsolved murders of unidentified mutilated women near the provincial capital town of Bad Kreuznach—30 miles northeast of Baumholder—that occurred between 1979 and 1981. The women were aged 14-30, they’d been stabbed and cut up, and Dahmer was considered a suspect. The Associated Press reported that only four of the five killed were women. Another report said that German prosecutors had reopened at least nine unsolved murders to check for connections to Dahmer.

Only one victim was identified by name: Erika Handschuh, 22, described as a hitchhiker, reported the *Milwaukee Journal*. She was found in Gräfenbach, a suburb of Bad Kreuznach, stabbed, strangled, her hands bound with cord, and frozen in the snow on November 30, 1980.

That day was a Sunday. Thanksgiving Day in 1980 was November 27. It was the only Thanksgiving Day Billy and Jeff were together.

Capshaw believed Dahmer spent at least some of his weekends away from his bunk looking to pick up people. Once, he remembered, Dahmer returned and his mouth was so damaged he needed dental surgery to pull his teeth back into place. Someone had slugged him, Capshaw figured.

I told him the pickup line the man gave Morgan, “Hi there, nice day, isn’t it?”

“That’s Jeff. Oh, yeah. He’d always tell people things like that. Like, ‘Beautiful day, isn’t it?’”

Morgan had said that in an instant, Dahmer’s eyes had turned demonic. “That sounds like him. His anger was something. In a millimeter of a second, he turned from good to bad—and then he’d attack. A kid (like Adam) wouldn’t know how to deal with it. If you’ve ever seen that—I promise you, you will never forget that eye contact.” When I told him that Morgan had an above-the-knee leg prosthesis that hobbled his walk, he said, “Jeff preyed on people who had that kind of problem.”

I asked, the last time he saw Dahmer, how long was his hair? Morgan had told Hoffman the man’s hair was long in the back but Hoffman responded that Dahmer, recently out of the military, couldn’t have grown long hair that quickly.

Capshaw answered the question: “We never got haircuts. When I got out, it was over my ears. Things were not military.”

Morgan had also thought Dahmer was ready to pull a knife on him. Capshaw said, “I know how he kills. He lunges—he’s unpredictable. He never made any sounds. He didn’t talk much.” Also, Capshaw said, wherever Dahmer went, he always wore an army-issue waterproof green jacket with many large pockets, in which he would keep his six-inch lock-blade serrated knife, which opened to 12 inches; foot-long cuts of nylon rope; and sometimes an ice pick and anesthesia drugs. The same jacket was designed for jungle weather as well as cold, and Dahmer wore it year-round. Although Morgan didn’t see the man inside the mall wearing it, the man Bowen said he saw, who threw a child into his already-running blue van, wore something like it—on a steaming hot July day in South

Florida. Capshaw surmised that Dahmer could have left the jacket in the van, then when he returned to it, he put the jacket over his shirt to change his appearance.

Capshaw was discharged in October 1981, and sometime either around Thanksgiving or Christmas Dahmer arrived at Capshaw's home in Hot Springs driving a two-tone brown station wagon that his mother thought was a Chevrolet. (Dahmer later told him, by phone, his father had given him a beat-up old car.) Billy wasn't home, he was staying with a friend a few blocks away where he was a shut-in, paranoid and afraid to leave the house. He now reasoned that Dahmer intended "to finish me off" because he knew too much. He'd since read that Dahmer killed his new friends when they wanted to leave—and Capshaw had never left him, because he couldn't.

Dahmer left a belated birthday card. It had a pop-up of W.C. Fields holding a beer mug and was signed "To a fellow guzzler on his 19th birthday, Jeff Dahmer." Capshaw said Dahmer liked the famously misanthropic Fields, and once spoke what he thought was one of his lines: "The only good kid is a dead kid." Although it wasn't an actual Fields quote, it sounded like one, and Capshaw said Dahmer meant it.

## 4 The Discovery

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1981**

SEARCH FOR ADAM GOES ON TV  
BOY, 6, MISSING 16 DAYS  
HEAD OF BOY FOUND IN CANAL  
—*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

To appear this morning on ABC's *Good Morning America* with other parents of missing children, John and Reve Walsh had flown to New York. While there, they were also trying to get on NBC's *Today Show*, and *Phil Donahue*, which taped in Chicago. Sitting by the phone in their hotel room at the St. Moritz on Central Park, the Walshes speculated to Charlie Brennan of the *Sun-Tattler* on why someone was trying to destroy their family.

"John has never stepped on anyone as long as I've known him," said Reve.

"The business we're in, we don't step on people or make enemies," John agreed.

Since the Walshes were planning to ask *GMA* viewers to call a number if they'd seen Adam, Southern Bell installed five phone lines in the old Hollywood police building, now serving as a temporary search headquarters.

Capt. Bob Mowers was a little skeptical: "They might get some good information, but they'll also hear from every... nut in the nation." Lt. Richard Hynds speculated that the investigation could go on indefinitely. "You get strange cases like this sometimes."

Beneath the *Sun-Tattler's* six-column banner headline on the Walshes, the remainder of the top of the page was occupied by an ominous wire story datelined Vero Beach, in central Florida: *Head of boy found in canal*.

While fishing on a bank of a canal Monday evening at 6:45, two orange grove ranch hands had seen something floating, a hundred feet away. It looked at first like a doll's

head. When they put a rowboat in the water and paddled toward it, they realized the head was human.

The men, Robert Hughes and Vernon Bailey, radioed their office to have them call police. At 7:20, the Florida Highway Patrol arrived. The scene was remote, swampy, and brush-filled, just off the northbound side of Florida's Turnpike, about seventy-five yards from mile marker 130. That was 125 miles north of Hollywood, fifty miles southwest of Vero Beach.

The site was located in Indian River County, just north of its border with St. Lucie County, so FHP called police and fire rescue from both counties to help them look for the rest of the body or other clues. Long past nightfall, they searched the canal banks and dove into the water, without success.

At 11:20, Indian River County Sheriff's Det. Donald Coleman showed the head to Lt. Sid DuBose. Both agreed it appeared to be Adam Walsh. The Indian River sheriffs notified Hollywood police. Also, a Vero Beach funeral home took the remains to the Indian River Memorial Hospital morgue.

At ten past midnight, the search was called off until daylight. But Coleman and DuBose waited at the scene for Hollywood detectives to arrive. At 12:15 A.M., the *Sun-Tattler* city desk called Brennan in his hotel room. He'd been asleep about an hour. "They've found a head of a young male floating in a canal. It might be Adam Walsh." Trying to return to sleep, he kept hearing, "They've found a head."

At 1:18 Det. James Gibbons, Sgt. Dennis Naylon, and I.D. tech Ron Young arrived at the scene. The Indian River detectives took them to the morgue where the Hollywood officers concurred, it looked like Adam. At two o'clock Naylon asked nurses to awaken Indian River County Associate Medical Examiner Dr. Franklin Cox so he could come to the hospital's autopsy room. He'd been told before nine P.M. about the head. At 2:40 A.M., Cox arrived and began his examination. He noted five cutting and chopping wounds stretching along the back of the victim's neck to almost the edge of both corners of his mouth. There was no evidence of any facial mutilation. It took him just eight minutes to conclude that the head appeared to have been intentionally severed by a blade like a meat cleaver.

Just before four o'clock, *Good Morning America* line producer Amy Hirsh took a call from a Florida police officer asking her to tell the Walshes that a head had been discovered. She was shocked, she later recalled, as well as left with the impression that the head was very likely Adam's. Hirsh told the officer, "You call him, no way I'm going to do that." She gave him the number at their hotel. When his phone rang, John Walsh answered, although later he couldn't recall specifically who it was. They wanted to know the name of Adam's dentist.

He wrote: "They were couching it. Saying everything in a way so as not to panic me. They didn't really think it was Adam's remains. Another boy [in Tampa] was missing, a boy a little older. And they thought it might be him." Walsh gave them the name of the dentist, and was told that John Monahan would be going up to Indian River County.

Hirsh said between four-thirty and five she called John herself and told him "You don't have to go through with this," meaning the show. They could arrange to fly them home immediately, and "we'll understand." Walsh wrote that he answered, "We have to go ahead with the appearance. You're our only hope. This is the only chance we have to

get Adam's photo on national television." Besides, he wanted to show photos of other people's missing children to get publicity for them.

After show host David Hartman arrived at about four-thirty, Hirsh told him about the calls and that the Walshes still wanted to do the show. "Awfully gutsy of them," said Hartman.

Charlie Brennan called John while he was shaving. "Charlie," John wrote he said, "I don't know anything. They're getting the dental records." Brennan thought there wouldn't be confirmation either way for a while.

Walsh wrote that he didn't tell any of this to Reve. "I didn't tell her anything. I was scared to death, hoping against hope. I had a horrible, paralyzing feeling. But I wasn't going to let anybody know. I was the guy with the stiff upper lip."

He prepared for his show appearance:

I knew exactly what I was going to say. I had it all memorized... If they gave me thirty seconds, I was going to cram it all into thirty seconds. If they gave me five minutes, I could go on longer, about how [Adam] acted and what his favorite games were, everything about him.

I knew that Reve wasn't going to say much. It was my job to do the talking... But I had it down. I was going to do it all... 'Stay focused,' I told myself. 'You've got to stay focused.'

Brennan reported differently, that Reve knew. At breakfast with her, John, and Jane Walsh, he wrote that Reve said, half to herself, "It's not Adam. It could be anyone."

Admitting he had the same intuition as Brennan, John said they'd already decided to do the show anyway. "What else can I do? If Adam's dead, I still have to give it a shot for all the other [missing] children."

At six o'clock the Walshes arrived on the set of *Good Morning America*. Hartman found them in the Green Room—the guests' lounge—and took them aside. "I understand you've had a call," he said. He repeated the offer that the show could put them on the first flight home. "Absolutely not," John told him.

At seven, in Indian River County, the search team resumed, now with an airplane, several helicopters and airboats, prepared to examine a full mile radius on each side of the turnpike. The Hollywood officers, having worked through the night, became part of it.

*GMA* went on air at seven as well. All morning executive producer George Merlis had been fighting with the network's standards and practices unit—the censors—over whether they could post on air the toll-free phone numbers the Walshes wanted people to call if they had information about Adam or the other missing children to be mentioned on the show. The censors were afraid that an avalanche of calls to those numbers would crash AT&T's phone lines, and in retaliation, AT&T might pull the plug on the entire ABC network. Merlis told the censors, nonsense.

Sometime before 7:30, in the midst of this argument, the show's unit manager Debbie Cox-Riches interrupted Merlis in the control room. She had a Florida policeman on the line asking to speak to John Walsh. Recollecting, Merlis thought the police agency

was the Florida Highway Patrol, possibly a lieutenant, who asked him if Walsh could be given a discreet area to take the call.

The Walshes were still in the green room. Merlis had the call transferred to David Hartman's dressing room, took John there, and closed the door. During the call Merlis recalled Walsh as very much in control. "He put down the phone and said, 'It still may not be Adam.'"

Merlis walked him back to the green room where Reve had waited. During a break, Merlis went to the set to brief Hartman.

Air time for the Walshes and Kristin Cole Brown, of Child Find, was set at 8:15. Moments before, John called Hollywood police. They told him Indian River County's judgment was that the head was almost certainly Adam's—99 percent certain. Brennan wrote that Merlis told the Walshes they could back out. Merlis recalled he said that only to John. The answer, again, was no.

Off-camera, Merlis recalled, Hartman said to the Walshes, "I have to ask you about this." John replied, "That's okay."

On set, designed to look like a suburban living room, complete with window blinds and modern art, Hartman sat in his wicker chair. On the couch to his right was Brown, then Reve, then John. On the show for their seven minutes, John looked and sounded fairly natural, although downbeat. Reve, on the other hand, said nothing the entire appearance. Only once did she even try. Her eyes stared straight ahead, down, or occasionally toward John when he spoke. Neither cried. John wrote, "The whole time, Reve was sitting there next to me. Not saying a word. Looking like a bomb had gone off in her head." Hartman described her as "catatonic."

The interview was clearly hard for Hartman as well. He stuttered through the opening part, while cute family pictures of Adam appeared on screen. Hartman later said it was his most dramatic moment in all the 12 years he did the show:

**HARTMAN:** John and Reve Walsh are from Hollywood, Florida. They have a son, Adam, he is six years old, but they haven't seen him for more than two weeks now. Adam and his mother were shopping in a shopping center, a department store, he was playing in the toy department while Mrs. Walsh went to buy something else just a few feet away. When she came back to get him, Adam was gone. Mr. and Mrs. Walsh—John, Reve, if I can—John, this has been a long night particularly—it's been a long two weeks, God knows, but it's been an even longer night. What happened last night? Can you tell us?

**JOHN:** Well, amongst many sightings and reported possible clues on Adam they have found the remains of a young person in Florida that at this time they are trying to identify whether it is Adam or not. At this point they feel there is a good possibility it is not Adam. Therefore they felt we should come on and carry the word of Adam to the public because there is a good likelihood that he is still out there with his abductors.

Watching in the studio, Charlie Brennan was stunned. He knew John didn't believe that. Hours later he quoted what Walsh had just said as "We have good information the body found last night is not Adam's."



The *Fort Lauderdale News*, watching from their newsroom, quoted him more precisely: “At this time they feel there is a good possibility it is not Adam. They feel there is still a good possibility he is out there [alive].”

**HARTMAN:** And you were advised this morning by what, the police authorities?

**JOHN:** By several police authorities, Hollywood Police as well as the FBI and urged to go on and give Adam the best possible chance.

Over more pictures of Adam, John described him as six and a half, with sandy blond hair, freckles, missing a front tooth, slight build, about 45 pounds and three and a half feet tall.

**JOHN:** He’s a very introverted, sheltered, but very bright little boy. He’s a little gentleman.

**HARTMAN:** What kind of help have you had in the last couple of weeks? Who has helped him?

**JOHN:** Overwhelming community support. It was the largest search in the history of South Florida for a little boy, conducted in the Hollywood area. All the official organizations joined in the search. Park rangers, fish and wildlife, game as well as many other police departments, citizens’ crime watch volunteers and individuals.

Also helping, Walsh mentioned, were Burger King, Eastern and Delta airlines, big theme parks elsewhere in the state, thousands of letter writers from across the country, and contributors to Adam’s reward for information fund, which he said had now topped \$120,000.

**JOHN:** And of course the media was phenomenal. The media in South Florida kept the word of Adam on the television stations and in the newspapers for nine days. Which I think is a long time.

Kristin Cole Brown spoke about problems other parents of missing children had encountered in dealing with authorities trying to help. After photos of some of those missing children appeared on screen, John added: “I can’t tell you the horror it is of losing a child. It would be hard to relay that to someone.”

**HARTMAN:** I don’t think anybody can...

**JOHN:** But the lack of organized efforts on the part of federal and state governments to assist parents in locating their children after they leave the immediate area is totally unbelievable in a country of our size.

The segment ended, as it did every show, at exactly 8:22:55. Merlis and Hartman differ in remembering what happened next. Merlis thought the Walshes and Hartman all stayed where they were sitting. John turned to Reve and told her: “It is Adam.” She broke down on the set.

“John and Reve sat there for some time while she wept. The local news cutaway—five minutes long—was going on, preceded by two minutes of commercial and one minute of station I.D. and commercial, so there were about seven minutes from the time the segment ended until we had to clear the set and David had to open the next half hour. I don’t recall how long John and Reve sat there. David is a devoted father and this must have been very hard for him. He had another half-hour of show to do after witnessing this and he did it like the professional he was, betraying none of the emotion he must have felt.”

In Hartman’s memory, all three stood up after the segment ended. Hartman thanked them then John guided him behind the set, as someone guided Reve away. Hirsh Rogers remembered it that way as well. Behind the set, alone, John told Hartman, “It is Adam’s head they found.”

“We both cried,” Hartman said. They stayed behind the set for only 30 seconds, maybe a minute. “But I had to finish the show.” Asked how he did that, he answered, “I don’t know.” It was that much harder, he said, because at the time, his oldest child, of three, was six, like Adam. It was his recollection that John was going to tell Reve back in the hotel.

Brennan called his city editor, Chuck Joyce, and told him what he’d just seen Walsh say on TV was wrong. At the 8:30 daily story conference, Joyce relayed that to managing editor Jerry Esslinger. They decided that since at any time that morning the story could change, the paper needed to be ready for all instances: that the head was verified as Adam; it was *not* Adam; or no determination by press time. They needed to compose three possible front pages, each with a completely different tone. They also kept a hotline open to Hollywood police, who were on a hotline with the Vero Beach sheriff.

The Walshes stayed in the Green Room forty minutes after their segment, Merlis said. Then John came into the control room and thanked everyone. “More than a few of us broke down,” Merlis remembered. Walsh wrote that everyone wished them good luck and said they were praying for them.

By nine o’clock, ABC’s limo returned the Walshes to the St. Moritz. To relieve the unbearable tension, Reve, Jane, and Brown wanted to go to the Plaza Hotel to eat. Brennan reported that he and John went back to John’s hotel room to wait for John Monahan to take Adam’s dental records to Vero Beach. Ten years earlier, working as a poolside cabana boy at the beachfront Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Walsh had rescued Monahan’s child from the rising waves. In immense gratitude, Monahan, an executive at the hotel, had rewarded John with a wedding present: a trip to Europe for his honeymoon with Reve, then an office job at the hotel, and became his mentor in business. It would be a horrible irony for Monahan to see John Walsh’s dead son, fished out of the water.

As Walsh mechanically tossed clothes into his suitcase, he became enraged, Brennan wrote.

I’m sure He’s still up there. But I don’t know what purpose He had for this, or what test, what reason... What logic? It’s beyond the human comprehension. Maybe Adam’s better off not growing up in this world. Look what happened to our little boy.

I'll never be the same the rest of my life. How could Adam have met the one person who would do this, out of the thousands of people in Sears who would have helped him?

Nor did he mince words for law enforcement, or the lack of government support for families of missing children:

There's more money spent for taking care of stray dogs at the ASPCA than there is on looking for missing children. The FBI waited and waited and waited. They waited for word. Florida Highway Patrol waited for word. Meanwhile, the Hollywood Police, those poor guys, are busting their tails for 14 grand a year.

I hope to God they catch him, because they told me that once someone does this kind of thing, it gets easier to do it again.

Whoever did this had to have a vehicle, it had to be registered somewhere. He was functioning in society. And now he'll probably just move to another state and get another dishwasher's job and the FBI could care less.

I'm getting super-conscious of the strange people out there. All I can say to people is, don't take anything for granted.

In his own writing, Walsh says he was alone in his hotel room.

"I sat on the bed, by myself, saying, 'It can't be. Nobody could do this. Nobody. Nobody could kill this little boy. There is no creature on the planet who could do that.'"

Driving in his white Mercedes-Benz convertible, just before eleven o'clock John Monahan arrived at Indian River Memorial Hospital in Vero Beach to see Franklin Cox. With Monahan was Lt. Hynds, who was carrying Adam's records from his dentist, Dr. Marshall Berger of Hollywood. Dr. Cox had already examined the child's teeth, noting a dental filling on his last lower left molar and an emerging upper right incisor. More than once in print, Adam had been referred to as "gap-toothed."

The records matched, said Dr. Cox. John Monahan looked in the child's mouth and said too it was Adam.

This is how Brennan reported it:

Just after 11:30, a phone rang at the St. Moritz. John Walsh answered it.

"Give it to me straight," he demanded.

How could Brennan, or anyone, have left John alone at that moment? Yet deadline was already an hour and a half past, and his newspaper was relying on him. Brennan had no choice. He raced to his room and rang his office.

Walsh recalled the worst moment of his life this way:

And then the phone rang.

"Is this Mr. John Walsh?"

"Yes, it is."

"Mr. Walsh, we are so very sorry to have to tell you this. But the remains that were found last night in Vero Beach have been positively identified as Adam's."

I went down.

Right onto the floor. It felt like somebody took a huge, wooden stake and shoved it into the wall of my chest.

Like somebody killed me right there on the floor.

I couldn't breathe. I thought I was having a heart attack. It felt like I was dying.

"Please let me trade places with him..."

Death would have hurt me so much less.

I thrashed and I screamed. I yelled and pushed over the mattress and smashed things. I broke glass and a picture frame and tore off the sheets and threw lamps and kicked the table over.

I was like a wounded animal. Dying the way a wounded animal dies. I could not deal with it. It was unbearable, unbearable. I thought that my heart was going to explode...

The little boy I had waited all my life to have was dead.

Security guards came to his door, asking if they could get him a doctor. "I don't think I answered them," Walsh wrote. "I was saying, 'How am I going to tell my wife? How am I ever going to tell Reve? How can I tell her? She's his mother. I can't tell her this.'"

He called the Plaza to page his sister Jane. He told her, "You must not tell Reve. Don't tell her. I will tell her. Bring her back to me at the hotel. Do it right now. Because I have to tell her."

When they got to the door of the hotel room, John opened it.

And I said, "Our baby's dead."

And Reve said, "I know."

As John watched, "the spirit that had made her who she was slowly collapsed into her. As if her whole being was caving in on itself... she went from being a girl to an old woman right before my eyes."

All John could say to her, over and over, was I love you.

Already so far past deadline, the *Sun-Tattler* desperately worked to get as much of the story as they could into the paper. Press time was delayed for an hour. Tearing up its hopeful front page, they replaced it beginning with a simple, stunning, urgent banner headline with a subhead:

ADAM WALSH FOUND DEAD  
DISCOVERED IN VERO CANAL

NEW YORK—Adam has been found.

John and Reve Walsh of Hollywood received the worst possible answer to the mystery of their only child's mysterious disappearance at 11:35 this morning.

The remains of a young boy found floating in an Indian River County canal late Monday are those of Adam, 6 years old.

Adam's father received a call at the St. Moritz Hotel in Manhattan from family friend Jeff O'Regan saying the two-week search for Adam is over.

Adam's mother was away from the hotel with friends when the news came.

"Oh Christ, oh Christ, who could do this to my little boy," the 35-year-old father cried. "Who could cut his head off?"

Throughout the day, police officers searched along the turnpike from Orlando to Miami, including thirty-five miles of canals. In the afternoon someone called the Indian River Sheriff's office to say the rest of the body was within a mile of where the head was found. But searchers didn't find it.

At noon, Franklin Cox spoke to Broward County medical examiner Ronald Wright, who asked to do the autopsy. Deferring to his bigger-city counterpart, Cox agreed, packed the remains in ice, and gave the package to Hollywood Det. Ron Young, who accepted a ride back to Fort Lauderdale in Miami television station WCKT's news helicopter.

Dr. Wright signed for the remains at 2:15. He too noted five distinct blows to the back of the child's neck and lower rear portion of his skull. He thought a very sharp bladed instrument at least five and a quarter inches in length had inflicted the blows.

He said Adam was dead when he was decapitated. By examining the inside of his skull, he could say he'd been dead at least ten days before he was found.

Because of the air traffic controllers' strike, the Walshes' flight home from Kennedy airport was delayed more than two and a half hours. Waiting at the New York Delta terminal, hearing that reporters from every major local news agency had gathered to await them at Fort Lauderdale airport, John and Reve reluctantly decided to speak to them.

They slept most of the flight. Jane Walsh talked to Charlie Brennan about the issue in general of missing children; Kristen Cole Brown, who'd formed Child Find to help families find their missing children, had told the Walshes that as many as 50,000 children each year aren't recovered.

"It's over for us, one way or the other. But for some of these women, they still go to sleep at night, not knowing where their children are. John's not going to forget them.

"John wants to help these people get publicity, and he'll do that. He could walk away and say 'The hell with the world.' But that's not my brother."

They finally arrived just after 11 P.M. They spoke to reporters for four minutes, refusing questions.

Reve's arm tucked under his shoulder, his eyes red, once again he broke into tears:

I really don't know what to say. Other than I'm sure you know our hearts are broken.

We were fortunate in the fact that we had a lot of friends and some resources to look for Adam, and we gave it our best effort to bring him back. I just wish it had a happier ending.

I don't know who would do this to a six-year-old child. I can't conceive of it. It's beyond the realm of reality.

He thanked the Hollywood Police, the volunteers who'd searched for Adam, the community that had prayed for him, and the press too, but was bitter about the lack of state and federal help:

I can't tell you how we feel. But maybe by me saying this will make some people aware of how hard it is, and how little cooperation people get that have missing children.

We have a huge computer in Washington, D.C. that is for stolen cars. But we have no kind of a central location for missing children. Monies are spent and funded for natural resources and to save endangered species, but yet there's no federal or state organization to help in the search for missing children.

This is a great country and we have a lot of resources but it appears to me that our priorities are in the wrong order. Maybe these words will help save some other little children from what happened to Adam.

Her face taut, Reve was briefer and less demonstrative:

I don't know what is happening in this world. I really don't. But Adam evidently is too good for this world. He's much greater than this world, and he didn't deserve to live in this world. He was too good, and you know, only the good die young.

## [5](#) [Man In A Blue Van](#)

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12**

ADAM MAY HAVE BEEN DEAD SINCE  
HE DISAPPEARED; POLICE NEED CLUES

—*Hollywood Sun-Tattler*

“The ordinary criminal, with this much heat, would have dropped the kid off by the roadside, stabbed him, smothered him or just killed him,” Lt. Richard Hynds speculated to the *Miami Herald*. “But this, this mutilation is the work of a psychopath.”

“This person is a nasty animal that needs to be eradicated from the earth,” said Broward County medical examiner Ronald Wright. “Assuming that this is the first such killing, there will be more. These kinds of people don't quit.”

The *Sun-Tattler* quoted Wright that Adam might have been killed July 27, the day he went missing. But the *Herald* quoted him saying the autopsy alone couldn't determine the cause or time of death because the head had been disfigured, possibly by alligators or turtles. He'd have to conduct clinical tests, which would take four days.

Tests on brain tissue might reveal a better idea of time of death, and testing the cut on the spinal column at the base of the head would help determine the decapitation instrument, Broward Medical Examiner's office chief investigator D.P. Hughes explained to the *Miami News*. The severing was uneven, Wright told the *Sun-Tattler*.

To the *Fort Lauderdale News*, Wright added that the head was in an advanced state of decomposition. It had areas of discoloration, but he couldn't tell whether they were bruises from a beating or something else.

Hughes said dismembered bodies are typically scattered, and Lt. Hynds concurred: "There had to be a massive amount of blood lost when the head was severed, and we didn't find any near the canal." Bacterial tests from water samples taken from the site would also need to be done.

Hynds added that the site where the head was found was inaccessible from the road, which meant the killer stopped his car and walked to it. However, the next day, in the *Sun-Tattler*, Hynds contradicted himself: "He could have just stuck his arms out the window and dropped it there. He may not even have left the car."

In the afternoon, the Walshes held another press conference, this time to announce funeral services, and that much of the money donated to the reward fund for Adam's safe return would now be given to Child Find and the Dee Scofield Project. To handle that money and new donations, they set up an Adam Walsh trust fund, in care of a Miami attorney.

"In our situation, the Hollywood police were fantastic, and their efforts were day and night. But once the child has left the area, the search becomes fruitless."

A Mass of the Angels, spoken at Catholic funerals of children younger than seven—who are considered to be without sin—would be held 10 A.M. Saturday. Cremation would be early the next week. Said John Walsh, "We'll scatter his ashes at sea, because that boy loved the water so much."

Walsh addressed questions that the murder might have been related to his business. "[The police] searched my background totally, from getting out of college and going to work, through the last few years, and my business associates (voluntarily) came forth. I'm in sales and marketing. I entertain people and try to get them to come to hotels, and I'm not in the type of business to alienate people. I'm a salesman.

"The people I'm involved with are wealthy on their own right. They have children. If it really is for a ransom, there was no ransom demand, so it's been eliminated. This person was a sick, sick person."

At three P.M., after more than 500 officers at the Vero Beach site had combed land, water, and ditches, finding nothing, the search was concluded.

### **Thursday, August 13**

What Timothy Pottenburgh had reported was the police's best lead, Lt. Hynds told the Herald. All over the state, police had stopped hundreds of blue vans and checked registrations. "I'm afraid to drive my own blue van," Hynds told the *Fort Lauderdale News*.

In the wake of events, the Pottenburghs let Ron Hickman speak to Timothy and his grandmother at length. Timothy said he and his grandmother were in Sears's toy

department when he saw a man reading comic books, loitering. He described him as white, mid-twenties, five-ten to six-foot, with dark curly hair and a mustache, wearing a multi-colored tank top. This concurred with what the family had described two weeks earlier, a man that was white, about six feet tall, muscular, with dark bushy hair, wearing jeans and a T-shirt.

Shortly after, Timothy said he saw a small boy leave the store through the north door, and the man followed him out. The man ran to a navy blue van parked near the entrance. The little boy walked around Sears to the west side, near the garden shop. As Timothy and his grandmother stepped off the sidewalk to walk to their car, the blue van nearly hit them as it turned the corner.

Then, in front of the garden shop, the blue van stopped, and Timothy saw the van's passenger side door slide open and two hands motion to the little boy, standing in the west parking lot. The boy then walked to the van and was pulled inside. He thought the person in the van was wearing a stocking mask.

On his first recollection, Timothy had said all he'd seen at the curb was the van, door open, where the boy might have been. He hadn't seen the boy enter, nor had he mentioned the mask. Carolyn Hudson, Timothy's grandmother, repeated that she hadn't seen any of this, except for the blue van that almost ran them over. Nor was she certain exactly when it happened.

At the end of the interview, Hickman again asked Marilyn Pottenburgh, would she now allow her son to be hypnotized? Finally she relented.

In an attempt to profile Adam's killer, Hollywood police legal advisor Geoff Cohen called Dr. Mark Reisner, a psychologist employed by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Because the evidence was thin, Reisner could offer only a general profile:

Sex: Male

Age: 19-35 years of age, probably in his early to late twenties.

Race: Caucasian or Latin. Expressed the opinion that this type of conduct was not generally inter-racial.

Mental Status: Borderline psychopathic/psychotic personality with a tremendous homosexual conflict expressed in violence and rage. Probably a loner and not liked by many people. Individual unlikely to brag or talk about this act. Unlikely that he will exhibit any remorse or guilt over act or confess to the abduction or murder.

Educational Background: Little formal education. Lower socio-economic background.

Occupational Skills: Probably has held many unskilled or minimally skilled laboring jobs.

Social Relations: Identifies with and is attracted to children. May sometimes work with children. Poor relationships with both females and males.

Criminal History: Almost certainly has abducted or attempted to abduct a child in the past. Almost certainly has sexually assaulted a child in the past. Very likely that he has been arrested and imprisoned for such acts.

Reisner also said the decapitation indicated there had been sexual contact with the boy. Further, after the abduction, the individual would seek an isolated environment, and that he would maintain control over the boy by using both deception and physical force.



## Friday, August 14

In the morning, a Fort Lauderdale man named Eugene Menacho called Hollywood police to say that a blue van had nearly collided with him as he was driving to Sears on July 27, between 12:30 and 1:00 P.M. He was at the southwest intersection closest to Sears, at Hollywood Boulevard and Park Road, about to turn onto Park Road toward the mall. That's when a blue 1979 Ford van traveling very fast westbound on Hollywood Boulevard almost struck him. Ron Hickman asked Menacho if he'd undergo hypnosis. He would, and they scheduled an appointment for Saturday.

Timothy Pottenburgh's hypnosis session lasted ninety minutes. He remembered a white man about six feet tall, in his mid-twenties, medium to heavy build (180-200 pounds), with dark brown or black curly hair and a thin mustache, wearing a striped T-shirt. He was standing in the toy department, looking around the Atari games area.

Then he saw a little boy leave the store by the north door, and the man followed him. As the boy walked to the west side of the store, the man ran to the blue van. Inside the blue van was a second white man sitting in the passenger seat. The running man got in the van and drove it to the west side of Sears.

As Timothy and his grandmother walked toward their car, the blue van almost hit them. Then the van stopped by the garden center and its right sliding door opened. Then he saw a little boy [he didn't say for sure it was the same one] standing in the parking lot, and a hand motioning him to come toward the van. The boy did, and was then pulled inside.

Both men in the van wore stocking masks, he said. He also recalled that the little boy wore a red hat. [Reve said Adam wore a beige hat; he wore a red baseball cap in his missing photo.]

Timothy also added details to his description of the van: it was a navy blue, late-model Ford with tinted windows, shiny rib-type mag wheels, a ladder on the left rear and a right-side sliding door with a large rectangular window. It also had a black front bumper, no spare tire on the back, and a Florida license plate. In his first description, it was late-model, shiny, dark blue, with dark-tinted windows, mag wheels, and a chrome ladder in the back.

At a wake in a Hollywood funeral home, a *Miami News* reporter described the chapel with bouquets and Adam's familiar portrait above the altar. Below it, she saw Reve praying over the coffin. "We will get through this. And we'll go on with what we're doing. We are going to make it."

"God gave man free will," said Father Michael Conboy, John Walsh's first cousin, from Rochester, N.Y., who would preside at the service. "Free will to commit good or evil. We can't blame God for the evil that man commits. (Adam) is at peace."

John Walsh took issue with that, he later wrote. "Is this the benevolent God that we have worshipped our whole lives? Is this an all-powerful, benevolent, gentle God who allowed this to happen? Tell me about that one, would you, Father Mike? Explain to me how it is that I'm supposed to deal with this."

Charlie Brennan wrote that fear was gripping the community, especially among parents of young children. School would begin in ten days. "Every person I've talked to

is frightened. They're just frightened to death," said a parent, one of two dozen about to discuss security with an elementary school principal. She said they were all ready to put their children in private schools.

### **Saturday, August 15**

Eight detectives were working the case full-time, as well as six officers who'd fielded a thousand phone tips. "Now we're going to get a lot of calls on vans with black front bumpers. Maybe this is our break, I don't know," Fred Barbetta told the *Miami Herald*. Lt. Richard Hynds told the *Miami News* he would try to get a list of every 1979 and 1980 navy blue Ford van sold in Florida. 1981 models didn't come in that color. "We'll run down every one if we have to."

The *Herald* found that Sears in Hollywood Mall hadn't added additional security. "I don't think any blame can be placed on the store," said manager Herbert Gellman. "One thing that's changed is we don't have any announcements for lost children any more. Parents are being more attentive to their children." The manager of a Sears mall in Palm Beach County said the incident had upset his whole mall. He'd even seen a woman shopper clutching a string leash tied to her child's belt.

At 10 A.M., services began at St. Maurice Catholic Church in Hollywood. Newspaper crowd estimates were between 300 and 1,000, including the overflow outside. Adam's casket was shrouded in white velvet and gold trim, empty for reasons of police evidence. A children's choir, in white, performed.

"There will always be this struggle between good and evil. God forbid, some choose evil," spoke Father Conboy, his voice breaking. "The hundreds and thousands of people who came forward to help John and Reve in their hour of need show that, yes, there are people who are good in this area. Evil will be overcome by good, somehow.

"We are hurt that this has happened to such a sweet, innocent, loving little boy. But he is now with God."

From a poem, he read: "It's time to say goodbye for a while. Do not weep for me. But if you must weep, weep for me because I am once again free. I have returned to the Lord, in the presence of God who is love.

"I am still here when you need me. Just call my name.

"So long for now, Cooter. We'll see you again. We promise."

Adam was too young to need prayers, said Father John Kapellen. "We believe Adam is already in heaven."

A *Fort Lauderdale News* reporter wrote that the only audible crying during the service was by young children. John Walsh frequently bit his lower lip and dabbed at his eyes with a handkerchief. Holding a single yellow rose, Reve looked composed. As she greeted friends and relatives, she smiled guardedly. Toward the end of the service, John took her hand, brought it to his breast, clutched it, then held it to his lips. Reve approached the photograph of Adam and kissed it.

As John Walsh left church, he unfurled a gold-lettered white banner a little girl had handed him during the service, a smaller copy of what hung above the altar. The banner read, If His song is to continue, we must do the singing. "We knew that the word His was supposed to mean the Lord. But to us, it meant Adam," Walsh wrote.

Under hypnosis, Eugene Menacho recalled it was about twelve-thirty when he drove to Sears with his wife. Eastbound on Hollywood Boulevard, he had a green light to make a left turn onto Park Road, the west border of the mall. While turning in the intersection, a westbound blue van sped past him in the lane closest to the center divider, narrowly missing his car on his passenger side.

Menacho was able to describe the driver: white male, mid-twenties, black hair, thin mustache, olive complexion, not wearing a shirt. He didn't recall anyone else in the van.

He described the van: a 1979 or 1980 Ford, dark navy blue, very shiny, with a rectangular tinted window on the passenger-side sliding door. It also had chrome running boards, shiny mag wheels, a chrome ladder on the right rear, two tinted square windows on the rear doors, a small silver mirror on the passenger side, and two antennas—one on the roof and one on the front passenger side.

He could also describe the interior: black stock seats, black steering wheel, and a wood grain partition between the front seats. He recalled the numbers four-six, or six-four on the license plate, possibly a Florida tag.

At 3:30, both Menacho and Timothy Pottenburgh met with police artist John Valor, of Miami P.D., at Hollywood police headquarters. Over the next two and a half hours, Valor made two drawings that both witnesses cooperated to produce. When they were done, police released both composites to the media.

The biggest difference between the two drawings was mustaches. One was pencil-thin, the other fuller, extending a bit past the suspect's lips. The similarities were in the faces' ovalness. It was hard to say whether they were drawings of the same man.

Dr. Sanford Jacobson, director of forensic psychiatry at Dade County-owned Jackson Memorial Hospital, offered a profile of the person who killed Adam, to the *Miami Herald*.

He was a loner, Jacobson said, but someone who easily blended into society. His choice of victim was a reflection of his dual self—"somebody they both hate and, in a sense, envy or admire. The weakness of the victim reflects what they remember of themselves. For they themselves might have once been victims of abuse, some of it sexual.

"By doing this to the victim, they identify with the person who aggressed against them in childhood and kind of master their own trauma.

"I've never seen a great deal of remorse in such people that I thought was sincere."

## CALLERS TIP POLICE TO DOZENS OF BLUE VANS

—*The Miami Herald*

At the Hollywood detective bureau, the hotline phone button glowed. Still dressed for his earlier Sunday school class, Det. Ron Hickman told a *Miami Herald* reporter, "Here's a big lead coming in now." Like hundreds of other calls police said they'd gotten by the end of the day, this caller thought he'd seen a blue van matching the more specific description police had released to the media.

The number of every license plate tipsters called in eventually would be checked on the state department of motor vehicles computer. Also, detectives had since asked the DMV for a list of every Ford van registered in Florida—there were about 10,000, and not

delineated by color. Meanwhile, tips were also coming in from police elsewhere in the state, as well as other states.

“There’s a guy in Miami who has a blue van, and he’s been stopped by police ten times,” said Sgt. Dennis Naylon. Another reported van turned out to be owned by Sgt. J.B. Smith.

After a few more frustrating weeks, police let the blue van fade as a lead. Perhaps having taken it on the way they did reflected their leadership’s early resolution to do anything to solve the case, no matter how daunting the task. But even had they been able to check every Ford van in the region—on their slim assumption the van was a Ford—what good would it have done? How would it have led them to recognize the killer?

In September, lead detective Jack Hoffman met again with the Pottenburgh family, this time while Timothy and his cousin were in school. They said they’d gotten to Sears that day around 11:45, shopped for school clothes for an hour, then as they were leaving for the food court heard a page for a lost child. They ate lunch until 1:15 then the boys’ grandmother Carolyn Hudson took Timothy through Sears to return to their car, parked on the store’s north side. The blue van incident happened at about 1:25, Carolyn said.

In what became the last mention of the blue van for 10 years, Hoffman wrote in his report, “If Mrs. Hudson is positive of the time, it appears that the incident that Timothy Pottenburgh had witnessed is unrelated to the Adam Walsh abduction.”

So instead of merely shelving the blue van lead until some new information arose that matched it, Hoffman determined that it had no value at all. But should he have been conclusive that someone couldn’t have seen Adam an hour after Reve began searching for him?

Relying on Reve for incident times that day was problematic. On her first recounting to Hoffman and Det. Ron Hickman, she said that on her way to Sears that morning she’d stopped at Adam’s church school, staying just long enough to leave a check for his upcoming year’s tuition. From home it was about five minutes’ ride to the church, then another five to Sears, but inexplicably she said she’d arrived at the church at 11, then Sears at 12:30.

At Sears, Hoffman found much firmer-grounded times. Angelique Ganas, a young woman working in the lamp department, remembered Reve asking her questions at about five or 10 minutes after noon. She was precise because she had just replaced the regular lamp counter employee, who’d left for lunch. Switchboard operator Jenny Rayner, who’d paged Adam, said her first page was at 12:25. Catalog desk employee Joanne Braun remembered seeing a gray Checker park between 11:30-noon. Reve drove a gray Checker.

And besides the Pottenburgh clan and the 12-year-old boy who’d said he’d played videogames with a child he thought was Adam and had last seen him between 1:30-2 (and whom a police lieutenant believed because he came from a very religious family), still others said they’d seen Adam in the toy department long after the first intercom page. Joyce Sotillo, mother to Andrew Sotillo, 13, and aunt to John Sotillo, 11, who’d both played in a tennis tournament that day at the park next to Sears, told Hoffman the boys had seen Adam play the videogames at 12:45. They were certain of the time because they’d finished their morning match, eaten lunch in the mall, and were due to play again

at one. They were almost late because of a videogame incident involving two black children.

Also, 13-year-old James Martin told Hoffman he'd wandered into Sears at 12:45-12:50 after also having lunch at the food court. He played the videogame with a boy he thought was eight when two black boys tried to wrest the controls from the smaller child. He remembered that a female security guard came then the black boys left. James said he left at about 1. When Hoffman showed him a picture of Adam, he said he couldn't be sure that was the same child he'd played with. However, it was five weeks after the incident when Hoffman showed it to him.

Hoffman also re-interviewed Kathy Shaffer, the security guard, who said the fight she broke up happened between 12:30-12:45. She was also sure that neither of the white boys she threw out of the store was Adam.

Another contradiction Hoffman found was that St. Mark's Lutheran church secretary Jackie Wing said she saw Reve come in that morning between 10-10:30. She remembered the check she left, for \$90 and signed by John Walsh—but said Adam wasn't with her. And she was positive about that. Later, Hoffman spoke to the church vicar who also said he saw Reve by herself.

When the detectives returned to Reve she insisted Adam was with her. (Later, confronted with the vicar's statement, she recalled that Adam was barely higher than the secretary's desk, and that she'd asked him why he didn't say hello to either the secretary or the vicar.) She revised her times forward to being at the church at noon and Sears at 12:30. But when they told her about the Sears employees' times, she admitted she might have been mistaken, she wasn't wearing her watch that day.

There was another side issue involving Reve. When the police interviewed Jimmy Campbell, a family friend who'd lived with the Walshes for almost all of Adam's life and had been the equivalent of his nanny, he'd volunteered a startling admission: he'd been having an affair with her for at least three years. John had spent a lot of time on business trips and had felt comfortable keeping Jimmy in the house. Jimmy, nearly 10 years younger than John, was originally John's friend.

But the Walshes, or at least John, had apparently grown tired of Jimmy living with them. They'd asked him to leave earlier in the year, and after stalling for a few months, Jimmy had moved out just two weeks before Adam disappeared. He didn't really have anywhere to go, or enough money to get his own place. In those two weeks he'd slumped at his parents' house and with a friend, and slept a night at a cheap hotel and another in his un-air conditioned beach cabana, from where he ran his business, a concession renting sailboats by the day to tourists.

The police made Campbell their prime suspect. In their minds, he might have killed Adam as retribution against the Walshes for throwing him out. This was at the same time they dropped the blue van lead, which clearly didn't connect to Campbell.

When Jimmy had learned Adam was gone, he immediately raced to Sears to help look, and for the two weeks the child was missing had devoted all his time to the search. Along with other Walsh family members and friends, he'd even helped the police answer incoming tips that came to the detective bureau. He'd also moved back into the Walshes' home.

It also came out that on the morning of the incident Jimmy had gone to the Walsh home after John had left for work, and that Reve had wanted him to take Adam to the

beach with him so she could do her errands. But Jimmy had said no, perhaps because he didn't want to revisit his babysitter role. He said he went to work but the police couldn't find anyone who had seen him in the middle of the day. Later, two *Miami Herald* reporters canvassing Campbell's hotel found an elderly couple who'd rented a cabana for the season who did confirm seeing him

When Hoffman and Hickman asked Reve if she'd had any extramarital affairs, she said no. But when pushed, she admitted, yes, she'd been having one with Jimmy for three years, but it wasn't serious.

Hoffman later said he'd pressed Campbell harder than he'd ever pressed anyone before. Relying on his desire to help the police any way he could, they polygraphed him twice, hypnotized him once, and kept interrogating him. Finally they confronted him point-blank that he killed Adam. Campbell deeply denied it but didn't convince the police.

When Reve first confirmed the affair to Hoffman and Hickman, they suggested she tell her husband before they told him. Were they right? They believed their mission was to solve the case, even at the risk of further emotional distress to the Walshes. And of course that was their mission. But this was only a week after the discovery of Adam's remains, and days after his funeral service. The affair in itself wasn't relevant, it was only in regards to Campbell as a suspect, and had the detectives waited before threatening Reve by telling John, they might have reasoned out that Campbell wasn't as good a suspect as in their zeal they'd thought. Police and profilers had described the killer as a psychopath, and that was not Campbell. Instead, according to his repeated professions to police, and from all others who knew him, he'd loved the child. He told the detectives, "I was his father, brother, uncle, and playmate."

So on top of all the other calamities that had happened to the Walshes, the police relentlessly pursued Campbell for three months, until finally disgusted he walked out of an interview, and John hired the top criminal attorney in Broward County to write a letter to the police to either charge Campbell or leave him alone. The police never charged him, nor ever quite cleared him either, and he lived the rest of his life with the indelible stain of being a suspect in a never-solved murder case.

The press wouldn't learn about the affair until 1983, after the Walshes sued Sears and Hollywood Mall for negligence and wrongful death and announced it to the media. Again the Hollywood police were to blame, this time for failing to keep confidences. They'd helped the Walshes' attorney by opening the case file for him to see. When the defendants' attorneys learned of that, they demanded equal access, and a judge granted it.

Reading the file they learned of Campbell. The defense then played hardball. During a combative sworn deposition of John Walsh they asked if he knew about the affair on the day Adam disappeared. Walsh answered no, adding, "I've never found that out." Days later the defendants deposed Campbell, who repeated what he'd told police. Since depositions once transcribed regularly become public record for the court file, they offered the Walshes a chance to keep Campbell's hidden if they'd drop their case. They considered that a courtesy; the Walshes considered it blackmail and wouldn't back down. When the judge denied a plaintiffs' motion to seal the depositions they were made public and the newspapers quoted from it. Weeks later the Walshes dropped the suit anyway.

John wrote of his discovery of the affair. Reve, he wrote, "knew there was no justification. No explanation, no cop-out, no excuse. She had known it was wrong. She

had done it anyway. And now there was nothing that could be done except to live with whatever I decided to do. I came to a decision, that some of this was probably my fault too. I told Reve that I would not leave her. And that was the truth.

“It wasn’t that this thing was small. It was not a small thing. But compared with Adam’s being missing, it didn’t even register... It did not mean that we deserved what happened to our son.”

## 6

### Dahmer On A Rampage

AFTER HIS SON WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE ARMY in March 1981, Lionel Dahmer didn’t learn where Jeff was for months. Lionel couldn’t recall exactly when Jeff finally called him, but he thought it was summertime. He was living in Miami, he said he’d been sleeping in the open for a while, but now he was working at a “sandwich and pizza place called the Sunshine Sub Shop” and had earned enough to rent an off-season tourist apartment in a place called the Bimini Bay. Although he was cheerful he offered few details. In a later conversation, he said he was living with a woman, an illegal alien from England who’d offered him money to marry her. Lionel and stepmother Shari urged him not to.

In September 1981, his last call was for money—he was flat broke, he said, with no way of getting more. Refusing his request, Shari instead offered to pay his airfare to Cleveland, where they’d pick him up. She’d have a ticket waiting for him at Miami airport. Jeff got off the plane in excellent spirits—drunk and stinking of whiskey. His clothes were filthy, and he’d grown a scraggly, unmanaged mustache.

On October 7, home merely two weeks, Jeff entered Maxwell’s Lounge in the Bath Township Ramada Inn drinking from his own open bottle of vodka. When asked to leave, he refused, and he was bounced first to the lobby, where he didn’t leave or stop drinking, then to the parking lot. The bar called Bath Police, and when they arrived, Jeff suddenly turned violent and threatened to kick one of the officers in the groin. He was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest—it took three officers to restrain him—and holding an open container of liquor. At the Akron lockup, he stumbled out of the police car and needed assistance. In court, he was sentenced to ten days in jail—suspended—and fined \$60 plus costs.

His unruly drinking continued. He’d stay in bars, even past closing time, demanding more to drink. Sometimes bartenders or the police would call Lionel to pick him up, since he couldn’t drive home. He’d also get in fights, lose his glasses or wallet, and sometimes even forget where he’d parked the car.

Searching for solutions, Lionel proposed a change of scenery. Jeff was sent off to live with his grandmother Catherine in West Allis, Wisconsin, a blue-collar suburb of Milwaukee. The two got along well. Jeff helped with shopping and chores, including mowing the lawn and planting roses. He attended several Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and services at his grandmother’s Presbyterian church. In late 1981 he got a job drawing plasma for a Milwaukee blood bank—he’d learned the skill in the army.

Lionel thought his son was improving. But in January 1982 Jeff bought a Colt Lawman .357 Magnum revolver from a gun shop, which his grandmother later found

under his bed, frightening her. She told Lionel, and Jeff explained to him it was for target shooting. Lionel quickly took it away. Jeff later said it was one of the few objects he owned that gave him pleasure.

Jeff soon lost his job, and on August 8, 1982, he was arrested again, in Milwaukee at the Wisconsin State Fair by the State Fair Park Police, for drunk and disorderly conduct. The police report said he “lower[ed] his pants in the presence of approximately 25 people, including women and children.” He was fined \$50.

Another night he stayed in a department store called the Boston Store after closing so he could steal a male mannequin; he kept it in his closet, dressed, until his grandmother discovered it. Answering his father’s question how he stole it from the store, he calmly explained he’d disassembled it at its waist, then put each half in a separate shopping bag and walked out.

He began staying away from home for long periods, even entire weekends. He told his grandmother he liked to go to a mall, nearby, or Chicago. He began hanging around the city’s gay clubs, including a bathhouse, where he attempted to pick up men for sex. He’d ask them into a private cubicle he’d paid \$7 a night for and offer them a drink—a Mickey. After at least four patrons complained, in 1986, management kicked him out permanently. One victim told the *Milwaukee Sentinel* he remembered nothing after a few sips. “His interest in me didn’t seem to be sexual. It seemed to be to get me to drink. Maybe he was experimenting with me to see what it would take to put someone out.”

Jeff slept in his grandmother’s basement, which had a private entrance, and one morning Catherine saw him with a man who seemed staggeringly drunk, since he fell down several times. Catherine told Lionel, and Jeff told him he and the man had drunk too much the night before, and he’d invited him to sleep on a chair, downstairs. They’d drunk some more at the house, then the next morning Jeff walked him to the bus stop and stayed until a bus came.

Another odd incident occurred when Catherine smelled a bad odor one Sunday morning. Jeff explained it came from the cat box, although to her it didn’t smell like that. Jeff told his father it was caused by the bleach and muriatic acid he’d used on chicken parts and beef bones he’d bought at the grocery. He’d just wanted to experiment. Months later, on another Sunday when she again smelled something awful, Jeff told her it was from the chemicals he’d used to clean the garage floor. To his father he said he was experimenting again. He’d found a dead raccoon in a gutter and had brought it home in a garbage bag.

“I know it sounds stupid,” Lionel wrote in his book *A Father’s Story* that his son told him, “but I just wanted to see what the chemicals would do.”

“But why would you be adding chemicals to those things?” Lionel pressed him.

“Just to experiment.”

“But what kind of experiment, Jeff?”

“Just an experiment. To see what would happen.”

“But what would be the point of that?”

“I know it’s stupid, Dad, but I just like to experiment.”

Yet that 1994 version seems to contradict what both Lionel and Shari told the Milwaukee newspapers in 1991. Lionel told the *Milwaukee Sentinel* that Jeff was about 10 when he’d bought him a chemistry set, and together they’d poured household bleach over some chicken bones. “He wanted to see what bleach would do to whiten them. It



was no extensive experimenting at all, just curiosity of a young kid.” Shari, not in the family at the time, told the *Milwaukee Journal* she thought that father and son had used road kill, or at least, animals that were always dead. “Because his father’s a chemist, Jeff used to take animals and melt them down to the bone,” she said. She compared them both to biology students dissecting frogs. She thought Jeff had always done his experimenting while supervised by Lionel.

On January 15, 1985, Jeff ended years of unemployment when he began a \$8.25 an hour job on the overnight shift as a mixer for Ambrosia Chocolate Company, an industrial candy manufacturer in downtown Milwaukee.

That didn’t stop his erratic behavior, though. On September 8, 1986, two 12-year-old boys told Milwaukee police they’d seen Dahmer masturbating in a park by the Kinnickinnic River, his pants around his thighs. One of the boys asked whether he was having a good time, and Dahmer answered, “Yeah, I’m having a great time.”

The boys laughed at him and ran to find a police officer, who arrested Dahmer for lewd and lascivious behavior. He told the officer he’d done it about five times before in the last month, that he knew he had a problem and wanted to get help. In court he pled guilty to reduced charges of disorderly conduct, and was sentenced to a year of probation. Later, to his probation officer he changed his story, he was urinating from drinking beer.

On September 15, 1987, according to his admission in 1991 after his arrest, Dahmer killed again, for the first time since 1978, he claimed. Outside a gay bar he met a 25-year-old man and took him to a cheap hotel room. They drank wildly, and when Dahmer awoke, he found himself atop the man, naked and dead, his chest beaten in and blood on his mouth. But he had no memory of murdering him, he insisted.

The room had been registered under Dahmer’s name. Had it not, he wouldn’t have worried about disposing of the body, he said. So he bought a large suitcase and stuffed the body inside, then took it by taxi to his grandmother’s house. In the basement he had sex with it, masturbated over it, dismembered it including the skull, then left it in a bag for garbage pickup.

In the next few months, Dahmer killed twice more, finding victims in gay bars; one was only 14. He also began keeping skulls as souvenirs. While his grandmother wasn’t certain what he was doing in her basement, she did see—and was terrified by—the Satanic-like altar he’d constructed, complete with griffins and black lights.

A 35-year-old patron of Milwaukee gay bars who knew Dahmer told a Knight Ridder reporter, “He appeared to be a lonely person. Face it, you go into a bar or a nightclub and start a conversation with someone who’s not looking at you, who’s not buying you a drink—they’re kind of desperate for human contact.”

Another patron, Timothy Johnson, who spoke to the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, remembered chatting with Dahmer about the disappearance of Tony Hughes, a deaf-mute who was later identified as one of Dahmer’s victims. Dahmer replied, “Those people got what they deserved.”

A man who described himself as a street minister, Jean-Paul Ranieri, who’d once spoken to Dahmer for two hours while he was drinking in a gay bar, told the *Milwaukee Sentinel* that Dahmer had a Christian fundamentalist view of homosexuality, and believed that AIDS was punishment from God. Although Ranieri had later spread the word for gay men to stay away from Dahmer, he said he didn’t look like anyone capable of serial

murder. Nor could he tell whether Dahmer was straight or gay. “He looked like a drunk yuppie,” he said.

Anxious for privacy—and possibly asked to leave by his grandmother, on September 25, 1988, Dahmer moved into his own apartment, in the city of Milwaukee, close to work. Within a day, at a shopping center he found 13-year-old Somsack Sinthasomphone, from a Laotian family that had come to America to escape its civil war and communist government, who for \$50 agreed to come to Dahmer’s apartment to pose for photos. After drugging his coffee and Bailey’s Irish Cream, Dahmer fondled him. Although under the drug’s influence, the boy escaped and stumbled home. His parents immediately took him to the hospital, and when he regained coherence, he led police to Dahmer. On September 27 he was arrested and charged with sexual exploitation of a child involving enticement.

On bail and back living at his grandmother’s, Dahmer killed again.

In court in May 1989 on the sexual assault, Dahmer pled guilty. He denied doping the boy and said he didn’t realize he was a minor. Blaming his actions on alcoholism, he asked for treatment, which he suggested he’d more likely get outside of jail.

Don’t buy it, prosecutor Gale Shelton told Milwaukee Circuit Judge William Gardner, asking him to sentence Dahmer to five years in prison. Dahmer was a “very manipulative” person who’d merely gone through the motions during court-ordered treatment after his prior arrest: “In my judgment, it is absolutely crystal clear that the prognosis for treatment of Mr. Dahmer within the community is extremely bleak... and is plain not going to work. That’s absolutely clear from every single professional who’s looked at Mr. Dahmer, and the reality is that his track record exhibits that he is very likely to re-offend.

“His perception that what he did wrong here was choosing too young a victim—and that’s all he did wrong—is a part of the problem. He appeared to be cooperative and receptive, but anything that goes below the surface indicates the deep-seated psychological problems that he is unwilling or incapable of dealing with.”

In response, Dahmer addressed the court himself. “What I have done is very serious. I’ve never before been in this position before. Nothing this awful. This is a nightmare come true for me. If anything would shock me out of my past behavior patterns, it’s this.

“Please give me a chance to show that I can, that I can tread the straight and narrow and not get involved in any situation like this ever again. This enticing a child was the climax of my idiocy. I don’t know what in the world I was thinking when I did it. I offer no defense. I do want help. I do want to turn my life around.”

Buy it the judge did: “This is the kind of thing that the prosecutor would just ask the judge to throw away the book, and the judge would say ten and ten consecutive and goodbye. But if there is an opportunity to salvage you, I want to make use of that opportunity.” He gave him five years probation, the first year on prison work release. Dahmer was able to keep his job at Ambrosia Chocolate. He was ordered to have no contact with juveniles, and not to hang around schools, playgrounds or parks. The Sinthasomphone family said later they were never informed of the sentence. They would have protested it.

Dahmer never did follow through with a treatment plan. Despite Lionel's written plea to the judge not to release his son until he finished treatment, the Milwaukee County House of Correction released him two months early, in March 1990.

After spending two months in his grandmother's house, in May 1990 Dahmer rented room 213 at the Oxford Apartments. In the next 15 months, until Tracy Edwards escaped, he killed 12 men and boys, aged 14-31. Nine were black; the others were white, Hispanic, and Asian. Most of them were gay, and most had arrest records. Most of them, after they were murdered, were not immediately reported missing.

Dahmer's most notorious murder happened the night of May 27, 1991, involving 14-year-old Konerak Sinthasomphone. To Dahmer's apparent later surprise, Konerak was Somsack's younger brother. On a Sunday evening Dahmer came upon Konerak in Milwaukee's Grand Avenue mall and offered him money to pose for pictures, same as his brother. After he took shots of him wearing a black bikini, Dahmer drugged his drink.

At the time, Dahmer's refrigerator was empty of beer. With his prey unconscious, he left to buy more. But before he returned, after midnight, two 18-year-old neighborhood girls walking on the street saw Konerak "butt-naked". He was dazed, bleeding from his buttocks, cuts on his elbows and knees, frightened, and unable to speak or stand. Then Dahmer showed up, beer under his arm. He grabbed Konerak by the arm, but one of the girls wouldn't let go of the boy while the other ran to call 911 on a pay phone.

When three cops arrived, Dahmer tried to control the situation. He coolly explained (in his later words), "Look, we've been drinking Jack Daniel's, and I'm afraid he's had too much." When an officer asked how old the boy was, Dahmer answered, 19. "We live together, right here at 924 (his address). We're boyfriends, if you know what I mean."

The girls argued the naked boy was obviously less than 19—he had a baby face and no chest hair, but the officers tried to shoo them away, and even threatened to arrest them when one insistently touched the officer's shoulder, trying to get him to listen. Dahmer was stuttering and didn't even know the boy's name, one girl told the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, "Well, his name is, well, uh, his name is Jim something. And they just believed him," said Nicole Childress, 18. Instead, the officers covered Konerak with a blanket and escorted Dahmer as he took him home. They wrote in a police report that Dahmer said his companion's name was John Hmung.

Inside his apartment's living room, the officers smelled what they thought were bowel movements but didn't ask to look around into the other rooms. Had they entered the bedroom, they would have found a body dead three days on the bed. Nor did they bother to run a background check on Dahmer—they would have discovered he was on probation. Konerak still wasn't able to speak by the time they left Dahmer alone with him. Once they were gone, Dahmer strangled him, had sex with his body, then dismembered him and saved his head. As one of the officers left the scene he reported over the police radio:

"Intoxicated Asian naked male (laughter) was returned to his sober boyfriend (laughter)." Later, he or his partner joked that the other was "gonna get deloused back at the (police) station." After the story broke, in defense of the officers, an unnamed patrol officer from the same district told the *Milwaukee Journal*, "A lot of bizarre things happen in that area of the city. People have been known to run naked in the street."

After Konerak didn't come home, his family searched places in Wisconsin and four other states. Days after his disappearance, the family got a phone call: "Konerak is in danger right now," said a man with a deep voice. It was similar to a call Eddie Smith's sister got in March 1991, after her brother went missing the previous June: "Don't even bother looking for your brother anymore," the caller said. When asked why not, he said, "Because he's dead." Asked how he knew that, he answered, "Because I killed him." The family of Ernest Miller got a call in September 1990 from a man who chanted, "Help me. Help me. Help me." Another call was just groaning noises, as if in pain. Dahmer later admitted killing both Smith and Miller.

Meanwhile, Dahmer may have been growing increasingly suicidal. On July 8, Dahmer told his probation officer he was close to getting fired at the chocolate factory because he'd been late and missed work too often. If he lost his job, he said, "That would be a good reason to commit suicide." In fact he was fired six days later, which put him at risk of eviction from his apartment on August 1. It was the fourth reference to suicide in his official files. In August 1990, after being sued by a hospital for failure to pay a bill, and under pressure to pay other bills, he said, "The only way I can see a way out is to jump from a tall building." In 1987 he said "Carbon monoxide. Always an alternative."

On July 22, 1991, a rainy Monday evening, walking with friends in downtown Milwaukee's Grand Avenue enclosed shopping district, Tracy Edwards saw someone he recognized from his twin brother's neighborhood, where Tracy had been staying the last six weeks. He'd seen him shopping before, too, and they'd previously chatted, briefly. Since the man, who said his name was Jeff, said he lived near Tracy's brother, he suggested they share a cab to get out of the rain.

At Tracy's brother's place no one was home, so Jeff suggested they go to his place, where he had some beer.

Edwards became apprehensive the instant he entered Jeff's one-bedroom apartment. Although it was neat, it stank. Jeff said the rain had backed up the sewers. The front door had double locks, and what turned out to be a fake video surveillance camera was pointed from a corner of the living room toward the entrance. Framed on the wall were black-and-white posters of bare-chested athletic men. Sitting on the beige sofa they opened cans of Bud that Jeff got from the refrigerator. "You should see what I've got in here," Jeff told him. Later, Jeff made him a rum and coke—then kept asking if he was high yet. Edwards took only a sip, thinking it might be drugged.

Sensing that his guest wanted to leave, Jeff tried to divert him by insisting they watch the fighting fish in his lit four-foot wide aquarium. As Edwards told the *Chicago Sun-Times*: "He was talking about the catfish, and how they clean the (bottom) of the tank. A split second later he throws a handcuff on (Edwards's left) arm and (presses) a big Hass military knife right below my rib cage, right below my heart."

"What's goin' on, man?" Edwards cried, sinking into the upholstery as Jeff straddled him, desperately trying to attach the second cuff to Edwards's other wrist. Edwards resisted, and they rolled off the sofa onto the floor. Jeff was about 40 pounds heavier, six inches taller, and strong—he worked out at a Vic Tanny club, Edwards said Jeff told him.

"I want to listen to your heartbeat. I'm going to eat your heart," Jeff said.

"His face was completely changed. I wouldn't have recognized him. It was like he was the devil himself."

At knifepoint, Jeff forced him into his bedroom, where photos Edwards called “disgusting” were posted on the walls. There was also a bolt-lock on the outside of the door, so someone could be kept locked inside. On his VCR, Jeff played *The Exorcist III* (which Dahmer later admitted he’d watched a few times a week, for the previous six months). On the edge of the bed, knife still at his ribs, Edwards tensed while Jeff rocked back-and-forth trance-like for 15 minutes and chanted “uuhmmm.” Then he talked about people he’d killed, and how he hadn’t wanted them to leave.

To stall for time, Edwards decided to play compliant, that he liked the idea of being handcuffed. Jeff said he wanted to photograph him, because his body was so beautiful. As the hours passed, five in total, Jeff was alternately Satanic then rational. Back on the couch, knife still at him, Edwards finally spotted his chance when Jeff looked away for an instant. Using a karate move he’d learned, Edwards punched his captor in the face then kicked him in the stomach.

Stunned, Jeff dropped his knife. Dashing for the door, Edwards managed to open its two deadbolts—just as Jeff grabbed his wrists.

Jeff calmly promised that if Edwards would return, he’d remove his handcuffs. Instead, Edwards yanked away and ran down the hallway, screaming for help.

Just before midnight, Milwaukee police officers Rolf Mueller and Bob Rauth, on patrol in their car in a rundown neighborhood near Marquette University, spotted a sprinting black man, a set of handcuffs dangling from one wrist. They were surprised when he changed direction and ran toward them, stopping at their car.

“Which one of us did you escape from?” asked one officer.

Breathlessly the man pointed at an apartment building. “There’s this white dude in apartment number 213, he’s got a big-ass knife stashed under his bed. He said he was goin’ to cut my heart out!”

To the cops the story sounded vaguely like homosexual love gone awry, but they agreed to check it out. At number 213 in the Oxford Apartments, with Edwards, they rang the doorbell.

“Milwaukee police officers!”

Dahmer answered.

“Are you Jeff?”

“Yes, I am. Is anything the matter?”

In the doorway, Dahmer was cool, matter-of-fact, and polite. At six foot, he was big enough to worry the cops if he wanted to make trouble, and there was beer on his breath. Edwards was right; the stench inside was awful. The officers asked Dahmer to get the key to unlock the cuffs on Edwards’s wrist. As Dahmer went on his way to the bedroom, Edwards reminded the cops Dahmer had a knife.

Mueller told Dahmer to stop, he’d go in the bedroom himself. On his way, he passed an open dresser drawer. Peering inside, he saw Polaroids of dismembered men—photographed in that same bedroom. Others, taken in the kitchen, were of skulls. Another, taken in the shower, was of a skeleton, hanging. He shouted to Rauth to make an arrest.

Suddenly Dahmer leaped from the sofa screaming like an animal. They rolled on the living room floor until Rauth clamped cuffs on him.

“You’re one lucky son of a bitch, buddy. This could have been you,” Mueller told Edwards, showing him a photo of a severed head.

Edwards pointed at the refrigerator. “Maybe he’s got one of those heads in there,” he said, recalling earlier that Dahmer had gotten upset when Edwards had wanted to get his own beer.

Edwards looked scared. Mueller opened the refrigerator...

... and screamed.

Quickly, he slammed the door.

Besides the head face up in the fridge in a cardboard box (next to an open box of baking soda), in the freezer compartment were two human hearts in ziplock bags, one partially cut open but intact, the other cut into four pieces. In the living room there was also a portable top-opening chest freezer, and in it they discovered three more skulls neatly tied in triple-wrapped garbage bags; a skeletonized torso; another human heart, this one cut into two pieces (Dahmer said he’d intended to eat the hearts, which didn’t explain their partial dissections); nine pieces of skeletal muscle, no skin attached, the largest about ten by two inches; five pieces of lung tissue; five pieces of a liver; two kidneys, a left and a right; adrenals; a gastrointestinal tract; and a bag containing 31 small pieces of skin, mostly cut into rectangles.

In the hall closet, an iron kettle held two decomposed hands and a penis, while above it on a shelf were two more skulls.

A sliding door to Dahmer’s bedroom had a set of locks—but on the outside, suggesting not security but a prison. Framed photos and posters of naked men were on the wall near his bed, and elsewhere in the room were gay pornographic magazines and videos. On the bed itself, its black linen and mattress bloodstained, rested a bloodstained Polaroid camera. Under the bed was a large knife, just where Edwards said it would be. To the side was a sealed blue 55-gallon drum; when the medical examiner’s office opened it, they found three headless skeletonized torsos preserved in formaldehyde. An inspection of his dresser drawers found more photos—corpses in various stages of mutilation including a man sliced open neck to groin, body parts posed on a black table that was in the living room, and graphic homosexual acts, some involving bondage.

In a laptop computer box, police found two more cleaned skulls and a photo album with neatly displayed and catalogued pictures of victims. A filing cabinet’s top drawer hid three skulls spray-painted gray; its bottom drawer had a cleaned dissected skeleton, an intact scalp and hair, and a black man’s genitalia painted a Caucasian flesh tone.

They also found: ether, chloroform, acetone, formaldehyde, ethyl alcohol, and four large boxes containing muriatic acid, a diluted form of hydrochloric acid; Clorox, Lysol spray, Odor-Sorb, and Woolworth brand pine solvent; prescription tranquilizers including Halcion; and near the sofa, a newly-purchased electric three-quarter-inch drill and a handsaw with five detachable blades. The corner of the living room had video surveillance installed although it wasn’t working. The kitchen had rum, beer, potato chips, and things unspeakable only because of their juxtaposition: two butcher knives, meat tenderizer, mustard, barbecue sauce and Crisco. There were also several dietary supplements sold to bodybuilders, including one called Anabolic Fuel.

When police led Dahmer away, a neighbor said he heard him meowing. Another described it as “a screeching I’ll never forget. It was terrible. It almost made me throw up.”

“I thought it smelled like dead bodies,” a neighbor told *USA Today*. “Never thought I’d be right.”

Later, Dahmer said he had no memory of the episode inside his apartment. “The only reason the last guy got away was because I was completely unconscious for at least six hours according to what he said. I have no memory of anything that happened but I was still functioning... I don’t know why I blanked out like that... I have no idea why half of my brain just turned itself off, that’s what it seems like. I came back to consciousness five minutes before I heard the knock on the door and there were the police. I didn’t have time for a cover story or anything.”

After their initial stunned reactions, Milwaukeeans began blaming each other for not realizing that a serial killer had been among them. The cops blamed the justice system—the judge who in 1988 had leniently sentenced Dahmer for sexual assault of a minor. The city’s blacks accused the cops of racism for poorly investigating black missing persons—most of Dahmer’s victims were black. The city’s gays protested the same point. Meanwhile, the white racist Aryan Brotherhood threatened to kill Dahmer, prompting tight security at his court appearances.

That night, Dahmer capitulated. Initially declining his right to an attorney, he began narrating to police his reign of murder. He described incidents—he said he didn’t know, or want to know, the names of his victims or much about them. That way, in his mind he didn’t have to humanize them.

As police fielded calls from people all over the Midwest whose relatives were missing, Milwaukee and other area police combed their missing persons files to see if they could match their photos to Dahmer’s. They showed the photos to Dahmer, who claimed several of them.

Dahmer said he’d met some of his victims at shopping areas, but most he found at gay bathhouses and bars in Milwaukee and Chicago, where he’d sit alone, sometimes starting conversations with men. Following the suggestion of a party or \$50-100 he’d pay to take their nude photos, he’d lured them all home. Once there, he’d drug their drinks, then, generally, strangle them. He’d have sex with them both before and after.

When Dahmer admitted he cannibalized some of his victims, he said it gave him a sexual charge, as well as a feeling of permanently possessing them.

As an M.O., Dahmer said he preyed on men who were vulnerable and often needed money. Most but not all were gay. Most apparently didn’t have cars. Some were runaways. Most but not all had criminal records, some violent. One was a deaf-mute. Usually they were smaller built than he. Some were adolescents, as young as 13.

He said killing was merely the means to an end. To do it, he needed to be intoxicated. For his victims he tried to make the killing as painless as possible.

During consensual gay sex, Dahmer discovered he liked sodomy—but not on the receiving end. His solution was to slip his partner knockout drugs so he could have his way without reciprocating. To make his victims permanently compliant, he experimented; he’d crudely lobotomize them by drilling a hole in their head, then he’d inject muriatic acid into their brains.

He enjoyed necrophilic sex. He'd masturbate over a body or while holding a skull in his hands—it implied control. As well, he'd cut open abdomens and have intercourse.

Perhaps his larger purpose in all of this, he explained, was to create a theatrical occult altar. At a black table in his apartment he wanted to place ten painted skulls on the sides and a full skeleton at each end. He hadn't yet bought a black leather chair for himself. Burning incense, he'd illuminate the room overhead with four blue globe lights, and hang on the wall a blue curtain and a plaque of a goat. He already had a statue of a griffin—a mythical lion-eagle—that represented evil.

In total, Dahmer admitted to 16 murders in Wisconsin, beginning in 1987. The 11 skulls in his apartment were incontrovertible evidence, and the Milwaukee County medical examiner confirmed most of their identities through dental records. From three severed hands the FBI matched fingerprints. Also, Dahmer had kept IDs of two victims. Kin identified victims from Dahmer's photographs. A twelfth, his body never found, was confirmed that way.

Shown additional missing-persons photos, Dahmer claimed four more victims he said he'd killed in Wisconsin, although there was no physical evidence. Three, he said, he'd killed while he was living in the basement of his grandmother's house in West Allis.

But Dahmer's most remarkable admission was the murder of Steven Hicks, in 1978. Dahmer told police that in 1981, when he returned home to Ohio after his military service, he exhumed the bag of Hicks's dismembered bones he'd buried three years earlier, peeled off all its rotting flesh, then sledgehammered them into pieces no larger than a hand. Then, behind his house, he dispersed them into the air, scattering them over a rocky 10-foot cliff in the thick woods as he turned around in a wave, making a complete circle.

After Dahmer drew them a map, police, like archaeologists, cordoned off squares on the 1.7-acre property where they thought they'd most likely find human bones. They found more than two hundred fragments, including three teeth, which forensic anthropologists from the Smithsonian Institution eventually identified as Hicks's.

Around the country police wondered, had he committed murders elsewhere? They wanted to know everywhere Dahmer had traveled to see if they could match any similar fact unsolved crimes.

## COPS SAY SUSPECT ADMITS DRUGGING, STRANGLING MEN

—*The Miami Herald*

On Wednesday July 24, 1991, still working the overnight shift as a printer at the *Miami Herald* as he had 10 years before, proofreading the next morning's newspaper before it went on the press, Willis Morgan saw the first photo the *Herald* published of Jeffrey Dahmer, arrested in Milwaukee two nights before. The thumbnail-sized mug shot ran buried in a five-inch wire story on page 16A in all its editions Thursday. (The paper had run the same photo Wednesday morning, also buried, but Morgan hadn't seen it because he wasn't working.) Although the *Herald* didn't say so, the mug shot was from August 1982.

In Morgan's words, he freaked out. He had to be calmed down by his supervisor. "*This is the guy!*" he told his friends.



Morgan's friends and co-workers all knew the story. As they'd encouraged him in 1981 to go to the Hollywood police station—where he'd been brushed off—they urged him to go back. So once again, after his workday ended, Morgan went to the Hollywood police station. This time an officer briefly took his information and left a message for Jack Hoffman

### **July 26, 1991**

Lionel Dahmer considered his son Jeff a liar. He wasn't convinced that 17 murders was the full total.

Like everyone else who knew him, Lionel had no idea Jeff was a killer until his arrest. Immediately he thought back to where his son had lived and made the connection between Miami in the summer of 1981—and Adam Walsh. Calling the tip line at John Walsh's show *America's Most Wanted*, as Walsh recalled it in his book, Lionel suggested that his son had killed Walsh's son.

On July 26, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* had published an interview with Lionel that made news the next two days in papers across the country. It said Dahmer had worked in Miami at a sub sandwich shop. From speaking either to Lionel or Jeffrey, Milwaukee police that day obtained the names Sunshine Subs and the Bimini Bay apartments, where Jeff said he'd rented.

When Hollywood Police checked, they found that 10 years later, Sunshine Subs no longer existed. A Walgreens had since replaced the Bimini Bay, on Collins Avenue in North Miami Beach. When police contacted the apartment's owners, they said they'd since trashed their records, and the manager who might have recalled tenants had died. Hollywood police also asked Metro-Dade and Miami Beach police if they had any record of Dahmer, perhaps for vagrancy. Neither said they did.

However, according to Hollywood police's estimation, the Bimini Bay had been merely 15 minutes by car from Hollywood Mall.

Quickly responding, Dahmer's Milwaukee attorney Gerald Boyle told reporters his client denied killing anyone else. He quoted Dahmer: "I have told police everything I know." But when Hollywood police asked Boyle to let them interview his client, the lawyer refused. Police speculated, the likely reason. Florida had the death penalty—Wisconsin didn't. Ohio did, but not in 1978, when Dahmer admitted killing there. Nonetheless, Jack Hoffman had Milwaukee police ask Dahmer directly if he'd killed Adam. He answered no.

### **July 27, 1991**

MILWAUKEE MUTILATION SUSPECT LIVED BRIEFLY IN DADE

—*The Miami Herald*

ADAM WALSH KILLING REVIEWED FOR LINK TO DAHMER

—*Palm Beach Post*

### **July 28, 1991**

DAHMER DENIES KILLINGS OUTSIDE WISCONSIN, OHIO

FLORIDA POLICE INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE LINKS TO ADAM WALSH  
—*The Birmingham (Ala.) News*

On July 28, 1991, Bill Bowen, living in Birmingham, Alabama, saw his local Sunday paper's Dahmer story and photo, and recalled a peculiar incident that deeply upset him. Later that day he dialed Hollywood Police, and left a message:

In 1981, Bowen had lived in Hollywood. On the day Adam Walsh was kidnapped, Bowen had been at Hollywood Mall and saw someone throw a small child, shrieking in protest, into a blue van that quickly screeched away.

He now thought the man might have been Dahmer.

On Monday July 29, Jack Hoffman returned calls to both Bowen and Morgan. By coincidence, Bowen was scheduled to fly to Miami that Tuesday on a job assignment to shoot a commercial with then-University of Miami football coach Dennis Erickson. Late in the afternoon, Bowen arrived at the Hollywood police station with his crew. While the others waited in the lobby, Hoffman took his sworn statement.

He brought in a bill from Sears, date-stamped by the Hollywood store for payment received July 22, 1981. That was a Wednesday, as he'd checked on a perpetual calendar, which helped him remember that five days later, a Monday, he'd returned to the store.

He was off work, and he'd returned to kill some time and look for a book. He couldn't recall exactly when he arrived, but he'd parked his blue Olds Cutlass Supreme on the west side of Sears.

What he saw had happened quickly. As he walked a few steps from his car, toward Sears, about forty feet away:

I heard the racket of a man dragging a boy out by his arms, really manhandling him... I heard the little boy saying, I don't want to go, I'm not going—something along those lines. The man proceeded to pick the boy up, throw him physically into the van that was parked in what I thought at the time looked like a fire lane. And I vividly remember this van screeching off, you could hear the tires screeching as the van took off.

Ten years after the fact, Bowen described the man dragging the child as wearing a dark blue baseball cap and a private's green army jacket—"which I thought was kind of odd for July, it was like today, very hot, very steamy, didn't make a lot of sense." He described the man as roughly the same age as himself—which at the time was 23. He was 5'9" to 5'11", medium build, and had scruff for facial hair. His hair was dirty blonde, collar-length in the back. He'd seen him from the side and recalled his jutting chin.

The child, he said, seemed to be about 5 or 6, with straight hair and a haircut as if from a Chinese bowl, and was wearing a striped shirt, perhaps red and blue. Reve had told police Adam wore a red-and-white striped shirt.

The van, he said, was plain—a "cargo-type van... a commercial-type van". He couldn't tell if it was old or new, but it was in reasonably good shape. He thought it had a Florida tag, with letters either BAC or VAC. And the van's color was blue—navy or dark blue.

Afterward he entered the mall, stayed maybe an hour, then left and didn't think much of it. At the time, he didn't read newspapers or watch TV news, so he wasn't reminded of

it until he saw Adam's missing poster at a drive-through Kentucky Fried Chicken in Hollywood.

In 1991 he was surprised to see the *Birmingham News* story that the case had remained unsolved because he recalled reading that someone had confessed to it. When he saw Dahmer's photo, "It hit me like a baseball bat" that it might be the same man he'd seen in 1981.

On Monday July 29, when Jack Hoffman returned Willis Morgan's message from the week before, he didn't ask him to come in and make a full statement, as Bowen would the next day.

Determined not to be dismissed as he had been ten years earlier, Morgan the day before, Sunday, had called *America's Most Wanted's* tip line to leave a message for John Walsh. When no one from the show returned his message (although they did forward it to Hoffman, unknown to Morgan), on August 6 Morgan addressed a handwritten letter to Walsh, in care of the show, which was also forwarded to Hoffman, unknown to Morgan. After introducing himself he wrote:

I was in the Hollywood Mall the day your son Adam Walsh was kidnapped. A man tried to pick me up in Radio Shack, located at the north end of the mall.

The man was Jeffrey Dahmer. I will never forget his face.

After failing to pick me up he headed south in the mall. I followed him all the way to the toy department in Sears. I went to the Hollywood Police department the very next day!! [It was three days after, Morgan later realized.]

Nearly three full months after Morgan first called police, Jack Hoffman finally took his sworn statement. He wasn't sure of the time, but on the Monday Adam was lost he'd come to Hollywood Mall and went to Radio Shack.

Browsing the red tag sale table, I noticed somebody staring at me with a big smile on his face, smirk, or whatever, and as soon as I looked at him he says, Hi there, nice day, isn't it?

He was standing in the entrance way and I just took a deep breath and I said, Geez, you know, I gave him a look like, you know, What are you looking at, and I remember he smiled again and came over to me and he just was standing there.

What was really strange is that he said Hi there, nice day, isn't it? again when he came up to me but he said it like he was standing 20 feet away, real loud, but he was standing right on top of me.

Morgan said he didn't answer. Panning the store, he saw only a clerk far in the back. Finally the man turned and left.

He described the man as between 20-25, wearing a yellow button-down shirt and faded blue jeans. "I remember when I was watching him, I kept saying I gotta remember this guy and I gotta remember what he was wearing, and I looked at his hair." His hair was dirty blonde and "scraggly," almost touching his collar in the back.

I knew, I had this sense that he was gonna approach somebody. He was intent on approaching somebody 'cause of the way he approached me, so I just wanted to see what would happen when he approached somebody, what their reaction would be... I was also thinking that they might need some help.

He went all the way down to Sears and he turned into Sears and I turned into Sears right behind him. I remember thinking, I wanna keep, I was keeping a distance 'cause I was afraid if he saw me following him, he would get, you know, upset... I remember when he went into Sears, as soon as he entered, I saw him like looking around for somebody but there was nobody there, except the two girls behind the perfume counter.

Morgan said he continued to follow the man into the store, until the man reached a dead end—in the toy department. Fearing he'd turn around and see him, Morgan ended his surveillance.

After seeing Dahmer's photograph in the newspaper, he was certain Dahmer was the man he'd seen in the mall. "Without a doubt," he told Hoffman.

At the *Herald*, Morgan had a friend in the art department pull a July 28, 1991, news service photo of Dahmer in court in Milwaukee. At Morgan's instruction, the friend penciled longer hair on him. He left that artwork with Hoffman, as well as a high school yearbook picture of Dahmer, reprinted by People magazine. On the page, Morgan handwrote:

"Keep in mind his hair is combed in the photo. When I seen him he looked like he was living out of his car."

### **Dahmer's Trial**

The trial of Jeffrey Dahmer began January 28, 1992, at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Although he'd confessed to 17 murders, he was charged with only 15. Of the remaining two, Ohio had one, and without physical evidence Milwaukee wasn't confident enough to charge him with the last.

Dahmer had already entered a plea of guilty by reason of insanity. The contest of the trial would be whether his actions met the legal standard of insanity—did he know his actions were wrong? The difference to Dahmer was whether he'd spend the rest of his life in a secure mental institution or in a Wisconsin state prison. To win, Dahmer needed to be judged insane on only one of the counts.

The defense's strategy was to acknowledge all of Dahmer's horrific acts, as confessed at length to the police. Then they would call to the stand psychologists, all of whom had been allowed access to the defendant. Nobody denied Dahmer was mentally ill. But by citing Dahmer's multiple locks on his apartment door and his interior security system, prosecutors said he knew what he was doing was wrong and didn't wish to be caught.

The defense conceded Dahmer did know right from wrong but argued that his compulsions overrode his rationality. That constituted legal insanity under Wisconsin law, they said.

As the prosecution recounted Dahmer's police confession, a few more details emerged of his version of his 1981 stay in Miami:

At Sunshine Subs a woman from England who was in the U.S. illegally befriended him. She wanted to marry him so she could become a citizen. Her name was Julie, he remembered, and she had long, curly, thick black hair. He was never physically attracted to her, but they did occasionally go out to dinner and take long walks on the beach.

In his closing argument, quoted by the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, defense attorney Gerald Boyle said:

How would you like at age 15 to wake up and have fantasies (about) making love to dead bodies? What kind of person would wish that on any human being? Who do you tell it to?

This boy who at age 15 or 16 found himself sick... (became) a steamrolling killing machine. This was a sick boy right here. Plenty sick. And anyone who says he's just mean or evil is trying to sell you something that can't be sold. This is sick.

There's no end to it until you destroy everything that is right in life. You destroy yourself. You destroy other people. That's what happened here, an insatiable appetite. He had to do what he did because he couldn't stop it. This is not a matter of choice, not when this pattern is here for these years.

He was a runaway train on a track of madness, picking up steam all the time, on and on and on, and it was only going to stop when he hit a concrete barrier or hit another train.

And he hit it, thanks be to God, when Tracy Edwards got the hell out of that room. Thanks be to God that this madness stopped.

No human being on the face of the earth could do anything worse than what he did... Nobody could be more reprehensible than this man, if he's sane. Nobody. The devil would be in a tie. But if he's sick, but if he's sick then he isn't the devil.

Prosecutor E. Michael McCann followed:

Cold-blooded planning. For sexual satisfaction. Your life, your life, your life, for my sexual satisfaction.

What is the price of not trying [to control himself] anymore?... The price for him is... to kill... 'Sorry, Mr. Doxtator [a 14-year-old victim], I want a couple more hours of sexual pleasure. You're going to have to die to give me that pleasure.'

The defense is painting him as a wild man out of control. Not a wild man out of control. Calm. Don't be fooled by him. He fooled the police in Bath, Ohio. He fooled the West Allis police. He fooled the Milwaukee police. He's fooled a lot of people, including the court who gave him probation for sexual assault.

Please, please, don't let this murderous killer fool you.

Under Wisconsin law, to return a valid verdict a jury of 12 needed only to vote 10-2. After a three-week trial, then a day of deliberation, on February 15 the jury voted 10-2 on each of the 15 murder counts that Dahmer was legally sane—prompting loud cheers in

the courtroom from the victims' survivors. Dahmer was sentenced to 15 consecutive life terms in prison, with no parole eligibility for 936 years.

In the months after Dahmer's conviction, the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit asked Dahmer to talk to them so they could draw his psychological profile, and he agreed. As Walsh recalled in his book, in August two Wisconsin-based FBI agents asked, "John, what the hell is going on with the Hollywood police department? Dahmer's lawyer has quit him. We've interviewed him on all kinds of unsolved cases around the country. We can get you in to talk to him. We can get the HPD right in. Where the hell is this detective? What if Dahmer was the guy who abducted Adam? Why the hell hasn't someone been up here to investigate it?"

Walsh called Jack Hoffman, who called one of the FBI agents. He told Hoffman that Dahmer would talk to him. But, Walsh wrote, Hoffman told him Hollywood police had already spent a great deal of money on the investigation, and had none budgeted for travel to Milwaukee.

"You know what?" Walsh replied. "I'm making a pretty good living on TV these days. I'll pay your way to go talk to Dahmer."

Apparently he never had to. But first, to resolve the issue of Florida's death penalty, Walsh asked Mike Satz, the Broward state attorney, to write a letter for Hoffman to carry stating that if Dahmer admitted Adam's murder, he'd waive the death penalty.

In his letter to Satz, Walsh wrote that he understood "two credible witnesses" had come forward that placed Dahmer at Hollywood Mall on the day Adam disappeared:

I have discussed the situation with my wife Reve, and we both concur that it is acceptable for you to offer whatever concessions you deem necessary in order for the Hollywood police to question Dahmer.

We are not vigilantes nor are we obsessed with vengeance, but after ten years of heartache and the nightmare of wondering why and who took Adam and if they would ever strike again against our family or our two beautiful new children, we need to know something. I know Dahmer will never get out of prison and I believe he will receive justice in the next life as well. At least knowing whether he did it or not would be some consolation.

Many people in the criminal justice system and the public have forgotten that Jeffrey Dahmer started out as a pedophile, kidnapper, and torturer of young boys and committed the ultimate travesty to a family. After being released on parole for the kidnapping and molestation of the youngest son in the family, in an act of cold-blooded brutal revenge, he kidnapped, tortured, and murdered the other son in that family. He certainly fits the profile of someone who might be capable of murdering a beautiful six-year-old boy.

Carrying Satz's letter, Hoffman flew to Wisconsin to ask the most notorious serial murderer in American history if he'd killed Adam Walsh. Accompanied by Milwaukee-based FBI Agent Dan Craft, Hoffman began by asking Dahmer what he did when he first arrived in South Florida:

**DAHMER:** Okay, I was discharged six months early from the service for uh, drinking too much. I didn't want to be discharged early, but they did. So when I arrived in, I think it was South Carolina, from Germany, they processed me out and told me they'd give me a plane ticket to anywhere in the United States that I wanted to go. I didn't want to go home right away because I didn't feel comfortable explaining to my folks why I was out six months early. So I decided that Miami, Florida, would be a nice warm place to go. They flew me down there. I stayed, I arrived I think at the end of, the very end of March, I think.

He said he flew into Miami airport, found a room at an oceanfront hotel on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach—he couldn't remember exactly which, then a week later ran out of money: "I didn't think very well ahead, didn't plan ahead very well. And so for about a month or two months I had to live most of the days—sleep literally under the mangroves of the beach, and take a shower once or twice a week in a hotel room."

After about two months, he said, he finally got a job at Sunshine Subs, in a strip mall on Collins Avenue. He worked there, off the books, he said, from April to September 1981.

Asked about his work there, he said, "I had all types of positions, cashier, cook, cleaner." At the same time, he also collected state unemployment insurance. He had a bank account at its peak worth a thousand dollars in a bank he couldn't remember the name of "right next to the sub shop." By May, he said, he had enough to rent a one-room furnished apartment in the Bimini Bay motel, a few blocks from work, for \$400 a month.

He worked 10-12 hours a day, morning to night, "every day, almost every day, once in a while I'd get one day off on the weekend." He said he didn't have a car. To leave the beach, he used buses.

His supervisor at Sunshine Subs was Ken Houleb, he spelled out the name—a white man then about 65. He didn't make any friends there or anywhere else, except perhaps a co-worker, a 28-or-so year-old English woman with an accent. He couldn't remember her name. She'd been working there when he started, and was concerned about being deported for lack of a green card. When her boyfriend came from England, he took her and Dahmer to some bars in Fort Lauderdale. The entire six months, that was his only time out of Dade County, he said.

Because Bill Bowen had said the man he'd seen was wearing an army fatigue jacket, Hoffman asked Dahmer whether he'd kept any of his military clothes when he got to Miami. No, he said.

Willis Morgan had said Dahmer's hair was longer in 1981 than in his 1991 news photo. Asked its length in 1981, Dahmer said it was the same as it was at present. "Never had it longer than this."

Out of nowhere, Dahmer made an odd association of infamous crimes. "I remember lying in a hotel room—that was one of the times I had a hotel room—and I remember seeing on the news that, that you know, missing boy Adam Walsh, and that was the same time the president was shot, around that time, too, so I remember both those stories."

It couldn't have been the same hotel room. John Hinckley shot Ronald Reagan March 30, 1981. Adam disappeared July 27, 1981.

Continuing, Hoffman asked if he'd ever been to Hollywood Mall.

“The only mall I went to was the Omni Mall,” he said, referring to an enclosed mall on the north edge of downtown Miami. “Never went, wouldn’t even know where to find the Hollywood Mall.”

**HOFFMAN:** I asked this gentleman, I said, what was the encounter that you are speaking about? And he said, Well, I was at this store inside the mall, and the person that he believed to be you...

**DAHMER:** Uh-huh.

**HOFFMAN:** ... came up to him and tried to pick him up, had a conversation, asked him, Isn’t it a beautiful day outside, and started following this gentleman. He got a little leery and he continued to walk through the mall and you followed him and eventually he lost you somewhere inside the Sears mall. [Morgan had said the reverse, that he’d followed Dahmer.]

**DAHMER:** Uh huh.

**HOFFMAN:** That’s my purpose for being here. You at no time were never in Sears? Or ever in Hollywood, Florida?

**DAHMER:** Absolutely not... I didn’t have the place to go back with anyone where I felt comfortable with anyway. I remember sitting after work one night right on Collins Avenue and there was this guy from Canada, and uh, he tried to pick me up—which is a switch—and I didn’t, I didn’t want anything to do with him ‘cause my place was a mess and I just didn’t feel like going back. So, no, I wasn’t into picking up people or starting relationships with anyone then.

**HOFFMAN** Then this gentleman who came in from out of state had spoken to us. He also, after seeing accounts of you on the news and also in the newspaper—he brought down this newspaper from Alabama with him—and he said that he remembered that he parked his vehicle in the parking lot and he was approaching the store, he saw some child apparently having problems with a male.

**DAHMER:** Uh-huh.

**HOFFMAN:** He described the male, you know, similar to you.

**DAHMER:** Coincident.

**HOFFMAN:** Excuse me?

**DAHMER:** What a coincidence, huh?

**HOFFMAN:** And the thing that stuck out in his mind is that here it was the middle of July and this gentleman was wearing an army fatigue jacket.

**DAHMER:** What year was this supposed to be?

**HOFFMAN:** Eighty-one, when you were down there. And he said that the boy was saying, I don’t want to go, I don’t want to go, and this man was struggling with him and eventually threw him into a vehicle.

**DAHMER:** Uh-huh.

**HOFFMAN:** And the vehicle took off. I said, did you see this gentleman’s face and everything? All he said was, I saw his profile, because he saw you from an angle. I said, well, who do you believe it to be? And he said, I saw this article on the news and I saw the newspaper and I got a flashback and I believe it to be Jeffrey. Now we want to know if you had anything to do with the abduction of Adam Walsh.



**DAHMER:** I didn't. You heard all the false leads about I supposedly had done something to some women in Germany, that was proven to be just bunk... And people have said they seen me in Arizona and in California... never been there. I can't prove that I didn't do anything to them but the biggest thing I can say is, why would I have admitted to half of them [his confessed murders] when they would have known nothing about, and then leave him [Adam Walsh] out?

Dahmer had admitted five murders for which his apartment held no evidence, but that was still less than half his seventeen.

**HOFFMAN:** That's what Dan was explaining.

**DAHMER:** I told Dan that I wanted to clear my conscience of everyone. So, it wouldn't make any sense to be trying to hide that.

**HOFFMAN:** You know, as an individual, even me, I would be embarrassed of something that I've done in life, you know, I might divulge certain things, but there are some things that I would keep secret, you know, maybe take to my grave with me...

**DAHMER:** Well, I don't want to do that. So that's why I spilled everything when I was hopeless to hide anything anymore.

**HOFFMAN:** And like I said, that's why we're up here, and you know, and I had to ask you right out if you had anything to do with the kidnapping and murder of Adam Walsh.

**DAHMER:** Nothing. Nothing.

**DAN CRAFT:** One of the things that did impress me last week when we were talking was your openness and honesty about this, you remember, we've talked about this, and then I'd ask you, and I shared this with Jack, if you would have done that, would you tell us? And you said, Absolutely. And then I said, why? And you had a good reason, it's like you said...

**DAHMER:** No secret, there's no point in trying to hide it anymore, you know.

**CRAFT:** The devil's advocate, I mean, those people that we always have to answer to, they said, well, he's afraid of the death penalty. Florida has the death penalty.

**DAHMER:** I would welcome the death penalty. In fact, if that would get me the death penalty I'd, I'd admit to it, you think it would?

**HOFFMAN:** No, we don't want you to...

**DAHMER:** I don't want to go on rotting away in this place... I'd be more than happy to get it over like that.

After praising Dahmer for being forthright, Craft suggested he was embarrassed to admit he killed a child. "Never went after children," Dahmer said. "My interest was in older adults of bar age, and all of them that I met I thought were bar age." That included Konerak Sinthasomphone, who was 14.

A week after the interview, Hollywood Police received a curt letter from a Philadelphia attorney who said he now represented Dahmer in his appeals, telling police not to again speak with Dahmer unless he or a designated attorney was present. He also

threatened legal action against Hollywood unless they gave him a copy of their taped interview, and chided Hoffman for not warning Dahmer of his Miranda rights.

Rather than the letter intriguing Hoffman to keep going, a month later, in a report for the case file, Hoffman wrote he'd dismissed Dahmer as a suspect:

Since Dahmer's arrest by the Milwaukee Police and the taking of his confessions, no other unsolved murder cases have surfaced linking Jeffrey Dahmer to them.

This detective and Special Agent Dan Craft were in agreement that if Jeffrey Dahmer committed the Adam Walsh homicide, he would have confessed to this crime.

After a lengthy time in segregation, Jeffrey Dahmer asked to be put in the general population of his prison, Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage, Wisconsin. On November 28, 1994, assigned to clean bathrooms in the gymnasium area, he was found in a staff bathroom, bloody with massive head injuries. Rushed to a local hospital, he died an hour later. Another inmate, one of the work crew, was charged with his murder and later convicted. He was Christopher Scarver, who had once told a psychiatrist that he was the son of God.

"Now is everybody happy?" Dahmer's mother, Joyce Flint, asked a sympathetic *Milwaukee Sentinel* reporter. "Now that he's been bludgeoned to death, is that good enough for everyone?"

## 7 The Drifters

"I'VE DONE ME SOME BAD THINGS, JOE DON."

Bad things indeed, the voice confessed from the wrong side of the food pass-through. A prisoner in a rural Texas county jail, in June 1982 Henry Lee Lucas scrawled a pathetic note to his guard Joe Don Weaver, "I've been killing ever thing I can for the past ten years. I am to say a bout X different people." The "X" was his scratch-out of a number because he didn't seem to know what it was—a hundred? Three hundred? He thought he'd committed murder in every state in the lower 48.

Glass-eyed as a result of a childhood knife fight with his brother, in 1960 he'd killed his mother, strangling and stabbing her with a penknife after she'd accused him of having sex with his stepsister. He was in the Texas jail only for carrying a weapon, as a convicted felon—but Texas Ranger Phil Ryan suspected him in the murder of an 80-year-old named Kate Rich, who'd hired him as a handyman. Now admitting his crime, Lucas said that during a drive in September 1982 he'd stabbed Rich dead then had sex with her. Using a two-by-four, he crammed her body into a drainpipe.

Lucas also admitted that a month earlier, in August 1982, he'd killed his 16-year-old, slightly retarded lover Frieda Powell, who was orphaned in 1981 when her drug-addicted mother overdosed. A juvenile home either released her into the custody of her uncle Ottis Toole, or Henry and Ottis had helped her escape. One way or the other, Lucas took her

alone on a road trip to California, then Texas, where after an argument he said he stabbed her on the side of an interstate.

On videotape, Lucas said he'd had sex with her dead body, beheaded her with an ivory-handled meat-carving knife, then "I cut her up in little teeny pieces and stuffed her in three pillow cases. All except her legs." He scattered her remains over a field. Using his descriptions of locations, Ranger Ryan found body parts. He was charged with both murders.

"I know it ain't normal for a person to go out and kill girls just to have sex with them. No matter how much trouble I try to prevent, I always end up in it," he said, almost charmingly, like a psychopathic Oliver Hardy.

Detectives and reporters beat a path to Lucas's jail door. Lucas listened to fact presentations of open murder cases and answered whether or not he'd done them. Often he said yes.

Only a few homicide detectives were skeptical. In July, two Oklahoma Bureau of Investigations inspectors wrote that Lucas wanted them to describe their murders. When instead they asked Lucas to tell what he knew, he was vague. When they did describe a case to Lucas—and he confessed to it—it turned out the inspectors had invented it from whole cloth. For Texas Ranger Ryan's part, he doubted that Lucas had murdered anyone besides Rich and Powell.

That didn't stop Lucas from confessing. In August, Lucas told Jacksonville sheriff's detective Jesse W. "Buddy" Terry that he'd killed "all over Florida," including twice, maybe four times, in Miami—with his pal Toole. By himself Toole had committed a homicide in Jacksonville—an arson that killed a middle-aged man.

Ottis Toole was then in Florida state prison serving 20 years for an arson of two abandoned flophouses in his Jacksonville neighborhood the previous May. He'd been arrested when two 16-year-olds, in police custody a week after the fire, said he'd used a gallon pickle jar to pour gasoline on the buildings. Earlier in August, Toole had pled guilty.

Confronted by Terry, Toole admitted the fatal arson, which occurred in January 1982. On September 8, Terry charged him with the first-degree murder of 64-year-old Nicholas Sonneberg, a boarder in the torched rooming house.

Quickly, the detectives who'd lined up at Lucas's cell raced to book appointments with Toole. Ottis was a scary-looking guy, agreed most law enforcement agents who met him. He was tall, husky, with bad teeth and thin, balding brown hair. His eyes were disconcerting, and his mannerisms were effeminate. He described Lucas as his homosexual lover. He said sometimes they killed together. Other times Toole killed alone, all over the country.

On September 22, Jacksonville police announced at a press conference they believed that Lucas and Toole had murdered eight women, ages 18 to 76, who they'd picked up in Jacksonville between 1979-81. They were shot, strangled, or stabbed. The mastermind was Lucas, yet Toole would become the focus of police interest in the murder case of Adam Walsh.

Born in Jacksonville in 1947, the youngest of nine, Ottis Elwood Toole was shy, simpleminded, and clung to his mother—who herself suffered from mental illness, wrote a psychiatrist who examined him in 1983. He had a sister who'd attempted suicide and a

brother who'd been institutionalized. His mother had kicked his father, an alcoholic, out of the house when Ottis was seven, ordering the children never to utter his name.

His schoolmates called him "retard," and in fact, he failed first grade. Struck in the head by a rock, he'd since suffered seizures and for years had been prescribed anti-convulsive medication. As a small child, his sister liked to dress him as a girl and later she coerced him into incest. At six he set his first fire, in a field. He dropped out in the seventh grade, largely illiterate, a loner. As an adolescent he nightly drank a half-pint of whiskey, several six-packs of beer, and used a spectrum of drugs and marijuana. He graduated to burning buildings; while watching them ablaze he would masturbate, fantasizing about sex. A racist, he often targeted homes belonging to blacks.

In drag, his legs shaved, he wandered streets and bars at night to pick up men while trying to hide his missing teeth. He was arrested propositioning an officer in a pornographic theater. He was a window-peeper and an obscene phone caller. He also had arrests for carrying a concealed weapon and transporting stolen cars across state lines.

He married "to see how it was," but it only lasted four days because his sister told his bride he was gay. In 1977 he married a woman 23 years older; they consummated the marriage but he didn't enjoy it.

Toole met Lucas at the Jacksonville Rescue Mission in 1976. By '78, Lucas had moved into Toole's mother's house, where Frieda Powell, then 12, also lived.

After his mother died in May 1981, Toole said he would lie beside her grave and sometimes would feel the ground move. Asleep or awake, he sometimes heard voices he thought might be the Devil. They told him to kill himself, and once he tried by overdosing on pills. However, the examining psychiatrist in 1983 wrote, "He has no homicide thoughts and he is not given to violence."

His native intelligence tested average, and despite trouble thinking, his cognitive abilities were intact. But on his admission, his memory was poor. Asked in 1983 who was President, he answered Johnson.

Was Toole dangerous? Opinions conflicted in his Jacksonville neighborhood, Springfield, where the city's early elite had built Victorian manses amid oaks, now shabby, decaying shells, subdivided and cheaply rented.

"Brutal" is what one neighbor called Toole in the *Florida Times-Union*, of Jacksonville. "The man was dangerous. He wouldn't think twice if he had a disagreement to take a two-by-four and knock you in the head with it."

"Ottis was a big liar," another neighbor told the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*. "One day we were sitting on a porch talking about somebody. He said, 'you want me to get rid of him? Well, I'll kill him in a house and set the house afire.'" "Nobody took him seriously, he said.

On Monday night October 10, NBC premiered a movie simply called *Adam*. It was based on the Walshes's story, and had their cooperation. The network's promos showed a cheerful family in polo shirts. Daniel J. Travanti, of the hit show *Hill Street Blues* played John, JoBeth Williams played Reve, and child actor John Boston was Adam.

The same day it aired, the *Miami Herald* sent a reporter to Monroe, La., to cover a three-day conference at a Holiday Inn of 90 homicide detectives from 19 states and the FBI to see if Henry Lee Lucas and Ottis Toole's admissions matched any of their cases.

Scorekeeping rather than skepticism held the day. Even Texas Ranger Phil Ryan said Lucas had detailed about 150 killings. Already he'd been charged with ten and had led detectives to four bodies. Police said they had enough evidence to charge him with seven more, plus they'd connected Lucas and Toole together to another 97.

"If there was ever an argument for the death penalty, it's Lucas," said Ryan. "He's a demon," said a Louisiana detective. "I've been a policeman for 26 years and I've never seen anything like this guy. He's atrocious," said a Mobile lieutenant.

By himself, Toole was claiming 65 murders, some including decapitation and dismemberment. That's what he told Steve Kindrick, a sheriff's detective from Brevard County, on Florida's space coast. To speak to Toole, at the Duval County Jail, Kindrick had patiently waited his turn. On the morning of October 10 he got his allotted hour. When it ended, Toole asked Kindrick if he was from Fort Lauderdale. No, Kindrick said, that's Broward County—not Brevard.

"Are you sure?" Toole asked.

Kindrick asked if he was expecting someone from Fort Lauderdale. "You get into something there?"

"Yeah, I did."

Toole had casually talked about killing until he mentioned Fort Lauderdale, Kindrick thought. When he spoke afterward with Buddy Terry, he suggested that Toole might have been talking about Adam Walsh.

Terry was just about to leave for the detectives' conference, but first he dropped in on Toole, who asked Terry if he'd ever been to Fort Lauderdale. He had. Had Toole? Yes, he said. Something had happened there two or three years earlier he wanted to talk about.

The next morning, Kindrick called Hollywood police and told Jack Hoffman that Toole might have been talking about Adam Walsh. Hoffman called Terry and left a message.

**Monday, October 17, 1983**

KILLER'S CONFESSIONS LEAD INVESTIGATORS  
ON TRAIL OF MURDER  
—*The Miami Herald*

MONROE, La.—The horrors crafted by Henry Lee Lucas and Otis Elwood Toole remain incalculable.

No one knows how many women were abducted, raped, murdered, and mutilated by the short, unkempt one-eyed drifter and his blond pyromaniac lover. Not even Lucas...

At the conference the next day, Terry had told its hosts, Monroe Lt. Joe Cummings and Sgt. Jay Via, that Toole had told him he'd have something big to say when he returned. Investigating the murder of a 16-year-old Louisiana girl, the two detectives spent the day in Jacksonville talking to Toole.

When Toole told the detectives he was reluctant to talk about killing blacks, because blacks in his prison might kill him if they knew, Via asked, was he was similarly reluctant to talk about killing children?

Toole smiled. "You are talking about the kid that got his head cut off around West Palm Beach, Florida."

Toole explained: he was at a shopping center near West Palm Beach when a six- or seven-year-old was abducted, taken to a remote area and decapitated. He said the child's head was later thrown into a canal near Fort Lauderdale.

Who killed the child? Via asked.

Henry Lee, said Toole.

Figuring this was what Toole had teased Terry with the week before, the detectives asked Terry into the room. Once again, Toole's demeanor changed.

With the intent to get a child, he told them, he and Lucas had gone to West Palm Beach. Outside a department store, saying they had candy and toys inside Toole's white, black top old Cadillac, they enticed this boy.

Once in the car, they drove south toward Fort Lauderdale, the whole way tormenting and threatening the boy. After an hour, they found a dirt road leading into a swampy, wooded area. There they killed him. Using a machete or bayonet, they cut off his head, then chopped his torso into pieces and scattered and buried them throughout the same woods.

But they kept his head. Leaving, they continued driving south. Arriving at or near Fort Lauderdale, they threw the head into a ditch or canal. Then they kept going south, to the Florida Keys.

Yet the next day Toole was singing a different tune. By the time investigator Paul Ruiz of Travis County, Texas, which includes Austin, met with Toole for his appointment, he'd heard the story. So Ruiz bluntly asked, have you killed any children?

"I don't think I could kill a kid, you know, little kids like 7, 8, 9, 10 years old. I may, and could have killed 14, 15, 16 year olds."

Ruiz asked if he'd told anyone about killing and decapitating a child in Florida. Toole laughed. "I wouldn't do that, not no little kid. I could kill someone 14, 15 years old, and it could have been in Florida," but "if I killed any I wouldn't know the exact location."

Eight days after Jack Hoffman's message, Buddy Terry finally called police in Broward—but not Hollywood. He was referred to Hollywood, where he left a message. When Ron Hickman returned it, Terry said right then he was talking to someone who'd said he'd killed a 6-10 year-old boy he'd snatched from a Fort Lauderdale-area Sears mall. Immediately, Hickman and Hoffman arranged to fly to Jacksonville to speak to Ottis Toole.

Arriving at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office at nine P.M., the Hollywood detectives had to wait until Toole was finished talking to investigators from another police agency. Finally at ten, Buddy Terry introduced them to Toole then stayed.

Audiotape rolling, Hoffman read Toole his rights. He said he understood them and declined to have an attorney present, although he wouldn't sign a document saying so.

Toole quickly admitted that he and Lucas had traveled to Broward County. But details were short. "I ain't really sure on the month. See, I always get jawed up on months all the time." He did think it was a couple years earlier.

Hoffman pumped questions. Did anyone know they went to Fort Lauderdale? Did they use credit cards? Did they have a reason for going? No. Did he remember the route they took?

“I say, went down A1A.”

That sounded wrong. A1A, the famous scenic beach road, from Jacksonville to Fort Lauderdale was 350 miles of local traffic.

Toole seemed to say they stayed two nights. In a motel? No, they slept in their car.

Did they know anybody there? Had any police stopped them, or their car, or had either gotten medical treatment while there? Again no.

Toole did say he remembered the mall where they took the child. “There was a Sears.” What time of day was he there? “It could have been in the afternoon, or it could have been a little bit later. ‘Cause I don’t keep up with the time when I’m somewhere.”

In the absence of Toole’s own ideas, Hoffman resorted to multiple choices:

“Do you remember coming down a main road, the interstate, A1A, or what road you used to get to this mall? Do you recall anything like that? Was it close to an interstate or the turnpike?”

“I’d say it was pretty close to A1A.”

A1A was the easiest answer to eliminate. All the way down the Florida coasts, the better shopping, at the bigger malls, was inland. The right answer was near interstate 95.

“Well, what else?” asked Toole, impatiently. For him it had already been a long day.

Hoffman asked the reason why he and Lucas went to that mall. Toole answered, without credit cards he wasn’t able to buy anything, he just liked to window shop.

“Did you go inside the mall?”

That question tipped off that Hoffman’s mall was enclosed—it wasn’t a strip mall.

“I looked at all kinda stores. There was a Sears store, there was all different kind of drug stores, and wig shops and furniture shops and...”

Any grocery stores in that mall? “Like Winn-Dixie?”

Another lob. Florida had two major supermarket chains, one already named. The second was Publix—on the north side of Hollywood Mall.

Still, Toole missed it. “I say, there could have been one there.”

Did he go into Sears? “Umm, no, I didn’t go into the Sears store. I went in some of the other stores. But I could have went in it, came back out and forgot I went in it. I do that sometimes.” Asked if he was drinking or intoxicated that day, he said yes. “I drink quite a bit. I pop pills, I smoke pot.”

Outside the mall, Toole said he and Lucas saw a kid exit a Sears door and run through the parking lot, banging on cars, including theirs. Then they “snatched” him.

Asked to describe him, he said “Ah, he had blonde hair and kinda curly, I’d say it could have been curly or wavy or in between. I’d say it wasn’t no straight-bodied hair. And, ah, he had on a pair of dungarees and a blue shirt and I know he had a, he even had a pair of [mittens] on.”

Mittens? In July? The police department’s transcription of the interview read “smitten”—a typo. However, in Hoffman and Hickman’s report two weeks later, they wrote he said “sneakers”.

Mittens or sneakers? If Toole said, “he even had a pair of sneakers on,” that didn’t make sense. Besides, Adam’s mother said he was wearing rubber beach sandals, green

shorts and a red-and-white striped shirt. As for his hair, no one had described it as curly or wavy.

Hoffman followed with a question about the weather that day. Toole answered by recounting the month, something he'd just said he wasn't good at remembering.

"I'd say that was somewhere around close to the first of the year, somewheres right in there." That further increased the chance Toole said "mittens," although even in January, mittens on children are rarely seen in South Florida. North Florida is different.

Hoffman asked if the child had resisted him.

"He kinda raised hell wanting to get out of the car, but when we put the windows up on the car nobody gonna hear anybody yelling anyhow, you know. They figure, well, you got a kid in the car and the kid's cutting up anyhow."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"No, he kept telling us all kinda different names. One time he told us his name was Jim, one time he said his name was Tom and Joe and all that shit."

Returning to roads, Hoffman asked which ones they used to leave the scene.

"I'd say went out on A1A... and then we, ah, some kind of turnpike or something we got onto."

"Florida's Turnpike?" That was the only turnpike in the state.

"Yeah, we got on it for a little while and then we got off of it and then got back on A1A... I call it turnpike, I say it was about the same thing as a freeway to me."

Florida's Turnpike used a ticket system to determine tolls. Hoffman asked if he passed a tollbooth to enter the highway. "It could have been, I'm not really sure about that shit."

Prompted by Hoffman's question "Did you travel northward?" Toole said they drove north toward Jacksonville, an hour or so on that road. But the day before, to the Louisiana detectives, Toole said he'd continued south, toward the Keys.

Traveling northbound, Hoffman asked, what happened next?

"Well, Henry says find somewheres and turn off. We turn off and got on, like, we went down a dirt road down there and ah, he said he couldn't hold the kid, and so, ah, he got the fucking bayonet out of the car and ah, I held the fucking kid and Henry chopped the fucking kid's head off."

"With the bayonet?"

"With the bayonet."

Toole described the bayonet as about a foot and a half long, like a machete. Hoffman asked how many blows it took.

"I think maybe 'bout three or four times. If you catch somebody right, shit, you can chop the head off in two or three times, you know."

"Yeah. Was he laying on his back or stomach when you chopped his head off? The kid. When you held the child down."

"I had the kid down and his face was down. 'Cause I know I was getting that fucking blood all over me."

Toole said they chopped up the boy the same place they killed him, "dug holes toward the swamp area, and kinda scattered out the pieces, and kept some of 'em, we put 'em in the car." Those were the child's head and arms.

Hoffman asked about his clothes. Toole said they pulled them off, then as they drove, "threw [them] out all over the side of the road." At the same time, "we threw



different parts of the body all out, out of the window, out of the car all up and down the road.” The head too, it was Lucas who threw that out.

Hoffman didn’t get a straight answer to why they kept the head at all, nor where they buried the torso. But asked if all this happened the same day, Toole answered, “Same day.”

As for the murder weapon and the shovel they used to dig a grave, he said he’d put them in his mother’s house in Jacksonville then muttered something about the house falling down.

Did Toole see anything unusual about the boy, or his face?

“No, the kid was a pretty-looking kid.”

“Anything unusual about his teeth, crooked teeth?”

“No, he was a nice-looking kid.”

The missing front teeth—Toole missed another softball.

Buddy Terry had his own questions, starting with whether Lucas used the child’s head for sex.

“Yeah, he fucked the fucking head.”

“Did you?”

“No, ‘cause I don’t look for blow jobs for sex.”

Terry asked where they stopped for gas, whether it was a service area on the turnpike or elsewhere. Toole thought it was at an off-brand “outlaw station, a station way out.” Then Terry asked if when they left the highway where they threw out the head, they had to pay a toll.

“I’d say it was no toll booth, it was something like, ah, see in my, my mind a toll road, I mean you kept saying turnpike, a turnpike in my mind is about the same thing as a freeway.”

“Yeah. But did you have to pay money to get off this highway you were on?”

“I don’t think so.” Again Toole missed the prompt.

“But you’re not sure,” Terry said.

“No.”

“It’s been some time ago now. Is this the first child that you and Henry picked up?”

“Oh, we killed some older than that, you know.”

“No, but I mean a six-year-old child like this, seven years old.”

Now Toole knew the child’s correct age, thanks to Terry.

“First, first one. I ain’t never, never got messed up in killing any kid that young.”

Next, Terry offered Toole chances to revise his description of the boy’s clothing—another prompt to Toole that he didn’t have it right. But after he again missed his obvious hint, Terry began arguing with him.

“Now when you described the clothing to myself and Detective Hickman, okay, are you just trying, you know, I know you’re meaning to tell us the truth, but is it possible you’re not sure about the clothing?”

“No, I’m sure about the clothing.”

“Why are you so sure about the clothing? What makes you so sure that you remember the clothing that the child was wearing? Was there something unusual about the clothing that you remember?”

“No, there wasn’t nothing unusual about the clothing, he had on a pair of dungarees and a blue shirt, light blue shirt,” Toole repeated.

“Ottis, don’t tell him what you think...”

“I ain’t tellin’ him what I think, I ain’t telling him...”

Had he heard about this murder in the news? Hoffman asked. Toole said he never paid attention to the news—which may have explained why he’d thought Johnson was still president. How about in jail, the week before, had he seen a TV show about missing children?

“Not with the guys in the cell. When the news comes on they just switch it off.”

“It wasn’t a news program, this was a movie, nine o’clock movie last Monday, a week ago last Monday.”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Did you ever hear anything during the past few years about a person by the name of Walsh?”

“Walsh?”

“Yeah, Adam Walsh.”

“Adam Walsh? Was he blonde-headed?”

“Excuse me?”

“Was he blonde-headed?” Toole inquired.

“It was a child.”

“Was he blonde-headed?”

“Yeah, sandy-colored hair,” Hoffman confirmed, now answering Toole’s questions.

“Was his hair kinda curly or wavy like that?”

“I think his hair was fairly straight if I’m not mistaken,” said Hoffman.

“It could have been because he had hair tonic on his hair, you know, ah, it was kinda, he was kinda sweaty a little bit.”

“Was he wearing a hat?” Hoffman took back control of the questioning. No. “Did he have a hat with him?” No.

After briefing Toole what a highway mile marker was, Hoffman opened a photo album and showed him a crime-scene photo of the Florida’s Turnpike near where the head was found.

“Now this is what I mean by a turnpike,” Toole said.

Hoffman tried to get him to say that the picture looked like the roadway he and Lucas were on when they took the child.

“Yeah, almost.”

Toole said they’d stopped the car when they threw out the child’s head. Hoffman pointed to another photo, of a canal along what he said was the same highway. When Toole said he would recognize the child, Hoffman showed him Adam’s “missing” picture.

Toole paused. “I don’t think so. No, I don’t think that’s the kid, though.”

“You don’t think so?” said Terry. “You’d have had no problem remembering who this kid was, or do you think you were just too intoxicated to remember at the time. You’re not intoxicated now, we know that.”

“It could have been ‘cause I was too fucked up in the head, you know. I ain’t really sure.”

Hoffman asked how many people he’d seen Henry kill. “I’d say, a couple hundred.”

“But like you said, you told Detective Terry you only remember one incident of a child being taken from a Sears mall.”

“What was this kid taken from?”

“This was in the Sears mall,” answered Hoffman.

“He was taken from a Sears mall?”

“That’s correct. And for the record, you did not identify the photograph from the flier that we have on a missing child in the Adam Walsh case, and that was the Adam Walsh child, and you’re telling us that you don’t recognize those photographs as being him.”

“Maybe that was because I was drunk and I ain’t drunken now.”

Hoffman showed Toole a photo of Adam’s head, fished from the canal. Toole took a long time to gaze at it. “Since the kid’s head’s wet, it does kinda look like the kid some.”

“But you’re not a definite hundred percent positive?”

“Umm, because the kid was sweaty in the parking lot, and his hair was all sweaty.”

Again Toole paused for a long time. “See, it looks more like the kid than them other pictures ‘cause his hair is more, it ain’t, ah...”

“Yeah...”

“... probably about the same, you know what I mean.”

Hoffman went on to tell Toole the abduction took place in July 1981, and asked for ideas how they could document where he was that month.

Toole said after his mother died, on May 16, 1981, he soon after left for Texas with Henry and Toole’s niece and nephew Frieda and Frank Powell. About the end of June, beginning of July, they returned to Jacksonville then they traveled in Florida. He might have been in Fort Lauderdale then, he said, but there was no way to prove it.

Back to logistics, Hoffman asked how long they drove after leaving Sears parking lot until they got to the highway. (30 blocks west on Hollywood Boulevard was the turnpike entrance, three blocks east was an I-95 entrance.) Was it 3-5 minutes, or 10? Toole thought 10. They made no stops between abducting and killing the child, and the murder scene was close to the highway, although he wasn’t sure if he could see passing cars from it.

Hoffman asked if either he or Lucas kept a memento of the child’s killing, like a piece of clothing, or a shoe. Toole said no. “Was he wearing socks, the child?”

“He was wearing socks. I’ll say he was wearing socks.”

Hoffman asked, “Do you know where the clothes are?” Terry: “This was two years ago, you say you take drugs and pills and smoke marijuana so possibly you’re also not a hundred percent positive of what you recall of this murder. You know, it’s been two years and you’ve been under the influence of drugs and things like that. Is it possible you’re confusing it with other murders also?”

“Could be possible.”

“But there’s no doubt about you and Henry abducting the child from the Sears mall a couple years ago. That you’re a hundred percent positive.”

“Yeah, a hundred percent positive,” Toole echoed.

At 11:49, the detectives ended the statement. But the evening was hardly done.

## 8

### The Drifter's Story Drifts

ONCE THE INTERVIEW WAS CONCLUDED, Detective Terry checked records on Henry Lee Lucas and discovered that Maryland State Police had arrested him on July 22, five days before Adam was reported lost. He'd remained in custody until October 7, 1981.

Terry confronted Toole, and Toole promptly changed his story:

"Uh, Lucas wasn't with me, I was by myself." He alone enticed the child into his car, Toole said as the tape rolled again, 50 minutes later. "And after I get somebody in the car with me I can lock all the doors and the windows on the driver's side." He'd since sold the car, he said, to a junkyard in Jacksonville.

When Hoffman asked again if Toole could remember the clothing the child was wearing, this time Toole said he couldn't, and Terry berated him.

"See this boy and see what you did, you think about it. What you did."

Toole repeated his story that he told the child about the candy and toys in his car. "He did say his momma and daddy was in the store and..."

Hoffman stopped him. "Both his mother and dad? Think about that now."

"Well, maybe I didn't even ask him was his parents in the store, you know..."

Hoffman asked the direction in which he left the mall. "We showed you a photograph with a mile marker 130 on it," said Terry. "And you said that looked like the turnpike, I believe." The turnpike or I-95? Hoffman pressed. "We've already gone this far, let us have the rest of it."

"Come on now," said Terry. "Look at me and tell me the truth. We've been honest with each other for a long time. Which one, were you on the turnpike or I-95?"

"On the turnpike."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yeah."

"You had to get a ticket at the tollbooth, and you got a ticket." "What was the boy doing when you got a ticket? Hoffman asked.

"Aw, he was yellin'."

"What was he yellin'?"

"But I told him to shut up, you know."

Right or left when he left the mall? Toole said right, which Hoffman assumed meant westbound on Hollywood Boulevard. But before the turnpike was a traffic circle where a military academy kept a campus. Hoffman guided him through it.

"I don't mean a complete circle, maybe around a half-moon circle, or did the highway just go straight there?"

"I'd say some of it was kinda..."

"Curved," Hoffman finished his sentence.

"Curved," agreed Toole.

Guided through another choice, whether it took 10 or 15 minutes to arrive at the turnpike, Toole chose 10.

“Okay. So the first thing you did was get a ticket to get on to the turnpike. Which way did you go on the turnpike, north or south? Did you go back towards Jacksonville or did you go south of Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood?”

Toole admitted he didn’t know north from south—or east from west.

Terry: “Did you go back from where you came?” Yeah. “Comin’ back home?” Yeah. “Or did you go the other way?”

“I ain’t really sure.”

“Look at me.”

“My mind is gettin’ stuck.”

“Look at me. When you left, where did you plan on going? Did you plan on going back home?” Yeah. “Alright, did you go in the direction to go back to Jacksonville, or did you go the other way?”

“I could’ve went the other way.”

“Ottis, look at me. What did you do when you left the shopping center? Which way did you tell me you went? Just think. Which way—where did you tell me you were going? Where did you tell me you were going? Come on now. Now you know which way you were going, ‘cause you told me and you told Detective Ruiz where you were going. Which way did you tell us you were going? Where did you tell us you were going? Were you going home, or were you going to Miami?”

“I was going back, goin’ back to Jacksonville.”

Both Terry and Hoffman pumped him to remember something—anything—about where he said he pulled off the turnpike. Was it farmland? Was there a lake? A pond? Was it soggy?

“I’d say it was a soggy road.”

Was there an overpass nearby? “I can’t remember. I really can’t.”

“Look at me. Look at me,” insisted Terry. “No more lookin’ at the ceiling.”

“I know what you’re tryin’ to do...”

“I’m not tryin’ to do nothin’,” Terry asserted.

“I know what...” Toole tried to say.

The browbeating continued. They got Toole to say the child may have been unconscious after he slapped him, so when he dragged him out of his car it wasn’t hard to chop off his head.

It took about four blows. “I laid him face down and I chopped his head off.”

“Did he ever move?”

“I’d say his body kinda, kinda shimmied, kinda shaky.” Following that, he cut up the remainder of his body and scattered the parts.

Terry: “Right in the area where you killed him, right?” Hoffman: “Did you just throw it like this, or did you just take it and throw it out a good distance?”

“A good distance.

Terry: “Did you put any of his body in the car? Did you put any part of the boy? Look at me. What did you put in the car? Did you throw anything out of the car window while you were driving? Did you throw any part of the boy out of the car window while you were driving?”

“Yeah, his head.”

“Did you bury any parts of the body in the area where you chopped his head off? Did you dig any holes, or did you just scatter the parts of the body?”

“I scattered it all out.”

“Just layin’ on the top on the ground,” said Terry. Yeah.

Toole said he left the child’s clothing at the murder scene, but put the murder weapon on his front seat floorboard and the head on the front seat.

Hoffman asked how far it was from the murder scene to where he dumped the head. Failing an answer, Terry asked how long he drove until he got to “the place where you threw his head into the water or canal?”

Hoffman: “How many minutes?” Terry: “Ten minutes, an hour, a half-hour were you drivin’?”

“I ain’t really sure of the time.”

Terry: “Thirty minutes, forty-five minutes?” Hoffman: “Two hours?” Terry: “How long do you think you were drivin’? How many minutes do you think you were drivin’?”

“I’d say, about a half-hour.”

Hoffman suggested, if they would take him to the turnpike, might he remember locations? No.

Hoffman then asked Toole why he’d said earlier that Lucas had committed the murder.

“Well, I was gonna try to get him convinced it was him, I don’t wanna savisty myself.”

“You don’t want what?”

“I was gonna try to get him savisty and hang his ass more than what he’s hung.” Toole couldn’t come up with the words “publicize” or “publicity.”

“Oh, you wanted to get him in trouble. Well, we know for sure he was in jail at the time of Adam Walsh’s abduction, and you’re the only one who did this crime, is that correct?”

“Yeah.”

Then he asked why he killed the child.

Toole paused. “When I asked him would he come back to Jacksonville with me and he said no, that’s when I said, well, I thought, I didn’t want to kidnap him, I didn’t want to get turned in on kidnappin’ charge ‘cause he woulda recognized me and so, I ended up, I ended up killin’ him.”

Terry asked if he thought the head would ever be found. “I wouldn’t think it would.”

Hoffman asked, did he realize he threw the head into water? Toole’s answer suggested he thought the area was a woodland swamp. However, the canal where the head was found was clearly a waterway, without tree cover.

More problems: Toole admitted he lied when he said the child had been wandering Sears’s parking lot, banging on cars. Rather, he and the boy had talked for fifteen minutes before he entered Toole’s car.

Hoffman showed him the photo of the severed head. Was this the child?

Toole paused.

“Don’t tell me what you think, I want to hear you tell me what you know to be the truth.” Terry: “If you know in your mind and your heart, okay, that that’s the child, or it’s not.”

Toole still didn’t answer. Terry: “I think he wants to tell us the truth.” Hoffman: “Is that the child you abducted from the Sears Mall?”

“I’d say, I’d say it was. I’m pretty sure that’s the kid.”

Terry: “Not pretty sure, Ottis, either you know it’s the child or you don’t know, okay?”

Hoffman again showed him the “missing” photo. “Is this the boy you took from the mall?”

“The other pictures, the other pictures look more like him than that one does.”

Hoffman returned to the severed head photo. “Is this the child?”

“Yeah, I’d say, yeah, that’s him.”

“Alright, for the record, he has identified the photographs of Adam Walsh.” The statement ended at 1:53 A.M.

Toole had said he’d never registered his Cadillac, but a woman named Faye McNett had sold it to him. Using motor vehicle records, Buddy Terry found it at a Jacksonville used car lot. He took Hoffman and Hickman there.

It was a white, four-door, 1971 Cadillac Sedan de Ville with a black vinyl roof and black leather interior—just as Toole described it, except he’d gotten the year of manufacture wrong. But it didn’t have power door locks, which Toole had said he’d used to imprison the child. It did have, on the driver’s side, power windows and a power window lock control. So unless the child was unconscious almost as soon as he entered the car, he would have been able to open a door anytime the car had stopped.

Testing the car using the chemical luminol, the Jacksonville sheriff’s crime lab found “a trace of bloodstaining” on the floorboard carpets—both sides of the front, and the left side rear. Further tests were needed to tell whether the blood was human. Police then took custody of the car to examine for fingerprints and to let agents from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement vacuum for fiber and hair evidence that might match Adam Walsh. Later, the FDLE crime lab reported that there was not enough blood to allow for further testing, nor did any hair or fiber samples match.

Also, Hollywood police requested permission from the Florida circuit court in Jacksonville to transport Toole to their crime scenes. The court consented, and so did Toole.

Hollywood Police sent their own small plane to Jacksonville to pick up Toole, Hoffman, Hickman, and Terry. Arriving at nine A.M. at Broward’s North Perry Airport, they were met by a van, which drove them east on Hollywood Boulevard, past the turnpike entrance, Military Circle, and then to the police station.

Although Sears in Hollywood Mall was directly across from the police station, Assistant Chief Leroy Hessler suggested they take him to another Sears then show him Hollywood Mall.

With Toole in the front passenger seat, the van left for Sears in the Broward Mall in Plantation, about twenty minutes north. Arriving, Hoffman asked Toole if this was the store. No, Toole shook his head, definitely not.

When they returned to Hollywood Boulevard, just off I-95, Toole said the area looked very familiar. Hoisington drove into the east side mall entrance, then did three-quarters of a circle around the parking lot before coming to the west side of Sears—where Timothy Pottenburgh said he'd seen a man in a blue van take a child he thought was Adam.

Alongside Sears, Toole said this mall looked more like the place where he'd found Adam. But he wasn't sure.

During lunch at the police station, Toole asked to again see the mall across the street. This time they parked alongside Sears's north entrance—where Reve had parked. After five minutes, Toole said yes, this was the right mall. He'd seen Adam exit the west side door and stand near the bus benches. That's when Toole parked his car, walked toward him, and told him about the candy and toys. Once Adam was inside his car, he said, he locked his doors, turned right on Hollywood Boulevard then drove about ten minutes to the turnpike. (Unknown to Toole, the detectives had already discovered that Toole's car didn't have power door locks.)

Det. Larry Hoisington drove the route. As they again passed Military Circle, then the turnpike tollbooth, Toole affirmed this was the road he'd traveled—he remembered the school within the circle and getting a toll ticket. Passing the toll entry, the road split; southbound to Miami, northbound to Orlando. Hoisington chose northbound.

Two hours north of Hollywood, Toole said they were approaching where he'd killed Adam. It was near Mile Marker 126—four miles south of 130, where the head was found. Of course, two nights earlier, the detectives had shown Toole a photo of the sign.

A problem left unanswered was why Toole, supposedly returning to Jacksonville, would have stayed on the turnpike north of the Fort Pierce exit. There, the turnpike veered northwest into the center of the state toward Orlando. Signs advised northbound travelers, including to Jacksonville, to exit at Fort Pierce for I-95, the free road.

Passing a construction site, Toole told Hoisington to stop. He said he remembered pulling into this area, then driving about three hundred yards. Everyone got out. A fence blocked a gravel road entrance. Hoisington said he'd driven the turnpike every weekend in the summer of 1981, and recalled that here workers had mixed asphalt for road repairs. At the time, there was no fence. As they looked, a state trooper stopped. He confirmed that construction workers had been there that summer.

Strolling, Toole repeated he thought this was where he'd decapitated Adam—although he wasn't certain. He'd buried the rest of the body here, then put the head on the floorboard behind his driver's seat, intending to keep it. (Before, he'd said he'd put it on the front seat.)

After driving north about ten minutes, he changed his mind. He pulled his car to the edge of the road, walked onto a wooden dock area, or bridge, and tossed the head into a canal.

They next drove to Mile Marker 130, then walked to the drainage ditch where the fishermen had spotted Adam's head. This was where he'd thrown the head into the water, he said, off that wooden pier. It was the one in the crime-scene photo.

Returned to the construction site, Toole tried to find the place he buried the remainder of the body, while the detectives scouted for signs of dug-up ground. Two



hours later, nobody had found anything. To explain his poor memory, Toole said he was extremely intoxicated when he killed Adam.

At 6:10, in the near dark, the detectives decided to go home. They'd look more on Monday.

Back in the detective bureau that evening, Ron Hickman asked Toole why he said Lucas killed Adam. Toole answered that the detectives didn't tell him he was in jail. Then he added that he'd heard about a story in the newspaper that Lucas was going to write a book about his murders. Since Lucas seemed to want publicity—sublimity, Toole called it—"I said well, I'll give him something where he can get some sublimity."

Next Hickman asked why he changed his statement about chopping Adam's torso into small pieces and scattering them. Again Toole referred to a newspaper story about Lucas, that he'd pointed police to dismembered bones they'd found in a wood stove. He was copying the story of what Lucas said he did. He denied decapitating any other victim, or chopping up their bodies. "I ain't never, I wouldn't take all that time."

To Hickman's last question, why he confessed to this crime, Toole said because this victim was so young. His murders with Lucas didn't bother him, but this one did.

"Okay, so everything you did indicate now is the complete truth as you know it to be?"

"Yeah."

"And you are the individual responsible for the abduction and murder of Adam Walsh, is that correct?"

"Yeah."

Hollywood Police Chief Sam Martin was going to wait until Saturday morning to hold a press conference, but *Sun-Tattler* publisher Ed Wentworth asked him to do it that night. The paper published Saturday mornings but not Sundays, so a Saturday press conference wouldn't make it into the paper until Monday afternoon.

Martin and Wentworth were friends. So even before the detectives had finished, the press conference started, at 10:30. It only made the announcement more dramatic: the case was solved. The killer had confessed and was in their custody.

"Toole killed Adam Walsh by himself," declared Assistant Chief Leroy Hessler. He had Adam "outside the city before Mrs. Walsh knew he was missing." Referring to Toole's other confessions, some with Lucas, Hessler said, "I've heard details of some of these homicides, and they make Charles Manson look like Huckleberry Finn."

Toole was not yet under arrest for the murder, he said. Monday, at the State Attorney's Office, they planned to charge him with kidnapping—they wouldn't charge him with murder because they didn't have evidence of the remainder of the body. But they expected that would happen.

The press was stunned. Someone asked, did they know where the body was? Would they say how Toole said he killed him? They wouldn't answer. Had he seen the TV movie? No.

Since they were relying strictly on Toole's confession, how could they be sure it was real? "Certain statements this man has given us have convinced us," said Martin, adding that only the killer could have known those things.

Away from the press conference, Hickman and Hoffman asked Buddy Terry, on tape, whether he'd slipped Toole any information he'd gotten from them.

Terry answered he didn't have much information. Once Toole began talking about the murder of a boy in the Fort Lauderdale area, and someone in his department mentioned the name Adam Walsh, all else he'd learned was the child had been taken from a mall and his head was found in a canal.

He added that he'd known Toole eighteen years, and had confirmed ten other homicides Toole had recently confessed to.

Hickman asked, in Terry's experience, had Toole ever confessed to a crime he didn't do? "No, sir, he will not."

"WE HAVE ADAM'S KILLER," HOLLYWOOD POLICE CLAIM  
—*The Sun-Tattler*

A family friend of the Walshes, Les Davies, commented "It's more sickening and disgusting than I ever could have imagined, assuming that what he told the police is true. My God. That [Toole and Lucas] killed someone in every one of the forty-eight states, it underscores all of what [John Walsh] has been saying."

Appearing later at the Hollywood police station, without Reve, John Walsh's eyes teared. "My heart will be broken for the rest of my life. I will always miss Adam. It will always be a nightmare." He didn't know the evidence against Toole, but said detectives had told him Friday afternoon they were "99.9 percent" certain they had the right man. "We pray the criminal justice system will not break down, and Adam receives justice."

Did he feel any compassion or pity for his son's killer?

"I don't, because I know the reality of what happened to Adam. He was a beautiful little boy, and there was no justification for doing that in any realm of human thought that I can think of."

**Sunday, October 23**

MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN IN ADAM WALSH'S DEATH  
—*The Miami Herald*

The doubts emerged slowly Saturday, but police remain convinced that Ottis Elwood Toole killed six-year-old Adam Walsh...

Unlike Hollywood's top brass, Jack Hoffman wasn't cheerleading the case. Without talking specifics, he admitted they had no evidence beyond the confession that Toole had even been in South Florida when Adam was killed. And, he added, a beheading didn't fit Toole's pattern. "There are certain aspects of the investigation that do raise some doubts."

Buddy Terry contradicted him, to the *Sun-Sentinel*. "Everything [Toole] has told us so far has been confirmed."

Florida Senator Paula Hawkins told the press in Jacksonville Sunday that information not yet made public convinced her Toole was Adam's killer. Her source: John Walsh.

In Monday morning's *Miami Herald*, Chief Assistant Broward State Attorney Ralph Ray said his office would present evidence to a grand jury as soon as possible. But later in the day, after Hollywood police met for ninety minutes with Ray and State Attorney Michael Satz, official comments to the press were decidedly lukewarm.

"Yes, we have a case. But we have some work to do," said Chief Sam Martin. "They are carrying on with their investigation," said Satz.

Translation: the prosecutors told the cops they didn't have enough to present to a grand jury.

In Jacksonville, Alfred Washington, an attorney previously appointed to defend Toole's murder charge in the arson case, discounted his client's Walsh confession. "It appears that Toole and Lucas are in a race" to confess to the most murders. He said Toole previously had confessed to many things that hadn't checked out, and in this case, Hollywood had only a "naked confession." "Unless they can come up with some other evidence, I think it's going to be difficult to make a case."

In an editorial the next day, the *Miami Herald* doubted Toole's tale:

The nature of that confession meshes with the dreamlike unreality about Adam's disappearance. Just as many found it hard to believe that a bright, reliable first grader could vanish from a suburban Sears store, many now find the confession by admitted murderer and arsonist Ottis Elwood Toole unbelievable. So far no physical evidence seems to place Toole in the Hollywood region at the time of the killing. If his confession is false, it would not be the first time that an unbalanced personality has responded to prolonged emotional publicity about an unsolved crime.

## 9

### The Drifter Recants

TO FIND MORE EVIDENCE, 25 searchers began digging at turnpike Mile Marker 126 on Tuesday, October 25. Police described the area as marshy and thick with vegetation, about seventy-five yards east of the turnpike, on private property. Three FDLE technicians used a device to examine whether ground had been disturbed, but had no luck. At three P.M. they quit for the day.

Wednesday they brought more sophisticated equipment that could penetrate the ground with radar. With it mounted on the back of a pickup truck, searchers identified seven soil disturbances or foreign objects—all the size of a body. At seven o'clock, in the dark, they decided to leave the excavation of those spots until Thursday.

Should those seven places yield nothing, St. Lucie County Sheriff's officers were ready to get down on their hands and knees and dig up the entire 1,800 square foot area, the *Sun-Sentinel* reported.

Closing the day, Chief Martin told the *Miami Herald*, "We've run all up and down the turnpike, and this is the only place it could be. He describes the location perfectly. So far as we are concerned, we are looking in the right spot."

On Thursday, as a backhoe excavated four inches at a time, the Grave Team followed, sifting with rakes and shovels. Then they repeated the procedure until they'd gone down two feet, but they found nothing.

Detectives were growing restless. "I've seen every scoop of dirt that came out of there, and there's no body there. If he was there, we would have hit on his bones somehow," St. Lucie Sheriff's Det. Steve Williams told the *Sun-Sentinel*.

In the same effort to collect evidence, Hoffman began trying to track Toole's movements in 1981. Could he document where he was on July 27? In a short time, he patched together this timeline:

After his mother died in May, in June he and Lucas took Toole's niece Frieda Powell, then 14, and her brother Frank, then 13, to Texas, California and Virginia. On June 15, Lucas and Toole were documented at a Houston blood bank.

They returned to Jacksonville by June 19, the day Toole's brother Howell said his 1972 blue Ford truck was stolen. On June 30 and July 1, in Wilmington, Delaware, Lucas signed for Traveler's Aid vouchers totalling \$25.00. On July 8, Delaware State Police in Wilmington told Howell they'd found his truck, abandoned and burned. In a Jacksonville police report dated July 15, Howell blamed Ottis and Lucas for stealing it.

On July 22, Lucas was arrested by police in Cecil County, Maryland—about 25 miles southwest of Wilmington—and charged on a two-year-old warrant for stealing a pickup truck from one of his own relatives. Maryland state social services took the children into emergency custody and soon returned them to Florida. But Toole wasn't with them.

Hoffman called Wilmington and got a lead that Toole had gone to Newport News, Va. He knew that when Lucas and Toole went on the road, they often tried to get money from the Salvation Army. Calling their office in Newport News, he got a hit; Toole had been there Friday, July 24, requesting money to return to Jacksonville. In fact, they'd given him a \$71.93 check made out to Greyhound for a one-way bus ticket.

The woman who wrote the check had left the agency, but Hoffman found her at home. She remembered; she called someone in Jacksonville who said he'd hire him when he returned. She recalled the time of day as about 11:30 A.M.

Hoffman then called Greyhound to get bus schedules that were in effect back then. Toole would have needed to take a bus from Newport News to Richmond, which took two hours, then transfer to a bus to Jacksonville, which took between fourteen and a half to seventeen and a half hours.

The Newport News information presented new questions: After he got the bus ticket, did Toole immediately go home? Did he quickly leave again for Hollywood, arriving at the mall by Monday at noon? If he was broke, what money did he use for gas?

Hoffman's captain had asked him to fly back to Jacksonville to ask. Arriving, Buddy Terry took him straight to the jail. Toole remembered the Salvation Army check for the bus ticket. Taking it, he walked directly to Greyhound and stayed until nighttime when the bus left. He didn't get off at any stops before Jacksonville. That suggested he arrived midday or evening Saturday, July 25.

Asked what he did after getting home, Toole said he either saw his wife, Novella, or went to Southeastern Roofing, where he worked. Hoffman asked whom he worked for there. Toole said John, he was certain because he worked at his house, possibly within a

day. Company time sheets would prove it. When he was broke, John would sometimes advance him \$20 to get through the week.

Hoffman asked how long he thought he stayed in Jacksonville until he went somewhere else.

“Been a pretty good while. ‘Cause I don’t go anywheres on no 15 or 20 dollars, or something like that.”

From reviewing the interview transcripts, Hoffman returned to something Toole had said, that he’d put the murder weapon, the machete, in his mother’s house. But he’d also mumbled about the house being destroyed.

Toole interrupted. “But I got to thinking more. I done burnt my mother’s house down.”

“That’s my point! If your mother’s house was burned down, you couldn’t have hid the murder weapon in your mother’s house, correct?”

“Correct.”

“So now you have to tell me what you did with the murder weapon.”

“Shhh, that’s why I’m tryin’ to give you all these statements, I’m not really sure that I really did kill Adam Walsh.”

Toole also remembered that when he arrived home, he rented a room for himself and Novella in Betty Goodyear’s rooming house. That was also when his brother Howell “beat the shit out of me” outside a convenience store for stealing his pickup truck. Toole said he filed a police report at the time. He also mentioned that when he was in Newport News, he’d been in a hospital.

Searching police records, Hoffman and Terry found a report dated Friday, August 1, 1981, 4:10 P.M. Just as Toole said, the sheriff was called to a convenience store in his neighborhood, and found him rubbing a red spot on his face. Howell had just hit him and threatened to kill him with a pistol, he said.

One of the only important case fact the detectives hadn’t told Toole in their interviews was the date of Adam’s disappearance. Now, with dates established that Toole apparently came home on the bus, July 25, and a clear date that he was in Jacksonville, August 1, plus Toole saying he thought he stayed home for at least a while to make some money because he was flat broke, Hoffman returned to Toole and told him the date, July 27.

“So only thing, if I didn’t really kill Adam Walsh, I would have to have been working the Monday on the 27th.”

“That’s correct. If I could verify you were working at John’s, then you didn’t kill Adam Walsh and you made up a whole story here.”

“Yeah, that would be what it would be if I didn’t, ah...”

For a moment it looked like the whole charade was going to end. But instead Hoffman reversed course, asking him how he could “know so many things about this homicide? How do you explain how you abducted the child, how you took him out to a location, how you laid him down, how you chopped his head off, how do you explain that?”

Then Terry jumped on him. “Look at me. You told the man something that only three people knew, the person that did it, the police and medical examiner. This thing has

been eatin' at you a long time, hasn't it? But you told people other than me that you did it—Ottis?"

Toole stumbled to explain. He figured, by confessing to so many murders, he could get in a prison cell near Lucas then get him to say what happened to Toole's niece Frieda Powell. "I still ain't sure she's dead, and that's the only way I could get him to bring out the truth on it."

"Ottis, were you lying today? Are you sure you didn't kill Adam Walsh? Now come on now, let's don't do this way. Look at me. Look at me. Ottis."

Toole began to cry. "My mind ain't gonna take much more of this shit."

Toole kept insisting he didn't kill Adam. If he had, he said, he would have been able to show where the body was. But Terry continued to press. How did he know to tell the Brevard County detective there was a boy taken from the Sears mall, and ask him if he was from Fort Lauderdale?

"Made it all up."

"You were right on the money, you told me a young boy between six and ten. I mean, making it up, that's a little difficult to understand. You were exact on the other murders. These other agencies were able to prove the murders that you confessed to. They got the bodies, everything you told 'em. Ottis, look at me. We've been pretty truthful with each other, ain't we?"

"Yeah."

"Have you ever lied to me?"

"I don't really know if I have at all, now."

"You're digging yourself a hole, Ottis, and you're not gonna get out of it. You know that. You know what you're doing. You want me to tell you what you're doin'?"

"What?"

"You're trying to go to a mental hospital."

Toole began crying again. "I don't believe that shit."

"You don't believe me? Huh?"

"My fucking life, I, I, can't stand it!!!"

Terry ended the interview. It was 10:30 P.M. Hoffman told Toole they'd talk again in the morning, then left the interview room. Terry stayed behind. Minutes later, outside the room, Terry told Hoffman wanted to talk more, because just before, he hadn't told the truth.

At 10:42 P.M. they began again. This time Toole clearly recalled he got off the bus in Jacksonville on a Saturday just before noon. He went to John Reaves's roofing company and opened the gate with his keys.

The Cadillac was there; under the car seat he kept his tools—a shovel and a machete. He drove to his mother's house, burned but still standing, and took from underneath it the about \$300 he'd buried in a tin can. He took the money, bought gas, then got on I-95 south, then much later, the turnpike. He drove straight before stopping "in Miami at Biscayne Bay," where he turned tricks whenever he came, for \$25-50.

Toole said he got to the shopping mall that Monday before noon and window-shopped. When Hoffman asked if he entered Sears, his answer progressed from "I coulda" to "pretty sure" he did. He couldn't remember which departments he'd been in—Hoffman had never told him which one Adam had been in.

Outside the store, he sat down on a bench for ten to twenty minutes talking a little boy he described as being between 6-10.

“Did he tell you his name?”

“Yeah, he told me... yeah, he told me his name. He told me his name was—he told me his name was Adam.”

Perhaps the last remaining thing police hadn't tipped Toole in the past week was what Adam had been wearing. Hoffman asked.

“No, I wasn't really, really payin' attention too much to what he was wearin'.”

Did he mention where his mother was?

“He told me his mom was in the store shopping.”

“Did he say what his mother was shopping for? Any particular item?”

“No. Not exactly.”

Toole said he asked Adam if he liked sports; he'd answered he liked baseball. Hoffman recognized an opening; if Toole knew the answer, it might have proved that he really did meet him. Did Adam mention his favorite sports team?

“He said he was playin' on some kind of little league team or something.”

The right answer, Hoffman knew, was the Fort Lauderdale Strikers soccer team. As a family, the Walshes often went to their matches. Toole's idea of baseball could have come from showing him his missing photo.

One more chance: did Adam tell him what baseball position he played? “He did, but I, I forgot what it was.”

In the first days that Adam was missing, his father had called him an all-star right fielder.

The rest of the statement was a description of how Toole got Adam in his car—he didn't need power door locks because the kid wasn't going to jump from a moving car anyway—followed the same route police had shown him, stopped somewhere on the turnpike to beat and choke him until unconsciousness after he'd gotten wild, parked off-road at a place similar to where police had shown him, and used both hands on a bayonet and chopped off his head.

He wrapped the head in the child's shirt, dug a hole a foot deep between the road and a ditch, then buried the body but forgot to include the head. Instead he put it first on the back seat then a back floorboard, then on the front passenger seat, then drove away.

He didn't have sex with Adam, alive or dead. Five or 10 minutes later, driving, he spotted a wooden bridge, stopped then threw the head in the water. It sank. He kept the shirt. Returning home, a week or so later he sold the murder weapon at a flea market for a few bucks.

Hoffman tried to wrap it up: “Now in this statement, this final statement...”

“This is the final statement.”

“This is the complete truth,” Hoffman tried to establish.

“The complete truth, the whole—whole thing.”

“And you're telling myself and Detective Terry here that you're the individual responsible for kidnapping and murdering Adam Walsh on July 27, 1981, from the city of Hollywood?”

“Yeah.”

“And nobody else is responsible for that kid's death.”

“Nobody else.”

The statement ended at 11:41 P.M.

**Thursday, October 27**

POLICE: SUSPECT DESCRIBED DETAILS  
OF ADAM'S MURDER  
—*The Miami Herald*

When he confessed to killing six-year-old Adam Walsh, Ottis Elwood Toole gave what police called a flawless description of the child's clothes and the place he was abducted.

Because Toole had said he was hospitalized in Newport News, Hoffman called a police detective there to see if there were any records. There was: on July 22, 1981, Toole was admitted to Riverside Hospital's emergency room, and the next day was put in the psychiatric unit for depression. He was discharged July 24.

Working the street, Hoffman found the John that Toole was talking about, his former boss John Reaves. He remembered someone called from Newport News to ask if he'd hire Toole when he returned home. Checking records, Reaves found that Toole's last day of work for him was June 4, 1981.

Betty Goodyear recalled that Ottis and his wife had moved in sometime in August 1981. She offered to check her receipts. She said Ottis always had money, he was never broke.

At Southeast Colorcoat, roofing foreman Mack Caulder said Toole had access to tools, knives, and a machete. He also knew that Mrs. McNett kept the white Cadillac on the grounds. John Reaves Sr. said Toole had a key to the company compound since it was his job to clean the grounds. He remembered a machete with a brown wooden handle but couldn't find it.

A machete did show up at Spencer's Motors. Spencer Bennett said he'd known Ottis for twenty years, they'd traded cars together. Two or three years earlier, he recalled, he found a blade in one of those cars—he didn't remember which. He showed it to the detectives: a wood-handled machete sheathed in a green web, its handle wrapped in black electrical tape, its blade rusty and tarred.

The detectives asked to take it. Bennett said he didn't need it back. When the FDLE crime lab later examined it, they found a trace of blood, but not enough to test further.

LONG TRAIL OF BLOOD  
POLICE STUDY CLAIMS OF LUCAS AND TOOLE  
—*The Sun-Tattler*

Ottis Elwood Toole has been linked to more than 100 murders. He has yet to be convicted of any.

Police now concede the (Walsh) case may never go to trial because investigators haven't been able to find evidence to support last week's confession by the suspect.



On Saturday, October 29, Assistant Chief Leroy Hessler seemed apologetic for trumpeting the confession too soon. They anticipated the story would leak once Toole returned to Jacksonville, he explained.

Yet the *Miami Herald* quoted a police spokesman who held the line that Toole was their man. “Toole did it. He is the suspect and we’re 99 percent sure he did it. He just knows too much not to be the one.”

Back in Hollywood on Monday, October 31, Hoffman and Hickman continued their search for footprints Toole might have left anywhere. In Jacksonville they’d called Salvation Army branches, Traveler’s Aid stations, the state welfare department, hospitals, pawnshops and missions. In South Florida they added blood banks, police agencies that wrote parking tickets, and the state division of employment, looking for payroll records under Toole’s social security number from 1981 to 1983.

They learned nothing—except it would take longer to search all the parking ticket records.

Later, to discover Toole’s state of mind during his time in Newport News, police acquired his hospital records. A priest had brought Toole in after a parishioner found him in a bathroom of their church hall. To the priest, Toole was disoriented, rambling that he’d been in New York and needed to return to Jacksonville. The priest thought he was possibly suicidal.

Riverside Hospital admitted Toole to its psychiatric unit. On admission, he was “disheveled, though pleasant and cooperative.” He said that since his mother had died in May, he’d been hitchhiking, sleeping outdoors or in vacant buildings. He denied having suicidal or homicidal thoughts. But the next day, July 23, he was claustrophobic and on the verge of tears. He hallucinated his mother’s voice speaking to him. The next day, against medical advice, he left the hospital. His discharge report said he was not considered acutely psychotic, suicidal or homicidal at the time.

## **Tuesday, November 1**

### WALSH SUSPECT RECANTS CONFESSION TOOLE DENIES EVEN HAVING SEEN MURDERED BOY, ATTORNEY STATES —*The Miami Herald*

The attorney was St. Lucie County Public Defender Elton Schwarz, who, claiming jurisdiction, had contacted Toole and then sent an attorney and investigator to Jacksonville. Toole then agreed to let Schwarz’s office represent him. “The man, in my opinion, is not psychologically right,” Schwarz told the *Sun-Tattler*. He seemed willing to confess to crimes whether or not he actually committed them.

In response, Toole told a detective he wanted to speak to Buddy Terry. Afterward, Terry began a taped statement. First Toole said both his legal counsels had told him not to talk to him, but he wanted to anyway. “The [public defender] is trying to get me to say I ain’t guilty on the Adam Walsh case... I really know myself that I really did kill Adam Walsh, but the lawyer I got from Miami [he meant St. Lucie], he’s trying to tell me I didn’t kill Adam Walsh.”

“Are you telling me you didn’t make any statements to the effect that you didn’t kill Adam Walsh? That your attorney did? Or did you make any statements?”

“I didn’t make any. I didn’t say anything on tape, or start anything that I didn’t kill Adam Walsh.”

As the Hollywood detectives could find no evidence, even they grew sick of Toole.

Several weeks later, on November 19, he told Jack Hoffman, “Everything I told you about the killing, about chopping his head off and all, that’s true, and the mall, all that’s true. When I chopped his head off, I started to dig a hole, but then I didn’t dig a hole, I put it in the, there was a, I had some blankets in the back of the car, and so I wrapped him in some blankets and put him in the trunk of the car, and I drove back to Jacksonville, and I cremated his body here in Jacksonville.”

In the backyard of his mother’s house he used to burn trash in an old gutted icebox. Late in the evening the same day he abducted Adam, he loaded wood in the icebox, then the boy’s body, dumped gasoline over it and set it ablaze. He hid the shovel and the machete he’d used under the house, went to sleep in his car parked at the house, then the next morning took the burned remains and the trunk’s blood-soaked carpet to the city’s north dump.

Hoffman asked why he’d said before he’d buried Adam near Mile Marker 126. He answered, he was just “fucking around with the police department.”

Six weeks later, FDLE did a cursory dig of Toole’s mother’s house backyard and found, about a foot beneath the surface, a pair of children’s light green shorts. Reve had said Adam was wearing green Adidas shorts the day he disappeared. FDLE then scheduled a full backyard excavation.

Operated by a city of Jacksonville public works employee, an eight-foot wide bucket dragged dirt two inches deep. They repeated until they got down six inches. Amidst a great deal of junk, they found a pelvis, two bones and a toddler-size yellow rubber beach sandal. Later, the Duval medical examiner determined all the bones were animal.

Another flip-flop occurred on January 6, 1984. In the Jacksonville homicide department, Hoffman passed Toole, who again wanted to talk. Without Buddy Terry in sight this time, Toole blurted out that he’d lied about killing Adam. Hoffman looked at his lieutenants Smith, Naylor, and Banks. They decided to put him back on audiotape.

After again advising Toole of his right to an attorney, which he declined, Hoffman asked why he was giving this statement.

“Ah, I didn’t, ah, I didn’t kill Adam Walsh.”

“You didn’t kill Adam Walsh?”

“No.”

Hoffman asked why he’d stuck to his initial story all this time.

“Ah, I was trying to hang Henry Lucas at first, but, ah, I found out he was in jail, and, ah, and so I changed it three or four different times, I did.”

After his first statement, “I didn’t know if I could change it back or not. That’s why I kept telling different stories about it, ‘cause I didn’t know if anybody would believe it or not. I didn’t know how to turn it back around, but I didn’t kill Adam Walsh.”

Toole added, he didn’t leave Jacksonville between July 25-30, 1981, the week after he got home from Virginia.

“Okay, is this your final statement referring to the Adam Walsh case?”

“Yeah.”

“And is this statement the complete truth?”

“The complete truth.”

“And you’re telling me you’re not responsible for the abduction and murder of Adam Walsh?”

“No, I ain’t.”

Returning to Hollywood, the detectives showed the green shorts and yellow beach sandal to the Walshes. They said they definitely weren’t Adam’s.

On May 18, 1984, for his 1982 fatal arson, the state of Florida sentenced Ottis Toole to death. But on June 10, 1986, while on Death Row, he got a re-sentencing hearing at which time the state declined to ask for a reinstatement of the death penalty. Instead, a judge sentenced him to life in prison, with a minimum non-parolable sentence of 25 years. The action got him into the prison system’s general population. In 1991 he pled guilty to four murders in 1980-81 in the Florida Panhandle, and for those he was given four consecutive life terms without parole. The same charges were made against Lucas but were dropped. He was on Death Row in Texas.

Although Toole confessed to perhaps hundreds of murders, those were the only ones that ever stuck.

**10**

## **“He’s Still Out There”**

IN OCTOBER 1988, WITHIN DAYS, the Broward Mall Sears store, Disney World, the *Orlando Sentinel*, the *Lakeland Ledger*, the sheriffs of Broward County and Holmes County (in the state’s panhandle), and John Walsh (by then the host of *America’s Most Wanted*) each got handwritten letters signed Ottis Toole, postmarked Starke, Fla., the town that encompassed the Florida state prison where he was held. Most recipients passed their letters on to Hollywood police.

Each message was individual, but they all carried the same theme. Sears received this:

Dear Sirs,

In 1981 I kidnapped, raped and murdered a little boy by name of Adam Walsh. I snatched that little boy right out of a Sears store down in Hollywood, Fla. I don’t recall the address exactly but you know the one I mean. When I got done raping the boy I cut off his head and disposed of his nude body.

I am now making a deal with the magazine to tell my story of how I snatched, raped and murdered this boy and some others. I like to snatch them from stores like Sears, in fact Sears is my favorite hunting ground for little boys.

I’m getting paid big money for my story and as you know I’ve never been charged for the murder so I get to keep it all.

One major part of my story is about how I hunt for little kids in stores, and of course everyone wants to know how I snatched the little punk out of SEAR’S

store in Hollywood. The cockteaser Adam Walsh was in that store when I snatched him away.

My friend suggested to me that Sears might pay me NOT to tell how I grabbed that kid Walsh and others out of Sears stores here and in other states. I can omit saying the NAME of the store, say only it was a dept. store. Like that. Of course it was a Sears store, everyone knows that already, but for some money I'm willing to downplay my activities hunting kids in Sears, and also I know Walsh could sue you for millions of dollars when I tell how easy it was to grab that sweet little boy's ass right out of the store. I'm a boy lover. I love to fuck them and then I kill them.

If you want to make a deal I'll be very agreeable for a fast check but since my story will be told soon you'd better rush a lawyer to see me. I'll talk to no polices, no State lawyers, only a Sears private lawyer. If you turn this letter over to the police I'll be talking about how easy it is to grab kids out of Sears for a long time. You know, everyone wants to hear how I get them and rape them and kill them and chop them up into little bits. I do my shopping for juicy little kiddies at SEARS. See what I mean?

We can talk about it.

See you soon. Bring money.

Sincerely,

(signed) Ottis E. Toole

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P.O. Box 747, Starke, Fla. 32091

The *Orlando Sentinel's* letter was a solicitation to sell the story, asking for "your best CASH offer promptly." But John Walsh's letter was the worst. It offered to tell him where Adam's bones were so he could have a good Christian burial, but only after Walsh paid him \$5,000 up front and \$45,000 after he found the remains. "Now you want his bones or not? Tell the cops and you don't get shit. Sincerely, Ottis E. Toole."

Days later, the FDLE received a letter in the same handwriting, only neater, a bit effeminate, and without grammatical errors and misspellings. It introduced the writer as Gerard Schaefer, an inmate in a cell next to Toole.

Schaefer wrote that Toole admitted to him the Walsh murder as well as others. His confession was detailed, including the blade he used to cut up Adam's body. He'd eaten some of the boy's flesh, but he could show police where his bones lay. They weren't at the city dump.

As a witness, Schaefer wanted a deal for himself, to be negotiated through his legal counsel. Plus, he wanted the reward for information leading to the conviction of the killer. Hollywood Police didn't bite. Instead, the Broward Sheriff's Office, after consulting with Hollywood, assigned two homicide detectives to speak with Schaefer and Toole.

Gerard John Schaefer was one of Florida's most notorious convicted killers—and since his imprisonment among its most annoying. In the early 1970s, he'd been a police officer in two Broward jurisdictions—and fired, twice.

Then the sheriff of Martin County, north of West Palm Beach, hired him as a deputy. On duty, to teach two girls about the dangers of hitchhiking, he'd driven them to the

woods, handcuffed them and tied them to a tree, then threatened them with bizarre sex acts.

For that Schaefer was arrested. While in jail, police found in a remote area the butchered remains of two teenage girls from Broward. One girl's father had written down the license plate of the car of the man his daughter had been seeing. It was Schaefer's.

Searching Schaefer's mother's house, police found links to four other murdered teenage girls, plus unpublished stories of grisly mutilation murders of women that seemed to match evidence found at the crime scenes. Schaefer was convicted of murder in the first two cases, but was sentenced to life because the state's death penalty had been reinstated only four days before the girls went missing. From prison Schaefer sold his stories in a mail-order book called *Killer Fiction*, maintaining that they were, indeed, fiction.

At their interview, Broward detectives Richard Scheff and Tony Fantigrassi saw that Schaefer tended to prompt Toole. Toole said he would testify in court that he'd killed and dismembered Adam with a bayonet and a black plastic-handled straight knife. Buddy Terry had the knife—he'd seized it from his car, he said, and the bayonet was hanging on a wall as part of a display in the home of his sister Vinette Syphurs, south of Jacksonville.

Adam's hacked remains, he said, were wherever he'd thrown them in a ten-mile stretch of canal alongside the turnpike near where he'd left his head.

The detectives found Syphurs, who'd moved. She said she did have an antique Japanese army bayonet on her wall, but it had never left her house. Had Ottis removed it for any period of time, she would have noticed. The next day she found it in storage and gave it to local police, who forwarded it to the Broward detectives. It eventually reached the Metro-Dade police crime lab, which had already processed Adam's skull. They couldn't find enough similarities to prove that the bayonet had been used on Adam.

"One can readily detect the ease with which Toole, a brain-damaged and troubled man, can be manipulated by others," Scheff wrote in his report. "Ottis Toole now appears to be under the influence of Gerard Schaefer, who may be using Toole for his own purposes."

Soon after, the warden at Starke placed Schaefer in solitary confinement for four months, then transferred him to another state prison.

On June 26, 1991, the retirement of Hollywood police Maj. J.B. Smith, a sergeant when Adam disappeared, prompted a *Miami Herald* story. Even 10 years later, leads were still arriving, he said. He reiterated past police statements they'd eliminated Toole as a suspect. "Ottis Toole is probably the most complete investigation we've ever done to prove that somebody didn't do it."

If the case was going to be solved, he said, it would be through a tip, perhaps from someone who had been afraid to come forward. "I don't know of any homicide that's this old that's going to be solved because of legwork."

A week and a half later, on a Friday, an hour before Jack Hoffman was to start two weeks off, a man named William Mistler called to say that when he saw the story about J.B. Smith, he'd become upset that Toole had never been charged with the murder—because he'd seen him take Adam from Sears.

At the time, he said, he didn't realize it was a kidnapping. He thought a family member was putting the child into his black-over-white four-door Cadillac. Adam hadn't

resisted. In the west-side parking lot near the garden shop, he took Adam from the sidewalk then drove off.

Mistler said he'd gone to Sears in Hollywood Mall that day to buy camping equipment. Returning to the store later with his wife, he remembered intercom pages for Adam Walsh. That afternoon he took his family on vacation for a few days. Back home, reading that the kidnapper had a blue van, he didn't call police because he never put it together that in fact he'd witnessed the abduction.

Nor did Mistler call police when Toole first made news because he figured he'd been arrested, and therefore police had other witnesses. From then on, until he read the story about J.B. Smith, he never realized Toole hadn't been charged.

Hoffman asked Mistler to call him his first day back from vacation. They next talked on July 29, two days after the publicized tenth anniversary of the murder. Most provocatively, Mistler said he got to Sears that day between 10 and 11—and that Toole's car was a rusty white Cadillac.

As he was driving the lot near the garden shop, Mistler described a woman driver creating gridlock in front of him. That was when Toole pulled up next to him and left his car, his door open.

They locked eyes for a moment. He was shabby, wearing a filthy T-shirt the color of a manila envelope, stained with what looked like spilled coffee. He was about six-foot, 130 pounds, with crossed eyes, uncombed reddish-brown hair and a beard.

He walked a few steps to the curb near a five-year-old boy standing near the store entrance. Mistler couldn't describe what he was wearing. Kneeling down to the child's eye level, they talked. Mistler didn't know whether to be concerned, because a woman and her teenage son were nearby, but then they left.

Mistler described Toole as an "old man... a grandfather-type guy." But in 1981, Toole was 34. Also, in 1983 he was noted as weighing 200, not a bony 130. Newspaper and TV stories had also shown his car, an old white Caddy.

Mistler said he didn't know whether to intervene. "What am I going to say?" "Where are you going with your grandson?" And if he says no, what am I going to pull out, my Sears credit card and tell him I'm an official Sears customer, I can arrest you?"

Mistler began to cry. "I made the wrong call, I didn't know. I kept looking for Adam to give me some sort of signal, any kind of a signal, he never..."

He said he watched Toole guide Adam into the front seat of the Cadillac. The back was crammed full of gardening tools. He'd wanted to jot down the license plate number, but he didn't have a pen. He thought he remembered it was a Florida tag.

He then totally forgot about the incident until he returned to Sears about three the same day. At a cash register, his wife saw a woman very upset with a man. His son recognized him: "That's Adam Walsh's dad." He knew Adam from the playground. They'd also heard Adam's name on the store intercom.

The Mistlers left on a camping trip that afternoon. Coming home, following the story in the newspaper, he didn't associate what he'd seen because police were looking for a blue van.

Hoffman asked Mistler if he would consent to be polygraphed. He would. The result was inconclusive, and at Hoffman's further suggestion, Mistler agreed to undergo hypnosis. That session took place on September 20 after a failed first attempt six weeks earlier, stopped because Mistler again had gotten emotionally upset.

Adding to his description of Toole, Mistler said he had a two-week-old beard, weird eyes, greenish teeth, dark pants and brown shoes.

Previously Mistler hadn't been able to describe the child's clothes. Under hypnosis, he said he was wearing a ball cap and white shoes.

Reve had said Adam was wearing a captain's hat and yellow rubber sandals. In his missing photo, he wore a baseball cap.

Nonetheless, based on Mistler's statements, Hoffman and his supervisors decided to re-interview Toole.

Still at the Starke maximum-security prison, Toole immediately denied he killed Adam, and admitted he'd lied to police. He said when he returned to Jacksonville from Virginia in July 1981, he never again left the city.

He'd lied about killing Adam, as well as so many others, because detectives would feed him, give him cigarettes, and take him out to their locations. He knew specifics about murders he hadn't done because Buddy Terry had fed him facts from other agencies' case files before they interviewed him.

Gerard Schaefer had done something similar. He approached Toole about writing a book about his and Lucas's confessions, to include the Walsh case. On the outside he had a woman who knew how to sell it, and if he'd sign over rights, she'd give him money monthly.

Toole said he told Schaefer he didn't kill Adam, but Schaefer told him, Confess to it anyway, it'll sell more books.

One last final time, Hoffman asked, did you murder Adam? No, said Toole, he didn't.

Hoffman wrote: "Based on the interview with Ottis Toole, it is this detective's opinion that Ottis Toole was being truthful and sincere about his noninvolvement in the Adam Walsh homicide."

In local media interviews, John Walsh also dismissed Toole as a suspect. To the *Miami Herald*, for its tenth anniversary story, he said, "My personal feeling is that [Adam's killer] is one of these predatory serial pedophiles, but I don't know. I hope he gets brought to justice one day because they just don't kill one kid and stop."

Asked by *South Florida* magazine in July 1992 who he thought killed Adam, Walsh replied:

In my heart, I think a child serial killer got him. A lot of people still think Ottis Elwood Toole did it. But he and Henry Lee Lucas confessed to a lot of murders they didn't do. It's a great ploy for convicts: They read about a murder and they're in solitary. They call the police, desperate to clear a murder, and they say, 'Fly me there and buy me a pizza,' and they get out of their cells for two days!

In an interview with the *Palm Beach Post* on November 6, 1994, he added, "I figure whoever killed Adam is probably still killing, if he's still out there."

IN AUGUST 1994, AFTER 13 YEARS ON THE CASE, police removed Jack Hoffman and reassigned it as a cold case to Det. Mark Smith, with instructions to review the entire file with a fresh eye.

After a full read, Smith came to some conclusions: he dismissed the theories of retribution against John Walsh as well as the Jimmy Campbell “love triangle.” Campbell, he wrote, “had neither the opportunity nor the motive to carry out this act.”

He didn’t dismiss Ottis Toole outright. Even if the killer wasn’t Toole, Smith thought, he might be “someone like him.”

One of the reasons to review the case was an advance in crime lab technology. In 1983-84, the FDLE’s Jacksonville crime lab had determined the presence of blood on the carpet of Toole’s car, as well as on a machete. Now DNA could be identified from bodily fluids, and samples could be matched.

In January 1995, Smith ordered retesting of all the physical evidence. First he called John Walsh to see if he’d approve, and he did. The carpet had been cut into seven samples. In the Hollywood Police evidence room, Smith found the machete and one piece of carpet—but it wasn’t bloody. Calling FDLE, an agent involved in the original testing told him he’d returned the bloody samples to Buddy Terry in May 1984.

Smith then called Terry, who in a step toward retirement was now a bailiff at the Duval County Courthouse. He couldn’t remember getting the carpet samples back.

On his way to personally deliver the machete to the DNA lab in Greensboro, N.C., Smith stopped at the Jacksonville sheriff’s office and got permission to search their evidence room for the carpet samples. With Terry’s help, they looked—but didn’t find it. Later, Smith found an FDLE document proving they’d returned the samples to the Jacksonville sheriff’s office.

In March 1995, the DNA lab reported results on the machete: no detected DNA of human origin. The sample was either too old, or the previous tests had used up all the blood.

Smith tried to find the Cadillac itself. From motor vehicle records he found its last owner, Siree Safwat, who knew that Lucas and Toole had driven it. But Safwat had junked it sometime in the late ‘80s, in Jacksonville.

At the same time Smith was reviewing the case, Jay Grelen, a reporter from the *Mobile Press Register*, in Alabama, was also interested. His connection to the story was tenuous. In 1981 he’d copyedited stories about Adam’s disappearance for a Baton Rouge newspaper, then worked at the *Denver Post* in 1985 just after they’d published a Pulitzer Prize-winning series of stories exposing the burgeoning missing-children advocacy industry spurred on by John Walsh, who after Adam’s death had dedicated himself to lobbying Congress and state legislatures for new laws to deal with child abductions. The Walshes had created one such agency, the Adam Walsh Center, which later merged with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which Walsh had helped to obtain federal funding.

The *Post* stories said the groups had grossly overstated the number of children abducted and murdered, stirring a “national paranoia.” They traced it back to Walsh, who



they quoted testifying to Congress, “This country is littered with mutilated, decapitated, raped and strangled children.” Using statistics that the crusading group Child Find admitted to the newspaper were “pulled out of a hat,” Walsh and others had said that 50,000 American children a year were being taken by strangers and that up to half of them were being murdered. The FBI, however, stated that the actual number of child stranger abductions nationwide in 1984 was 67. Although there were huge numbers of police reports of missing children, they overwhelmingly concerned runaways. Non-custodial parents had taken the remainder.

Through their vociferousness, missing-children groups had changed parenting in America. At the reminder of what had happened to Adam and others, they’d scared parents into never letting their young children out of their sight or control in public areas or even playgrounds. Ubiquitous shrill school educational programs similarly frightened children to scream at, run away from, or otherwise reject the approaches of any stranger. In 1991, John Walsh seemed to apologize for the overstatements. He told the *Miami Herald*, “There were so many misconceptions and bad information. We thought there were tons of stranger-abducted kids. And there weren’t. I didn’t know about troubled runaways and custodial cases. What did I know? I was a broken-hearted father out there battling.”

One of the *Denver Post* reporters on the series later told Grelen he’d examined the facts of the Adam Walsh case but never wrote anything. He offered Grelen his old file, and Grelen was able to convince his Mobile editors to let him spend months on the story, although there was no local angle. In May 1995, Grelen wrote that he thought police would be happy, and John Walsh grateful, for a newspaper’s extended investigation, and that they would cooperate with him.

“I was wrong on all counts,” he wrote. The Walshes refused to speak to him, despite repeated attempts to contact them. He even went to Washington for a taping of *America’s Most Wanted* and still got nowhere. Nor would Hollywood police let him see the case file. A week before his stories were published, the *Press Register* sued the police in a Broward County court citing Florida’s public records law. It read that police had to allow public inspection of all their case reports and work product, exempting only those in active investigation “with a reasonable, good faith anticipation of securing an arrest or prosecution in the foreseeable future.”

After 14 years, that did not describe the Adam Walsh case, argued the *Press Register*. Quickly, the *Sun-Sentinel* and *Palm Beach Post* joined the suit. They suggested that a press examination of the files might stimulate new leads.

Grelen wrote that his pursuit became clear to him the night he researched old newspaper stories on microfilm in the Broward County main library. When a photograph of Adam’s eyes met his, “I connected with a person, a real little boy who died an unimaginably horrible death... That night, Adam’s eyes seemed to ask for help.”

But because he couldn’t read what was in the case file, Grelen mostly rewrote what had already been reported. Aside from the newspaper archives, his best source seemed to be the attorneys who had defended Sears and Hollywood Mall, who had seen the case file. Much of his writing was critical of the Walshes, including that in 1981, investigating their background to consider possible revenge theories, police had heard rumors which they couldn’t confirm.

The attorneys shared with him a police report that the local press had not previously reported. Three days after Adam's disappearance, Michael Monahan, then 20, the son of Walsh's business mentor John Monahan as well as a close friend of Jimmy Campbell, had been accused of (although never charged with) aggravated assault on a 19-year-old at a skateboard park about 10 miles north of Hollywood. The victim thought he'd recognized his unique skateboard, recently stolen, in Monahan's possession. They'd tussled over the board, the victim wrested it away, then he ran into the skateboard shop and locked the door behind him. Enraged, Monahan broke down the door with a machete blade, waved it within inches of the victim's head, took back the skateboard and threatened everyone else in the shop.

Hollywood police had made the possible association between Adam and the machete. They gave it to the Broward Medical Examiner. On testing, the connection was inconclusive. After that, police dropped Monahan as a suspect. In the years since, however, Monahan had been convicted in federal court with co-defendants for extortion over a Mafia-style loan. Days before his trial was to begin, in Tampa, the victim had disappeared and was found in a drainage ditch, shot five times in the chest. Murder charges were never brought.

John Monahan similarly refused Grelen's interview requests. He told Grelen, "Neither you nor the police are going to find the killer" of Adam.

But the *Press Register's* public records suit forced the police's hand. In June, in court, they argued for keeping the case file closed because they were still actively investigating it. They said Mark Smith, in his six months of review, had identified a new suspect although they didn't name him, and added that John Walsh also opposed disclosing the file. The judge ruled for the police but left open the door for the newspapers to later renew their suit.

Who was the suspect? Hollywood police attorney Joel Cantor said they now believed more than one person was responsible for the murder. One suspect was from very early on, the other had been mentioned in the past but never interviewed. After that interview, he said to reporters outside court, "We can bring [the investigation] to fruition in the near future." He seemed to be referring to Campbell and Michael Monahan. In his 1983 deposition, Campbell had admitted that after leaving the Walsh home, when he'd spent a few nights at the apartment of Michael's brother John Monahan, Jr., Michael had slept there at least one night.

But later in the day Hollywood's own press spokesman contradicted its attorney, apologizing for any "misinterpretation that there are exciting new revelations or breaking news in this homicide investigation." John Walsh told the press something different still, "There is a suspect, [and] the suspect is a stranger."

The new suspect was Michael Monahan, said Grelen, interviewed days later by the *Miami Herald*. It was ironic, he thought, that John Walsh had made a television career from publicizing unsolved crimes, but he opposed letting the press see police details from his son's case.

Michael Monahan was then free but on federal probation. When he saw a newspaper story connecting him to a criminal investigation, he called his probation officer, as required. The probation officer called Mark Smith, who scheduled him for an interview the next day. Smith wrote in his report that it was Grelen's theory that Monahan killed Adam as a favor to Jimmy Campbell. For himself, Smith discounted it in the absence of

other evidence or more specific motive. A machete swing at someone over a disputed skateboard did not by itself indicate a propensity to murder. Besides, Smith wrote, the machete blade had previously tested negative against Adam's remains. (Grelen had written it tested inconclusively.) Monahan was then a landscaper, which explained his possession of it.

To the *Sun-Sentinel*, John Walsh seemed protective of his friends. He said the police had told him Monahan's upcoming interview was "just routine. They wanted to make it clear that Michael Monahan has never been a suspect nor is he a suspect right now. The focus is still on a stranger. They can't tell me who, or any of the details, because they don't want me or the media to compromise the investigation."

At his interview, Monahan offered Smith little, excusing his poor memory by saying, "You know, I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed." He remembered little about the skateboard incident, and little more about the day Adam disappeared besides that he was driving with his girlfriend in her car when they heard the news on the radio. He said they drove to Hollywood Mall and found one of John Walsh's friends, who suggested they hand out "missing" fliers. Maybe that was the day after it had happened, he rationalized. He said Campbell was his best friend, and doubted that Jimmy had anything to do with the murder.

Two days later, Smith spoke to Monahan's girlfriend at the time, Chris Fehlhaber, now married and named McGuire. She remembered the radio news of the disappearance and helping search, but also wasn't sure if they'd heard it the same day it happened. Although she'd recognized Monahan's violent streak and knew he'd gotten in trouble with the police—she didn't know about the skateboard incident—she didn't think he could ever abduct or hurt a child, much less Adam.

To a *Herald* reporter, John Monahan blew up at Grelen for suggesting Michael may have murdered Adam:

"It's my son, and I don't think he's capable of doing anything like that. He may be the suspect in the mind of this renegade reporter who's in this thing for personal gain."

On June 30, Hollywood Police Chief Richard Witt wrote the *Herald* that Michael Monahan had been ruled out as a suspect. Their recent follow-up interview with him "confirmed that he did not have the opportunity to abduct or murder Adam Walsh. This has been independently supported by other witnesses."

## **12**

### **The Case File Opens**

IN SEPTEMBER 1995, the *Mobile Press Register*, *Palm Beach Post*, *Sun-Sentinel*, and later *The Miami Herald* re-filed their suit to open the Walsh case file, just three months after Broward Circuit Judge Leroy Moe had ruled they could do so. In response, Hollywood Police attorney Joel Cantor told the judge the department still had "some extremely major issues" remaining to investigate.

In October, Judge Moe this time handed police a deadline: six months. Unless by then prosecutors could bring the case to a grand jury, he'd open the file.

John Walsh told the Associated Press that as long as the police investigation wasn't hampered, he wouldn't oppose the opening of the files.

As the February 16, 1996, deadline approached, Hollywood Police kept in touch with Walsh, but gradually a breach emerged. On January 23, Walsh's attorney told the press "impressive developments" had recently occurred in the case. But a police spokesman responded, "I think the meaning of 'impressive developments' is open to interpretation."

By February 7 the rift was out in the open. To *The Miami Herald*, Chief Richard Witt criticized the original case detectives for becoming too close to the Walshes and their friends. They shouldn't have let them into the detective bureau to hear information or answer tip hotlines. One of those answering phones was Jimmy Campbell. "They were involved in every stage of the investigation. That is just not professional. It creates a distraction. Police officers are supposed to be like scientists. You need to leave your emotion outside the ring of your pursuit. You're supposed to be objective." That didn't mean to say he suspected the Walshes in the murder, he added.

On *CBS This Morning*, John Walsh responded in a blast:

"The chief of police in Hollywood, Florida gave up on the case. This is heartbreaking." Walsh added he strongly believed that Ottis Toole might have killed Adam, but the coming publicity from the release of the files would prevent his prosecution. That contradicted what he'd said in past years about Toole, as well as the release of the files.

Even blunter in his criticism of Witt for not charging Toole was *America's Most Wanted* executive producer Lance Heflin: "It was a great opportunity, and he bungled it. [Witt] may well be the poster boy for shoddy law enforcement."

In a February 11 letter to the *Miami Herald*, Walsh insisted "the Hollywood Police Department has made it unequivocally clear that the murder of our son resulted from a stranger abduction." He also said he'd never profiled Adam's murder on his show because he'd been asked not to.

The stage moved to the Broward state attorney's office, where Walsh hoped for a more sympathetic ear. After Walsh met with Chief Assistant State Attorney Ralph Ray, the office filed a last-minute emergency motion to block the files' release. "In reviewing the file we noticed things that, in our opinion, should still be done," said Ray.

On their editorial pages, the newspaper plaintiffs cried foul against both the state attorney and Walsh. *The Miami Herald* noted that *America's Most Wanted* "tries to solve old cases by shedding new, public light on them." The *Sun-Sentinel* called Walsh's opposition "curious."

The Walshes entered their own motion. In an affidavit, they said Chief Witt told them on January 16 he planned to publicly identify Adam's killer at the time the file was to be released.

Witt denied that claim, however. At that meeting, he said, "They presented things that I thought were nonsensical. I think they're focusing on a statement I made that they took out of context. The new findings presented to the Walshes in January were determined by them to be valueless.

"John Walsh is looking for some kind of unequivocal statement that says neither he nor his wife had any part in the death of their son. I don't know why they want that. But they are emotionally upset by certain members of the media pursuing a poor man's Oliver Stone-style plot."

The *Sun-Sentinel* reported that police had just re-interviewed Ottis Toole. They had, in December 1995. As he had the previous June, Toole again maintained no involvement. Witt confirmed Toole was still a suspect, “but there are other places we are looking.” The *Herald* quoted Witt saying there was at least one other person besides Toole “who needs to be closely pursued.” He wouldn’t name names.

Witt’s administrative assistant Paul Dungan told the *Herald*, “This case is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. Right now, there’s a lot of missing pieces. Some of those pieces will never be found. But sometimes, like with a jigsaw puzzle, even with pieces missing you can tell what the picture is.”

On February 16, Judge Moe ruled, open the files. In open court, Moe said no one had proved to him that an arrest or grand jury presentation was imminent, or that his action would jeopardize any future arrest or prosecution.

In the courtroom, Reve Walsh asked to speak but the judge denied her. Outside the courtroom, she had no comment for the press. The Walshes made a written statement instead: “We are gravely wounded and bitterly disappointed that a judge in Florida has decided that a newspaper’s demand to see the police file in our son’s case is more important than finding his killer.

“Now, details previously known only to the police and the killer will be known to all—making it almost impossible to find out who the real murderer is.”

By telephone from New Orleans, where he was shooting a segment of *America’s Most Wanted*, Walsh told the Associated Press:

“I’m absolutely heartbroken. My concern is we may never, ever get a successful prosecution of this case. I think it’s a travesty.” He also told the *Sun-Sentinel*, “I’ve had investigators tell me that this is the most active this case has been in fourteen years and now a chance to prosecute someone has been taken away. Everybody wants to cover their political asses.”

Ever harsher was George Terwilliger, the Walshes’ attorney: “What you saw in court today was a contest between justice for a six-year-old boy who was brutally murdered and the insatiable appetite of the media for these files. Justice lost. The only thing that releasing the files might reveal is that Hollywood police are the biggest bunch of bungling idiots since the Keystone Kops. The Hollywood Police Department gave up on a notorious homicide investigation because they were running scared from a bunch of newspapers.”

Walsh told the *Sun-Sentinel*, “I don’t fear anything in those files. I don’t care what’s in those files as it relates to my family.”

POLICE FILES ON ADAM’S DISAPPEARANCE  
GIVE SUSPECTS, LEADS, BUT NO CONCLUSION

—*Sun-Sentinel*

ADAM WALSH FILES POINT TO 1 MAN

—*Palm Beach Post*

As reporters started reading the microfilmed file’s 6,700 pages, their first problem was perspective. Case details, many previously reported, others not, failed to answer the big picture question: Was the solution to the murder somewhere in the file, overlooked?

If it was, reporters quickly realized, it was well buried.

Looking for mere police errors was easier. From the first day, the top story was the lost bloody carpet samples from Ottis Toole's white Cadillac. It took days for reporters to plow through everything. Front-page and lead-newscast stories of excitement faded to disappointment.

Three months after the release of the case file, Fox TV canceled *America's Most Wanted*, after nine seasons and more than 400 criminals apprehended with the help of their tips. The network claimed ratings had sank; Walsh said they'd risen to its highest in four years. Regardless, the "economics" of the show "weren't working," they told him.

On September 21, as its final segment, they would do the story that had always been on everyone's mind, but they'd never broached—Adam Walsh.

"This was a very difficult thing to do. Nobody wanted to push John to do this," producer Lance Heflin told the *Miami Herald*.

The segment's production and narration would be independent of the show. The reporter was John Turchin, a personal friend of Walsh's who worked for WSVN-TV, the Fox affiliate in Miami.

Turchin told the dramatic story about the abduction, the Walshes' grief, that Adam's head was found two weeks later, then said that Hollywood police had announced Ottis Toole's confession two years later, although it never led to his arrest.

"But is Toole really the killer? Despite a massive investigation, some say the Hollywood police so badly handled the case and the evidence that to this day, we still can't answer that question."

Turchin interviewed Chief Witt: "The city of Hollywood and its police department lacked the experience to conduct an investigation of this magnitude."

It was surprising to see Witt on the show, considering what Heflin had said about him. The month after the file was opened, the city of Hollywood had fired him over a hiring scandal, and he'd since been installed as chief for Golden Beach, a tiny, wealthy nearby Dade County municipality.

Turchin described that Reve took Adam to Sears and left him for a few minutes to play video games. "Minutes later, Reve returns. Adam is nowhere to be found.

"Where did he go, and why wasn't he where his mother left him? The truth is this: a security guard threw him out of the store."

Then Turchin interviewed the security guard, Kathryn Shaffer, who'd never before given a press interview:

For fifteen years of my life, a day has not gone by that I don't think of Adam... I approached him and said, look, this isn't allowed here, are your parents in the store? And the little black boys told me no. So I pointed to the end of the hall, and I said you need to leave, exit these doors.

Then I asked the two little white boys, who I assumed were together, and I said, are your parents here? And the older boy told me no. And so, I assumed they were together, and I sent them both out.

It was agonizing to see Shaffer consider herself partly responsible for Adam's death. But even more agonizing was Turchin's unambiguous conclusion. He didn't report that in August 1981 she'd told Jack Hoffman she was sure she *hadn't* ejected Adam. In 1995 Mark Smith had re-interviewed her, and although she'd changed her mind she still was only "85%" certain she'd sent out Adam. Turchin also didn't mention that the time of the incident didn't seem to match when Reve said she left Adam at the game.

Next was William Mistler, who'd told police he saw Toole put Adam in his white Cadillac at Sears. *America's Most Wanted* was famous for dramatizing re-creations of crimes, which gave witnesses' versions the feel of fact. Now they showed what Mistler was describing:

When he gets to the front of his car, his head stops and he locks eyes with me. At that time, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I can't take my eyes off him, because this is the weirdest-looking guy I've ever seen.

He walked over to the curb, got down like a catcher would, and got eye-to-eye with Adam, and their faces were maybe two-and-a-half feet apart. And then they got to where the open [car] door was, and Adam just stood there, and Ottis took him from behind and just like picked him up where his feet would be on the seat, and then Adam walked across the seat.

And I didn't really think anything wrong with that because I did that with my kid dozens of times, you know.

He wasn't afraid of him, and I was looking for the fear in his eyes. I was looking for crying, but nothing, he was a perfect gentleman. It was just like he was walking with Grandpa, or something.

Turchin explained Mistler's confusion, that police had said that Adam's abductor had used a blue van, not a white Cadillac. "But two years later, when he saw Ottis Toole's picture on the tube, he called the cops."

**MISTLER:** I jumped up out of bed instantly there, and I ran over to the TV, but before my feet touched the ground, I knew who this guy was.

**TURCHIN:** It was the guy you saw.

**MISTLER:** It was the guy in the white Cadillac. He wasn't in a blue van.

**TURCHIN:** Mistler was later hypnotized, and given a polygraph exam, which he passed.

Turchin then asked Mark Smith, "Do you have any reason to believe that [Mistler] lied to you?"

"No," said Smith.

There were a number of facts that were wrong, however.

First, Mistler did not go to police in 1983, as Turchin reported. He waited until 1991. Second, Mistler's polygraph was inconclusive. Also, when Mistler said, "It was just like he was walking with Grandpa, or something," that differed from what he'd told Hoffman: the man actually looked like a "grandfather-type guy," or, an "old man." In 1981 Toole

was 34. Also, Mistler had described a man 70 pounds lighter than Toole's weight. But the most glaring problem Turchin left out from Mistler's narrative was time. He told Hoffman he'd arrived at Sears that day between 10-11 A.M.—up to two hours earlier than when Reve was likely at the lamp counter.

“Detectives say Ottis Toole first became a suspect in October 1983 when he began bragging of the murder of Adam Walsh to cellmates.”

That was also wrong. Toole's first mention of the case was to a Brevard County sheriff, and Toole didn't then name Adam.

Introducing the tale of the missing blood evidence, Turchin said around 1983 crime labs had showed there was blood on the Cadillac's carpet. That was true, but Turchin didn't say that the blood was never proven to be human.

“But what's considered by many to be the most crucial evidence in the case was sold to a junkyard. Simply put, police let a 4,200-pound piece of evidence slip through their fingers. How could this happen?”

In fact, after the car had been fully tested in 1983, it was properly returned to its owners. The real problem was the lost carpet. With a lack of physical evidence, Turchin reported, all that remained was Mistler's memory and Toole's confessions—which had to be regarded in the light of his recantations.

However, “there are investigators who believe Ottis Toole is guilty of murdering Adam Walsh, and others who believe he has been involved in so much, his story is a compilation of many crimes.”

Turchin left unmentioned that other detectives thought Toole had invented almost everything he'd ever admitted to.

Then Turchin reported the most surprising statement of the entire segment:

“All agree, however, that Ottis Toole is still the prime suspect.”

Mark Smith: “I think it's safe to say Ottis is a strong suspect.”

In summary, the segment led viewers to believe that police had Toole's confessions to investigators and inmates, and a security guard who'd ejected Adam from Sears to a place where Mistler saw Toole put him in his white Cadillac. But absent the ability to retest the lost blood evidence, the case could not come to court.

Richard Witt: “Cases get solved. Sooner or later, they get solved. Prosecution may be an entirely different matter.”

Turchin asked viewers, if they knew any facts at all about the case, to call the show's hotline, 1-800-CRIME-TV.

**KATHRYN SHAFFER:** My life is changed. I'm now a trauma nurse, which I think stems from remorse or some deep-seated guilt inside of me, saying that I want to help preserve life instead of help destroy life.

**TURCHIN:** Certainly the case of Adam Walsh is not unique, but if there was ever a face that launched a thousand ships in the battle for children's rights in America, it was the face of Adam Walsh. Ever since they lost their son, John and Reve Walsh have been fighting a war with the only weapon they have—the name, the sweet face, the inspiration, and the brief life of their murdered child,



to prevent other parents from joining this very select, very devastated group of survivors.

The segment ended with recently discovered old home movies of Adam playing organized T-ball. He mugged for the camera, wearing the same shirt as in his famous “missing” picture. Across his chest was the name of his team’s sponsor:

*Campbell Sailing Rentals.*

## **September 24**

Ottis Toole is dead, reported WSVN-TV in Miami, John Turchin’s station. “This means the murder might never, ever be solved,” said anchor Rick Sanchez.

Turchin reported the story: “Now we may never know if Ottis Toole was Adam’s killer. It is devastating news for Adam’s father.”

He taped John Walsh on the phone: “You know, this is just another setback. I mean, this is just another heartbreak. You know what this means for my family, now John? No closure. No closure. I mean, maybe, maybe, if Ottis Toole did it, they could convict Ottis Toole. But the door is slammed on the ability of Ottis Toole to tell someone—non-law enforcement personnel—that he killed Adam.”

Turchin asked Mark Smith what effect Toole’s death would have on the case. “The easiest thing right now would be for us to fold up the tent and go home. That wouldn’t be fair. That wouldn’t be fair to the family, and it wouldn’t be fair to the criminal justice system.

“(Maybe) somebody has been holding back all these years, maybe for fear of Ottis Toole, or not wanting to put him in the electric chair, whatever. Maybe now that person or persons may come forward. In the negative, we didn’t get another shot at him, to speak with him.”

Turchin: “But Ottis Toole did speak to John Walsh, through the mail. In 1988, Toole mailed Walsh a letter, demanding \$50,000. In return, he would tell Walsh where Adam’s remains were buried.”

On screen, Turchin showed a letter in Gerard John Schaefer’s neat handwriting. Turchin didn’t mention Schaefer.

Then, John Walsh deemed the case solved. Ottis Toole murdered his son:

“At least, Adam’s killer and a child killer is not on the streets. He’s in another place. I truly believe that you’re held accountable for your actions. I truly believe that Ottis Toole will get his in the next life.”

Turchin said that Toole had died on September 15, of cirrhosis of the liver. After waiting four days for someone to claim his body, the state decided to bury him in a prisoners’ cemetery.

Sanchez had one more bit of news: an hour earlier, Fox TV had reinstated *America’s Most Wanted* on its schedule.

Next morning, the *Miami Herald* reported that Fox did so after getting “bombarded” with 7,000 letters from fans, law enforcement agencies, and 37 state governors.

Peter Roth, the new president of Fox entertainment, called the public outpouring “enormous.” “Never before has a TV program made a such a clear and significant impact on people’s lives. Quite simply people have told us that this program made them feel safer.”

That evening, WSVN rebroadcast excerpts of a 1984 interview its reporter Patrick Fraser had done with Toole.

“That Adam Walsh case isn’t, it ain’t true. I didn’t do that case.” He explained how he knew so many details about Adam’s murder, even though he didn’t do it:

You can go the whole way through a whole case and tell them you don’t know nothing about it, and [you wait five or ten minutes and] you can double-back, and you pick up different little details in it, like beer cans, cigarette packs, trash by the side of the road, or something like that, the way the road is, or something like that. There ain’t no way you can miss on it after you’re done looking at all the pictures.

They don’t pay attention to that, ‘cause they just want to clear the case, and they don’t care how they clear it, as long as they clear it.

## 13

### First Person

I HADN’T BEEN HERE WHEN THE MURDER HAPPENED. In 1978 and 1979 I was a reporter for the *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*, even sometimes assigned the police beat, but I’d left the area in 1980 and didn’t return until late ’83. What siren-songed me to it in 1996 was its open case file. I’d already written three true crime books which had heavily depended on public records for their start, but when I’d gotten to them one case already had been resolved by arrests, another by convictions (both cases had been resolved possibly incorrectly or inadequately, as it turned out), and a third was awaiting trial but records had already been disclosed to defense attorneys in the legal discovery process. A long-unsolved murder with the same investigative detail available was a rare bird indeed. And it was in my backyard.

To begin, I bummed a case file copy from a friend at a local TV station and read it on public library microfilm readers. Then I found and copied every printed news story I could. Digital storage of local newspapers had not yet begun in 1981. I had to hand search in library microfilm *The Miami Herald* up to 1983, the *Sun-Sentinel* to 1986, and everything in the *Sun-Tattler*. I then weaved it all together with the police chronology.

The first detective I spoke to was someone I respected from Metro-Dade Police who I’d dealt with on a past story, who asked for anonymity. He’d met Toole, whom he said was creepy: “He scared even me.” He’d listened to both Toole and Lucas confess about two dozen murders they said they’d committed in Dade. Toole’s information didn’t match any open cases. But although he knew that Lucas’s confessions elsewhere had become as discredited as Toole’s, they did match two of his cases.

Police in Texas holding Lucas sent him information that Lucas had described killing two girls near the Everglades in 1979 or 1980. He was specific even to how the girls were left tied, and the Indian-type jewelry found on their bodies. When he showed Lucas a photo lineup of women, he picked out the two victims. A Dade grand jury indicted him for the crime, but since he was on Texas’s Death Row, no one in Florida expected a prosecution.

When Jack Hoffman first arrived in Jacksonville to see Toole, the Metro detective was already there. The two detectives had previously worked together in Dade, and in Jacksonville they went out for beers. Days later, when Hollywood Police announced that Toole had killed Adam, the Metro detective was surprised. He called Hoffman, who was “beside himself.” Hoffman told him, “Man, it was all politics. I had no part of that.”

By chance, my next step turned up a new development in the cold case. When Mark Smith had reopened the case file he’d gotten help from Phil Mundy, an investigator from the Broward State Attorney’s office. I managed an introduction to him, but he didn’t say much.

Days later, I got a call from Christina Spudeas, a friend who was a defense attorney and had been a Broward prosecutor. She’d just heard from her former secretary, Doreen, whose dad was Phil Mundy. When he mentioned meeting a writer, she recognized my name. Doreen’s married name was different so I’d never made the association. Doreen said her father had taken the investigator’s job after he retired as a detective for the Fort Lauderdale police, but instead he’d been working as hard as ever, traveling most of the last two weeks. Combing the file, he’d found a new witness, an older woman who’d lived near the Walshes and knew them to say hello.

She’d been to Sears that day and saw Adam at the video games behind a bunch of children. She also saw a man talking to him. Then she went to the lamp department, saw Reve, and told her she’d just seen Adam.

Hearing later in the day that Adam was missing, she became upset and wanted to tell police, but her husband pooh-poohed it. She never did go.

But two years later when police announced they had Toole, she saw his mug on TV news and recognized him as the man she saw talking to Adam. Then she did tell Hollywood police. She said they took her name and phone number but never called back.

After finding her name and phone number in the file, Mundy was the first law enforcement person to talk to her. He said she described Adam accurately, and said the man had a weird grin. Around the same time the Metro-Dade detective was investigating Toole’s other confessions, Phil also had interviewed Toole and remembered his odd smile. Of all the people he’d ever met working homicides, Toole was the only person who’d truly scared him.

Before Toole died, she said, Phil was ready to ask the state attorney to indict Toole for killing Adam. He felt he had absolute proof Toole was in Broward on the day of the abduction, and was 100% convinced he was guilty.

It took a month to arrange a meeting with the grizzled Phil Mundy. He was 57, with wavy-thick blonde hair combed back. Behind gold-framed eyeglasses were the sharp blue eyes of a younger man. He looked like he’d been a boxer, and wasn’t afraid of holding his ground. But his days of chasing suspects on foot were clearly past.

He still wouldn’t tell me much beyond that the case was coming to the “end of the line” in a few months. That’s when he would present his conclusions to Chief Assistant State Attorney Ralph Ray and tell him, “If you disagree, find another detective.”

Then he’d ask Ray for permission to talk with me.

But once he laid the ground rules, Mundy jumped the gun a bit. Three weeks earlier Henry Lee Lucas had told the press Toole had showed him Adam’s body, so I asked Mundy’s opinion. “Lucas is full of shit,” he said. Nor did he need to meet with him to

know. Lucas doesn't know where the body is, he said, and only wants a trip to Florida, a chance to escape, and a delay in his death penalty.

Five weeks later, Mundy relented and told me, the target is Toole. But they hadn't found the body.

When Toole died, John Walsh had railed about Hollywood's failure to offer him a deathbed confession. Mundy said it didn't happen because the last time Mark Smith interviewed him, a few months before he died, "he wasn't really with the program."

As if Toole had ever been with the program. Toole had played games with the police from day one, Mundy said, so he saw no reason to think he wouldn't also have at the end. "The guy gave different accounts—you can toss a coin to which you believe."

Still, Mundy was furious when he heard Toole had died. Had he stayed alive, he thought he had enough to win a grand jury indictment, although he admitted the case had a chance of losing at trial. "State attorneys love when you bring them an ironclad case—but the reality is you can't do that all the time.

"I think you have to ask yourself, is this case going to get any better in the foreseeable future? Witnesses are going to forget, die."

In the Broward courthouse office of Brian Cavanagh, a homicide prosecutor I'd also written about previously, I saw on the phone a man who had the intense look of a detective. It took him an unusual couple of minutes to introduce us. When he did, he said later my eyes lit up. It was Mark Smith.

Months earlier, in a *Sun-Sentinel* interview, Smith had refused to discuss the case. But in comfortable surroundings, he talked with me freely. Later, outside the courtroom while he was waiting to testify, I compared notes with him and realized we thought alike on a number of observations.

On Monahan, we agreed no physical evidence connected him, and the machete incident was a stretch. On Campbell he said there were still some in the police department who thought he did it. Smith wasn't among them. He thought they should have embraced Campbell rather than accused him.

Ever since I'd heard Phil Mundy had evidence that Toole had been in Broward on the day Adam went missing, I'd been trying to guess what it was. Had he found a parking ticket for Toole's car? Hoffman's reports in 1983-84 showed he'd searched municipal and county ticket records in both Dade and Broward. However, he never wrote that he finished the project.

No, they didn't have a parking ticket, Smith said. Contrary to Mundy's assertion, he led me to believe they had no new ideas where Toole had been those six missing days. In fact, Smith disagreed with Mundy that Toole was guilty—or at least that there was enough evidence to have gone to a grand jury. Instead, Smith concurred with me that Toole's interview transcripts showed that the detectives had prompted all his accurate statements of facts. Also, Smith knew of no other evidence that Toole took or killed children.

Phil Mundy's estimate of two months to conclude his research turned into a year. It still wasn't finished when he told me that John Walsh, with a co-author, had written his own book about the case, and that Ralph Ray had consulted with them. The book, *Tears of Rage*, was announced for release later in the month, September 1997, and I wanted to know what Ray had told them.

On that basis, Ray granted me his time, with Mundy present. Ray had a southern accent—increasingly rare in these parts—and made easy-paced conversation—equally rare, and equally welcome. He was in his 50s, with a receding hairline.

Like Mundy, Ray favored Toole as the prime suspect, but since he didn't think the case was complete, he didn't want to open the new investigative records. He denied offering much new information to Walsh because "it would run the risk of prejudicing what we're doing."

"If we decide that Toole did the crime, we'll still never know—there will never be a jury deliberation because he's dead."

Again I found myself debating. When I suggested that Toole's statements on tape seemed prompted, he answered, "That is one argument—a damaging argument in a criminal trial. Though I'm not saying that's true."

When Ray said they put more credibility in the statements Toole made until the police, in their van, took him from Sears, I mentioned that in Toole's first statement he apparently said Adam was wearing mittens. Ray conceded that detectives around the country had been over-anxious to solve other crimes by letting Toole take credit for them.

Again I asked what evidence they had that Toole was here at the right time. Ray said they had none—"not yet"; what they had was "in the nature of corroboration" that Toole was familiar with Broward County. He would only describe that evidence as "little subtleties that come out; by themselves, they may not mean anything. In the general picture, they do have significance."

"We ask ourselves, Why would a guy coming from Miami stop at Hollywood Boulevard and go to Sears—20 miles north, when he's going home to Jacksonville?"

"We have no crystal ball, there's a lot of questions."

He also seemed to criticize the original lead detectives, saying that had things been done "that should have been done, that were not done, our results might be corroboration."

What did he think of William Mistler as a witness?

"I'd like to say, 'That's it.' But we can't."

I asked if they'd been ready to indict Toole when he died. He said no.

"I don't know if we've exhausted everything. But we've done everything we can think of. We may never know for sure."

He was still receptive toward possibilities other than Toole. "I'll tell you what—you never know when a witness comes out of the woodwork."

"Problem is, you've got to make a decision on Ottis Toole first—either include him or exclude him. Anybody else has a built-in defense. That's why we took the tack we took. Either corroborate the things he said, or dispose of them.

"There's more questions than answers, unfortunately."

In the case file there was a document apparently missing. Reve Walsh had been polygraphed at the State Attorney's office in 1981 by an investigator named Carl Lord, but the narrative of her interview were absent. I'd asked Mundy to look, but he'd answered he couldn't find it. Lord was long since retired and living out of state, so Mundy suggested I call him.

Relaxing as soon as I mentioned Mundy's name, Lord volunteered information of which I'd had no clue: the Fort Pierce medical examiner, to whom the severed head was

first brought, found evidence of sperm in a cavity in the head. He couldn't remember exactly where, but it wasn't necessarily in the mouth—it possibly might have been in the neck area. That information had never been released, he said.

I was shocked. Apparently Lord thought the opening of the file closed the case, so it wouldn't be a breach to disclose something like that.

"I still think it was Ottis Toole—or Michael Monahan," he said. In 1981, Monahan had refused to take a polygraph, he said—something else that wasn't in the case file. "We tried to get him in the worst way. He ran away from us.

"He had the opportunity and the inclination." His motive: "Trying to punish John (Walsh) and his father (John Monahan)."

"I knew John Monahan from the Hollywood Beach Hotel [across the beach highway A1A from the Diplomat]. I liked him. He had a lot of trouble with that kid."

What about Reve's varying timeline? "I think she was like foggy. She lost track of time. I don't think she ever knew, legitimately, her times that day."

Lord called Ottis Toole "a very viable suspect. He was a psycho, nutty as a fruitcake. He was really a loony. The two of them, Toole and Lucas, had the IQ of what, a blister?" But Toole was cunning, letting the cops feed him details. "That was his style, a game he was playing: Tell me what I did, and I'll tell you if I did it. That was his fun. I had a feeling he knew what he was doing."

"I think Toole was the model for Hannibal Lecter, in *Silence of the Lambs*. Except Toole wasn't intelligent. Toole looked through you. I don't have to tell you, eye contact is very important in an investigative interview. Guys who are lying to you look down so they think you can't tell.

"Toole had a glazed stare. He was scary. He was a screwball, I don't think he could have been polygraphed."

Carl Lord thought Jack Hoffman would speak to me, so invoking his name I left a message at Hollywood police. Hoffman was now a sergeant on road patrol, but he was willing to talk, and it wasn't hard to hear the hurt in his voice. In his opinion, I asked him, during his interviews had Toole ever volunteered anything original that wasn't prompted? No, he said.

How about off-tape, during pre-interviews? Again no.

When he learned Toole was dying, Hoffman said, he visited him, even before Mark Smith. Still hopeful Toole might finally admit the murder and provide the real facts instead Hoffman got one last denial.

I told him that Ralph Ray and Phil Mundy still considered Toole the prime suspect. Hoffman criticized them for thinking that, even in good conscience. Since 1984, he said, nothing new had been added to the case against him.

That was the moment I tried to drop in what I thought I wasn't supposed to know—that sperm had been found in Adam's head cavity. He stopped me short. "That's the first I ever heard of that," and as lead detective, he said he would have known. I told him my source—Carl Lord. Hoffman said he didn't know how Lord would have known that. He called it false information.

I moved on. He didn't think Mistler was credible. If he was, he agreed, the abduction had to have been around 10 A.M.

He'd long ago eliminated Monahan as a suspect because his time was accounted for. On the other hand, he'd never eliminated Campbell because his time was never accounted for, despite what the *Miami Herald* reporters found.

And as to the impending release of John Walsh's book, he said neither Walsh nor his co-author had ever asked to speak to him.

**14**

## John Walsh's Rage

IN *TEARS OF RAGE*, JOHN WALSH'S ARGUMENT—rant, in some places—was that Toole killed Adam and the Hollywood police blew the case. To make this case, he relied on many of the witnesses and statements that others had dismissed or discounted.

Who was right? Walsh took Toole at his inculcating words, ignoring his many problems. He didn't criticize Buddy Terry for supplying information. Hoffman was incompetent and predisposed not to find Toole guilty. The strongest witnesses for Toole were Mislter and the person Phil Mundy had rediscovered. But even more malignant than all the bumblers at Hollywood P.D. were the South Florida press—for invading his family's grieving space on the night Adam was confirmed dead, for their attitude over the years in trying to dig up dirt on them, and then their *coup de grace*, opening the case file.

During Toole's confession to a Denver area murder, Walsh wrote, "The Colorado detective's mind was completely blown. He knew full well the case that Toole was talking about. And every one of those details was true."

That detective, in Littleton, Colo., may have thought that at the time. Colorado indicted Toole for the murder, which occurred August 3, 1981, seven days after Adam's disappearance. But after Hollywood police discovered a Jacksonville police report dated the afternoon of August 1, 1981, documenting Howell Toole's assault on Ottis, Colorado dropped its charges.

Nor did Walsh think Buddy Terry had done anything wrong.

[Terry] had known Toole for nearly two decades now, and had never once seen him confess to a crime he didn't commit...

Mundy and Mark Smith both looked into the allegation that Buddy Terry had fed information to Toole in hopes of lining up a book deal. It was a serious charge, one that, if true, could shed doubt on the whole investigation.

What they found was that Buddy Terry was a good cop who, back in 1983, had basically been trying to help everyone out. Terry was the one who had led Hoffman and Hickman to Toole's white Cadillac. Terry was the one who had learned about Henry Lee Lucas's incarceration at the time of Adam's murder. It may have been fair to say that Buddy Terry had been a little overzealous. But it was clear that he had been wrongly accused, perhaps out of sheer jealousy on the part of other cops. There was not a shred of evidence to suggest that Buddy Terry had tainted the case.

Later, to me, Terry also denied giving Toole any case information from the Hollywood detectives. In sympathy with his position, it seemed the detectives had done

that themselves. I also asked him about book or movie rights. He denied wanting them, nor did he know how that allegation started.

(In 2008, Smith and Mundy's 1996 interview with Terry became a public record. Terry said that at Toole's suggestion they had signed what he described as a handwritten document for book and movie rights. However, he denied he ever had a real book deal. Mundy also interviewed John Nelson, Jacksonville undersheriff in 1983, who said he'd learned from a Dallas detective that Terry had already entered into an agreement with a Texas author to write the book. Nelson said Terry admitted to him his agreement with Toole but said he'd merely been "playing around" with Toole and denied anything improper. Nelson had Terry transferred out of the detective division.)

Walsh also omitted Toole's initial statement of the time of year when he said he'd kidnapped Adam, and particularly that he'd probably said the child was wearing mittens. After Toole guided Hollywood police onto Florida's Turnpike (or had police guided him?), he wrote Toole "suddenly" recognized the area around mile marker 126 as close to where he'd buried Adam. Yet Walsh didn't say that Hollywood police had already shown him a picture of mile marker 130.

Walsh offered a possible solution to the problem:

It never seemed to occur to the cops that the most maddening part about Toole's confessions—his inconsistencies and fuzzy recall—might actually have a reasonable explanation. Any normal person would certainly remember having committed a homicide. Factor in his heavy drinking and drugging, and it makes sense that he might not be able to remember exactly what he had done with the body of one victim out of the hundred or so killings that he had been a party to.

Of course, corroborating proof was slim on those admitted hundred or so killings that he had been a party to.

Walsh thought Mistler was a valuable witness but didn't mention his statement that he'd been at Sears in the 10 o'clock hour. Nor did Walsh write that Ralph Ray as well as Jack Hoffman had dismissed Mistler.

Then came the only real news in the book: specifics about Phil Mundy's rediscovered witness. Walsh called her Mary H. She was 76 when either he or his co-author had visited her earlier in the year in Central Florida. However, Walsh wouldn't print her full name, he said to keep her privacy intact from the media's intrusiveness.

She'd called *America's Most Wanted* after it aired its segment about Adam. She said in 1981 she was living in Hollywood, not far from the Walshes, and she knew Adam. On several occasions, another neighborhood little boy had pointed him out to her.

Around noon on the day Adam was lost, she'd gone to Sears to buy a lamp—"I had seen in the paper that they were having a lamp sale," she said. She'd bought one the Saturday before, and was returning to buy another. She still had the lamp in her living room.

Passing the computer games in the toy department, blocking the aisle in fact, she saw three kids playing and a younger child, about six, off to the side. She thought that boy was Adam. Talking to him in a low tone, holding his interest, was a man: "He didn't look like somebody that a little child would be talking to, or who would be working in the store." He was "sunburned, and he looked kind of shady." When he moved, to let her



pass, he grinned. “The one thing I noticed was that he had big round freckles across his face. And he had a big gap in his upper front teeth.” His hair was “shiny” and “laid real close to his head.” When she passed him, on the back of his head she saw a round bald spot. He wasn’t tall.

Although she was no longer certain what he wore, she mentioned a red shirt, blue pants with heavy stains from white paint or caulking, and dirty sandals. Even from a few feet away, he smelled terrible—like beer and onions.

As Mary H. passed, the child’s attention never left the man. The boy was pale, slim, had a thin face, and was neatly dressed in shorts, possibly blue, a long-billed cap that was a little big on him, and rubber beach shoes.

Leaving the toy department, Mary H. entered the lamp department, empty of customers except for a woman who seemed to be waiting for something. She was slim with light straight hair parted down the middle, probably in her 30s. After Mary H. shopped for lamps, finding none she liked, she again passed the toy department but this time everyone was gone, the game turned off.

Later that day, neighbors told her a little boy named Adam Walsh had been lost at Sears. “I said, well, I’m sure I saw him in the store. He was talking to somebody, but I didn’t know him.”

She said her husband had been away for a few weeks on vacation, so she was home by herself. Because the police seemed to have an idea of who’d taken the child, she figured others must have seen him as well. When her husband got home, they took a car trip to Washington, D.C. Returning via Florida’s Turnpike, they spotted a blue van. Conscious of the police alerts, her husband even tried to follow it.

When Adam’s head was reported found, she was scared: “I was afraid to go out. I didn’t know if the guys who had done it were caught or anything. I knew the guy had seen me, and I didn’t know that he didn’t live around here somewhere.”

She said at the time she wrote notes of what she’d seen—she did that sometimes because occasionally she has difficulty speaking to people. She showed them to her husband and wanted to give them to the police, but he said, “Why don’t you leave it alone? The policemen will do their job.” The notes are gone now, she said. When she left Hollywood, she threw out all her old notes.

But she said she never forgot the incident, or the man in the store. When she saw his photo on Walsh’s show, she said she reacted, “My God, you mean he’s still living? And they didn’t get him?” Not long after, she wrote Hollywood police a letter, which included an apology. When a policeman [apparently Mundy] interviewed her, she picked out Toole’s photo from a lineup.

Walsh wrote: “Mary knew she probably should have come forward sooner. But she didn’t know any detectives, and had never met any policemen. She is the kind of person who would never have had any reason to.”

Then Walsh added that Mary and her husband had tried to tell her story to police just after Adam’s head was found. They went to the Hollywood police station, “but there were so many people over there. So many telling things that were no help. And the police had other jobs to do.”

Outside at a bench, she said, people were waiting in line to see an officer who looked annoyed, tired, and disbelieving of everything. Looking down at the floor, away from her interviewer, she said, “I decided not to tell it. I guess I just chickened out.”

Walsh wrote that he'd fought to keep the case file closed because he thought it would jeopardize any future prosecution.

Instead it showed what a disaster the investigation was right from the start. How filled with laziness, stupidity, and arrogance. It showed that there had never been a chance of convicting Adam's killer. Not from day one.

At the beginning, the Hollywood police wanted it to be Jimmy Campbell. If it had been, it would have made for one great headline: *Wife's Lover Killed Adam*. There was just one problem with that theory, though. It wasn't true. And that marked the beginning of a bad situation for all of us.

Once Campbell and the rest of us passed those polygraphs, the cops should have bored down. They should have said, There's the possibility of a stranger abduction here. Even if they were 100 percent sure that the family was involved, in those critical first days they should have been more willing to focus on other things, too. They should still have run a parallel search.

Two years later, when Toole confessed, instead of regarding him as the most logical suspect, the Hollywood police basically ruled him out.

Then Walsh hypothesized what he thought happened. Home from Newport News, without Lucas, without money, Toole knew he could turn tricks in Miami, where the pay was better. "Aimless, weird, and angry... while he is down there around Lauderdale, somewhere in his sick brain he decides to get himself a new traveling companion. A pet. A little kid."

After he talked to Adam at the video games, he saw him again outside, alone. "And you tell him you have a new video game over at your house around the corner. Why, not even three blocks away..."

Why was Ottis Toole never indicted for my son's murder?

The simple answer is that it was because the Hollywood police never presented it to the state attorney's office for prosecution.

That statement is absolutely not true. They did that Monday after their Friday night press conference in 1983, announcing Toole's confession.

The more complex answer is tougher to figure out. It involves conjecture and speculation, and—ultimately—a judgment.

It's not that the HPD cops were simply lazy or stupid. Maybe they honestly believed that he didn't do it. Maybe they were sick of the case. Maybe, once they heard about James Campbell, they didn't think we were worth the effort. Maybe they thought, Toole's in prison anyway. What's the difference?

If someone doesn't see what is hiding in plain sight right in front of them, there must be a reason for that. Maybe a combination of ego and arrogance. Pride—the worst of the seven deadly sins.

What astounds me is how the truth was always out there, just waiting to be seen. And of how many refused to see it: the cops, the courts, and especially the

media. Aren't journalists supposed to be the guardians of truth? They certainly worked hard enough to have the case file opened up. And then, after that whole battle, what did they do with it—except flip through it, looking for dirt?

Walsh listed the detectives who thought Toole was guilty: Buddy Terry, Joe Cummings, Steve Kindrick, Paul Ruiz, Joe Matthews, Mark Smith. Plus Phil Mundy, who told him, "Toole's your man. I'm absolutely convinced of it."

Yes, Mundy thought it was Toole. But Mark Smith had told me he differed. Cummings, Kindrick, and Ruiz were all out-of-town cops only tangentially involved in Adam's case. Matthews had been a polygraph consultant to Hollywood at the very beginning of the case, and uninvolved in Toole's investigation except to later help review the file. He'd since become Walsh's friend. As for Terry, only Walsh seemed to care what he thought these days.

I wanted to know what the detectives and others involved thought of the book. First was Jack Hoffman. We met at the Denny's Restaurant across from where the now-defunct *Sun-Tattler* once stood.

He was in his early 50s, with combed-back thick dark hair with some gray. He was sunburned, well built, and wore Hollywood police's dark blue uniform, short sleeves, with a radio on his breastbone.

I showed him a copy of *Tears of Rage*, which had just reached some bookstores. I told him Walsh thought Hollywood Police had blown the case against Toole and that he held Hoffman personally responsible.

Hoffman's first response was, it was unfair for Walsh to select his facts in presenting his case.

Although he'd failed to document Toole anywhere between July 25 and July 31, 1981, he did prove he was in Jacksonville those bookend days. The head was found August 10. "Where did Ottis Toole keep this child for two weeks?" he asked sarcastically. Furthermore, when they brought Toole to Hollywood, "he didn't know where the hell he was going." On directions and yes or no questions, he continually contradicted himself. The detectives had to keep asking, "Which is it, Ottis?" Even Henry Lee Lucas had told Hoffman that Toole didn't have the personality to do murderous things by himself.

What really happened was that every time Toole would say his confession was a lie, Terry would say "Let me talk to him alone." Then ten minutes later, Toole would reverse himself again. Still, Toole was never ruled out.

When I pointed out that Mundy believes it was Toole, Hoffman bristled. "That's Mundy's opinion. Ask guys who worked the case—J.B. Smith, Hickman. Is this going to make John Walsh feel better—that he has confirmation about Toole through Mundy in State Attorney's Office? I'm not comfortable with it."

As for Walsh's portrait of his family, he commented, "John Walsh wants to show that he and Reve were like *Ozzie and Harriet* back then. The truth was far from it."

At the time, did John know Reve was having an affair? Maybe not, he said. After Campbell told it to Hoffman, it was his decision, with others, to tell Reve she'd better inform John because they were going to tell him themselves the next day. He said John later thanked him for handling it that way.

The fact was, he said, “This department never had a case of this magnitude before.” They made many mistakes—the worst, in his opinion, was giving the family access to the detective bureau.

He agreed that tips were lost, as Walsh wrote. “I didn’t know half the tips coming in. There were splits and factions in the force. There were 30 different detectives going in different directions, and not all of them reporting back. There was no case management—with all the different [brass] involved in the case.”

That extended even to who should have handled the case—Indian River County. “We had the kidnapping, but usually it’s the jurisdiction where the crime scene is that gets the case.” But Indian River didn’t want it and Hollywood did, thinking “if we solve the case, we’ll look great.”

As for the decapitation, Hoffman believed that the head was disposed of just before it was found. It was easily identifiable, there was very little decomposition. Besides, he said, had it not been found quickly there were a lot of alligators in the area that might have eaten it.

“We’re not any closer today to solving the case than we were 16 years ago. Homicides are solved by physical evidence and eyewitnesses. This case didn’t have a crime scene [the canal was a secondary crime scene] or reliable eyewitnesses. How do you solve a homicide like this? Without these things, you don’t solve it.

“We did our legwork on Lucas and Toole. John Walsh may not have been happy with our results, but my job is to solve cases, not make people happy.”

We discussed a few passages from the book. He said he wasn’t familiar with Mary H., but Toole had told police he was only outside Sears—Mary H. said she saw him inside.

About 45 minutes into the conversation, a radio call came. Leaning his neck toward the receiver mounted off his shoulder, Hoffman took it, excused himself then rushed out.

Later in the day, I reached Mark Smith by telephone and asked him about the book.

Did he know Walsh wrote that Smith thought Toole was guilty? No, he said. Walsh’s co-author Susan Schindehette had called him but hadn’t asked that. If she had, he would not have said yes. Smith went on to note that he’d talked to Schindehette only after his superiors had okayed it—and he gave her no new information.

When I began telling him what Walsh wrote about Mary H., he stopped me. To my surprise, he said, “It isn’t accurate.” He wouldn’t elaborate.

As to Buddy Terry, he’d talked to him, but didn’t think he’d tainted the case. Nor was he a strong force on Toole. “But was Terry in way over his head? Oh, yeah.”

I moved on to Hoffman’s thinking, that because the head wasn’t badly decomposed, it might have been ditched just before it was found. Smith disagreed. He said Broward medical examiner Ronald Wright had thought Adam had been dead at least ten days—“but he gave no opinion how long he was in the water.” Among medical examiners, Smith said, there’s dispute to whether decomposition slows when the head is detached. “There’s no way any doctor can give an opinion, ‘No way it was in the water for 14 days.’ But if you wanted, you could search for and find a doctor who would say ‘No way.’”

What about alligators around that canal? That area is not teeming with gators, he said.

And of the sperm found in Adam's head? "Carl Lord is wrong."

The next day, I talked to Ralph Ray. Since Mary H. was no longer a secret, I wanted Ray or Mundy to discuss her with me. Ray wouldn't, but unlike Walsh and Mundy, he didn't think her statements were that helpful. "Such an identity is certainly suspect"—because it came 16 years later. "That's the problem. It's like Mistler's story—why do you wait 10 years before you come forward? In a trial scenario, witness identifications are attacked every day." He added that specific descriptions so many years later are similarly suspect.

To Hoffman's point that Toole never told police he was ever inside Sears, Ray responded, "We don't know of what version, if any, of Toole's that we believe." At various times he said he'd left the body by the turnpike, burned it in a refrigerator at his mother's home, or took it to the dump. Police had extensively searched sites along the turnpike and in his mother's backyard, and all results had been negative. "I don't think any one thing is conclusively going to make it Toole," he said. Although he thought Toole the prime suspect, "that doesn't mean he's the only suspect."

When I said that Walsh gave differing stories of how he first heard Adam was missing, Ray pointed out that an author Walsh was "not under oath. I don't know if there's a such thing as literary license."

In the meantime, John Walsh continued to make news. On September 15, 1997, he appeared on *Regis & Kathie Lee*. Walsh took the occasion to rail again against the newspapers that petitioned for the opening of the case file:

**WALSH:** I personally don't think they cared about solving the case, I think they were hoping that now that I was a TV guy—there might be something in there, we all know about tabloids. Well, the saddest, heartbreaking thing about that for me is that when those files were opened, I lost that battle, so did the DA's office, the judge said first time in the history of this country, an unsolved capital murder file was turned over to the media. Meaning we'll never get justice because what's in the file can never be used if they indict someone. And we had always believed this guy Ottis Toole had killed Adam, and there was never enough evidence. But when those files were opened, I was heartbroken to find out all the mistakes, all the cover-up, for example, there wasn't DNA testing in 1981, but they had taken a bloody piece of carpet out of Toole's car. Over the years they had lost the carpet. They had lost the car, they had lost the carpet. The FBI said to me, John, because I've caught twelve of their ten most wanted, they said, we'd put you at the head of the list, we'd test that carpet in one day and tell you if Ottis Toole killed Adam. So, I felt like if I couldn't get justice in this country, who could? And I should write about that.

**PHILBIN:** The man that you suspected finally admitted that he did it, on his deathbed.

**WALSH:** On his deathbed he finally confessed that he had killed Adam, and he was a serial killer, et cetera, and they never indicted him.

A day later Walsh elaborated on Toole's deathbed confession—which I'd never heard of before *Regis & Kathie Lee*—when he appeared on *Geraldo Live*. Walsh said the medical examiner at the Florida State Prison at Starke said Toole had told it to a nurse and psychiatrist: he'd killed Adam, and it was the only murder he was sorry about.

The next day I called Jack Hoffman to ask what he knew of Toole's deathbed confession. He said he'd never heard of it either, and there was “no reason why the prison would have withheld that information from the police.” By saying it's Toole, Walsh is “just trying to get this off his conscience.”

“I stand on my professional career that Ottis Toole didn't do it.”

Also, Hoffman held to his theory that the head wasn't disposed of the day Adam disappeared. “Nobody believes that head was in the water for two weeks. I've handled lots of decomposed bodies. It's unbelievable what water, heat, and animals do to a body.” Land crabs too.

The Broward medical examiner at the time, Dr. Ronald Wright, was now working in the pathology department at the University of Miami School of Medicine. On the issue of how long the head might have been in the canal, he was much less definitive than Hoffman.

On the whole, he thought it *had* been in the water for two weeks, “but it might not have been. It's so variable, with what's in the neighborhood.” Still another unknown was how soon the head had been amputated after death.

Then he offered me a biology lesson—the reader is forewarned. The bacteria that speeds decomposition is in the intestines, he said: “You really spoil from the inside out.” Newborn babies, which don't have much bacteria, don't decompose much at death, and Wright assumed the same effect happened here. “Assuming that, then this amount of decomposition is perfect for 14 days.” Unless, he said, the head was severed more than 12-24 hours after death. Then bacteria would start to migrate.

By now I'd seen the police photos of the head. I was surprised how identifiable it was; everything looked fairly normal, save for some bleaching spots. I'd steeled myself for much worse.

He said crabs, fish and turtles “go after the eyes and mouth. But if the head's face down, then they can't get to it. “Heads alone have a very short float life. They leak. Whole bodies don't. You've got that whole bottom to let air out. They don't stay up as long. I always was surprised it was found. It was one of those really weird things, happenstance. My guess is that it wouldn't float more than a half day, maybe a day at the most. Obviously I don't have a lot of experience with that, just a few stories here and there.”

Wright surmised, gas in the head caused it to rise to the surface, but once it leaked out, the head would have sunk back down, forever.

I asked, did the head look consistent with being under water all that time?

Yes, he said. “That's what bodies look like when they've been under the water all that time.” The darker part is remaining skin, the bleached part is subcutaneous tissue.

Then could the head have been under water two weeks or so, and taken that long to surface? Was there any data on that?

“Not a lot. We tried some tests—I think we used pig heads—and it just varied all over the place. It was one of the various things we tried.”

So Wright couldn't be sure how long the head was down, but "up I can tell you. It would have been very unusual that it would be up for more than a day. When it's up, flies lay their eggs—maggots—on them. No maggots. Therefore, not up very long."

I asked how long it took flies to do that to a body. "It depends a lot on the availability of pregnant females." The shortest he'd ever seen was a half hour post-death—that was near a manure spreader. In other areas with open dumping, he'd seen it within an hour. "Once they lay 'em, they'll go ahead and hatch. They'll even hatch underwater—they're anaerobic."

"It depends on the general availability of flies, and the general rule should be, yeah, there should be quite a few (it was summer in the swamp.) So therefore, it wasn't up very long."

In a canal, he thought a severed head would drop to the bottom immediately, and that's what happened with the pig heads. As he recalled, they surfaced 7-14 days later. But on the whole, the pig head experiment failed—a lot of stuff you try doesn't work, he said. "There's so much variability. I couldn't believe how variable these canals were." Factors that couldn't be measured included how much rain had recently fallen on the spot, and how much manure had been dumped in the waterways. Back then the canal was pastureland.

"It was always hard to believe that we got that head."

Wright said he'd heard of Afro-Cuban Santeria religious rituals where heads are severed. However, he never thought that had anything to do with this murder. "I always thought it was a sexual thing."

I asked him the sperm in the head question. He said flatly there was no evidence of it. "If it had been there, it wouldn't be"—meaning the submergence of the head would have washed it out.

I asked, had Toole left the body by the turnpike where he said he did, might an animal have eaten it and left no trace?

"We're a little short on the animals that would do that. Raccoons will eat dead bodies, but not very much—and not bones. Bears will, but we don't have them anymore. Panthers won't. Alligators, they won't eat it on land. Wild dogs, not really."

"If I were to guess, the rest of the body is probably in those canals," he said. Canal water there didn't have much movement, only from wind, and since the head hadn't floated long enough to get maggots, it likely didn't float more than a few feet before it was found.

How do you search a canal? I asked.

"That's the problem." Canals are so silty, he said, that only on clear days can you even see your fingers in front of your dive mask. And on the bottom is "gooey stuff." Every time he passes the site, on the turnpike, he thinks about it.

On the positive side, he said, bones stay intact a long time. Bones are still occasionally found from the 1928 Palm Beach hurricane that overflowed Lake Okeechobee. On the negative side, no machine can detect them.

(According to a document released into public record in 2008, in February 1997 Phil Mundy had 14 detectives from the Broward Sheriff's Office dive team search a large area of the canal around where the head was found. Although the water had no visibility, the team searched in a grid with hand tools and rakes and found bones. However, the Broward Medical Examiner as well as a second opinion said they weren't human.)

I wondered out loud, could Toole, a noted blockhead, have had enough sophistication, even accidentally, to dispose of a body without it ever being found?

“That was always what bothered me about Toole. Toole was a quart low. He was never high on my hit parade.” Yet, he thought, even if the body was ever found, it wouldn’t be of much investigative use. “This is one case to be solved, if at all, by confession.”

Two weeks later, Phil Mundy said Ralph Ray finally decided to let him discuss with me some of his investigative details.

First I asked him about the deathbed confession, as reported by Walsh. He said, after Toole died, Mark Smith went to the prison and wrote a report. “I don’t think Toole, in my estimation, made what I would call a dying declaration.

“If John Walsh wants to believe he made a deathbed declaration, fine. And I can’t blame the guy for wanting to think that.”

Mundy didn’t like William Mistler because in his interview he kept changing his story. “I wouldn’t take this guy to the bank,” he said. The case’s star witness, he thought, was Mary H. As she was depicting the man she saw, “I thought, my God, she’s describing Ottis. Not so much his physical stature but his mannerisms. Having sat and chatted with Ottis Toole myself, trust me, the man made an impression on me.”

When she said that Toole had turned and smiled at her weirdly, Mundy thought he recognized something similar Ottis had done to him. Phil dramatized it: opening his mouth and tilting his head high to the right, almost 45 degrees, he gave a knowing wink. For him, Toole then brightened into a full smile and said, “Nothin’ says you can’t fuck ‘em when they’re dead.”

“If you hadn’t met Ottis, you wouldn’t pick up on shit like that. You can’t make that up, you can’t.”

She also described Adam wearing flip-flop sandals. “When I heard that, I went, *Excuse me?*” For emphasis, Phil flipped his coffee mug in the air by its handle. For an instant I thought it was full. “When I heard that, thinking Toole was still alive, I thought, your ass is mine. He’s going to be indicted. You’re going to be a witness at a grand jury.” Later, Mundy created a photo lineup, for which he had to go through 2,000 pictures to find six men who looked anything like Ottis Toole. She picked him out.

“Bastard! I wish he would have lived longer! I think we were getting very close to a grand jury presentation.” Then he added, “If Mary H. is a fraud or a liar, it would be one of the major disappointments of my career.”

Two days later, I found myself arguing with Mundy. Mary H. had already seen Toole’s picture before his lineup, and probably some video of him, at which time she learned his mannerisms. She’d also told Phil that Adam was wearing a red baseball cap. Phil admitted she likely remembered that from his missing photo. In her next interview, for John Walsh’s book, she’d revised her description to a different kind of cap. And as Ralph Ray had said, because she’d waited 15 years to come forward she’d be vulnerable to a tough cross-examination. Although Mary H. told Mundy she’d gone to the police station weeks after the incident, she left before speaking to an officer. In sum, she wasn’t bankable either.



Reluctantly Mundy conceded the issue. And without a bulletproof Mary H., Toole was no slam-dunk at trial. He tried to extract a weak compromise. “I don’t think you can completely slam the door on this guy. You’ve got to leave a crack.”

## [Tracking Down a Fledgling Serial Killer](#)

AFTER LATE 1997, I SHELVED MY FILE since there wasn’t much left to do. In the summer of 2002, in the true crime section of a used bookstore, I found a 1997 book by former FBI serial-killer profiler Robert Ressler titled *I Have Lived in the Monster* that included a transcript of an interview he’d conducted with Jeffrey Dahmer in January 1992. In it, Dahmer was talking about finding his last Milwaukee murder victim and had made light of a coincidence, that Konerak Sinthasomphone was the younger brother of Somsack Sinthasomphone, who he’d been arrested for sexually assaulting three years earlier:

“He was the brother of the one that [I’d photographed]. I was just walking in the mall, ran into him, didn’t know him from Adam—how many are the chances of that happening? Astronomical.”

When I read this, I stared at it. Was this a slip of the tongue by a serial killer who severed heads, who’d admitted being in Miami when the Walsh child was reported lost?

In 1991, Hollywood police seemed to have decided that Dahmer’s movements here would be too difficult to trace, 10 years after the fact. Despite the handicap of another 11 years since then, I decided on the spot in the bookstore to do the legwork Hollywood hadn’t done and learn everything I could about Jeffrey Dahmer in the literature—and especially his time in Miami.

My clues were the same as they were in 1991: Sunshine Subs, the Bimini Bay motel, and Ken Houleb. None were in the Miami phone book.

I did have one advantage by this point in time—the Internet. In Florida, county governments and the state had built websites allowing online searches of official records. With the advice of my friend Jean Mignolet, a Fort Lauderdale private investigator, I began.

Online, for criminal records, Dade County (now Miami-Dade County) posts docket sheets. For civil records it posts book and page numbers. To see more takes a trip downtown.

First, I searched Dahmer’s name and anyone named Houleb—and found nothing. However, there were hits on Sunshine Subs and the Bimini Bay motel. I concentrated on the sub shop, the managers of which I thought would be more likely to remember Dahmer than anyone at a motel. Besides, in Hollywood’s cursory investigation in 1991, someone had told them the motel manager had since died. They apparently hadn’t located anyone from the sub shop.

Sunshine Subs had three references, from 1979 to 1983. In a small claims action, as a defendant, appeared the name Darlene Traux. Searching for her, I found no further hits. I tried Broward County records online and also found nothing. I checked the current Miami phone book—nada.

A trip downtown was beckoning. But first, since Dahmer said he'd collected state unemployment in Miami, and those records are not online, I called Tallahassee and eventually spoke to a supervisor in Unemployment Compensation's archives. Dahmer's records would be public, except they'd since purged all paper records dating back that far.

Possibly it was on their computer; a customer service operator offered to check under Dahmer's name and Social Security number (which I had from the Walsh file), but nothing came up. Still hoping, I mailed the agency a public records request. That produced no results either.

Downtown in Miami, I stopped first at the county main library's Florida room. They had the 1981 Miami phone book on microfiche. It listed "Sunshine Sub—pizza," at 17040 Collins Avenue.

I hadn't lived far away, so I knew the area. Everyone called it North Miami Beach, although the real city by that name is on the mainland. Now it is part of the city of Sunny Isles Beach. There was also a listing for the Bimini Bay motel, at 17480 Collins. Dahmer had said it was close to work. Also, an American Savings branch was located at 17066 Collins. Dahmer had told Hoffman he'd banked "right next to the sub shop."

So now I was convinced that Dahmer truly had been here.

From the library, the Dade County recorder's office was around the corner. To my dismay, I learned that in order to save on warehousing costs, in 1993 the county destroyed most all its court files older than five years. All that was left was whatever had been microfilmed.

Searching those microfilm reels of books and pages, I found that Traux was a misspelling—Sunshine Sub's principals were Darlene and Cecil L. Truax. On the computer, I searched those names—and found nothing more.

With a clerk's assistance, I tried to find land ownership records of 17040 Collins, Sunshine Sub's address. We uncovered nothing, but she showed me another database, then inaccessible online, for Miami-Dade County marriage licenses. On a lark I entered Cecil Truax and got a hit: a book and page for his 1980 marriage to Darlene C. Sortini. Since it was nearly closing time, I raced to another county building, where on a high floor newlyweds-to-be patiently sat for their bakery ticket number to be called, to buy a marriage license. Conspicuously out of place as well as out of breath, I ordered a photocopy from microfilm of the Truax's license. One dollar later, the license gave me dates of birth, both in 1945. Both had been divorced. Cecil Truax was born in New Jersey, Darlene in Massachusetts, and her maiden name was Famolare.

Back to the library's Florida room, which had a multi-diskette copy of the U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1999 edition. Bad news: Cecil Truax had died in November 1983, his death benefit sent to a Miami zip code. There was no listing for Darlene Truax.

Famolare sounded like a unique name, so still checking the death index, I found a number of elderly Famolares, all born and deceased in Massachusetts—Darlene's home state. I guessed, maybe everyone with that name was kin.

In 1992, at local public libraries, I could electronically search *Miami Herald* back only to 1988. They'd since added the years back to mid-1982, so I asked its database for "Cecil Truax." I got a one-line death listing on November 28, 1983. Realizing that the *Herald's* database didn't include paid death listings, I manually searched the library's

*Herald* microfilm and found one, published the next day. Survivors listed were Darlene, his five children and two sisters. It listed his employer, plus the fact that he'd died in Dallas on November 27. His nickname was Tex.

That left Darlene as my last tenuous link. But 19 years had passed, and certainly she might have remarried and changed her surname.

I had her date of birth, though. How many Darlenes could have been born on that specific date? I asked my friend Jean, could she run a check?

Eight, she soon replied, but none were apparently living in Florida. One was Darlene C. Hill, in Johnstown, Ohio—and my Darlene had been Darlene C. Sortini.

Checking online phone books, I found no listing in Ohio for that name. A dead end.

I was down to one last shot. Asking for “Famolare” in Massachusetts, I found about two dozen listings. There were none in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, nearby states with large Italian communities.

I tried the listing in Boston for Charles Famolare, Jr., because there was a listing of the same name in Pompano Beach, Florida. That line was temporarily disconnected, which suggested he was a snowbird—it was summer. When I reached him, I introduced myself. “I’m looking for a woman I’m hoping is a relation of yours. She was born in Massachusetts and her maiden name was Darlene Famolare.”

Charles Famolare couldn’t have been nicer. “That’s my cousin Darlene,” he said. “She was just here a few weeks ago.” The Florida house belonged to Sonny, his retired dad. He got him on the phone, too.

I explained why I was looking for her—twenty years earlier, ten years before anyone knew who he was, at her sub shop in Florida she might have hired Jeffrey Dahmer.

“Dah-mah!” exclaimed Sonny, in an unmistakable Yankee accent. I thought maybe this was a family joke, that in 1991 Darlene would have recognized Dahmer as a former employee. But the Famolare cousins had never heard this.

Without hesitation they gave me Darlene’s phone number—she *was* Darlene Hill—but in Indiana. I called immediately—at that moment I envisioned her cousins thinking, what did we just do? then calling her themselves. I got her voice mail but didn’t leave a message.

I reached her that afternoon. By then her cousins had called, and she was dying of curiosity. She was warm and helpful and wanted to know how I found her. Had I called several weeks earlier, she said, she was at the funeral for her cousin Ricky Famolare, a sergeant of detectives for Boston P.D. Their last conversation was about the Boston Strangler, one of Ricky’s pet interests. In the old neighborhood, growing up, their friend’s Uncle Albert was Albert DiSalvo.

Darlene said she didn’t remember hiring Dahmer, but she had an excellent memory for names and faces, and wanted to see his photo before saying for sure she’d never known him. On MSN’s search engine, I found a black and white mug shot from his August 1982 misdemeanor arrest at the Wisconsin State Fair—the same one the *Miami Herald* ran that Willis Morgan saw. His hair was similar in length to what it was in the 1991 photo.

Darlene still didn’t recognize him, though. She said Sunshine was a small operation, and its employees basically consisted of her, Tex, and her teenage daughter Denise Sortini. But she remembered the Walsh case very well, and as we talked further, Darlene

would become my gateway into the past. As it turned out the Dahmer story hinged less on Sunshine Sub and more on its sister store in a strip mall ten blocks north on Collins.

At the beginning, the tie-in was complicated. In June 1979, living on the beach, Darlene was diagnosed with a rare, fast-growing, life-threatening cancer. It came as a complete surprise. Her doctor wanted her to enter the hospital that afternoon, saying she had maybe two weeks to live. She refused; first she had to order her affairs.

Foremost were her two teenage daughters. Darlene was divorced, and their father was mostly uninvolved with them, so legal guardianship would have gone to her mother. That did not suit her, she preferred her sister.

From this extraordinary circumstance came an extraordinary solution. A tenant at Salem House, the apartment building she managed, offered a suggestion: he knew a gay Canadian who needed U.S. citizenship to stay in the country. On the shortest of notice he would marry her, and upon her death, he would assign guardianship of the girls as she wished.

(For this story I'm calling him Larry and his establishment Beach Pizza. Neither are their real names, although the business was a pizza restaurant. I've changed both names in all references to come, including in quotations. Everything else about them is accurate as I found and heard it.)

He was two years younger than Darlene, and she agreed to meet him. Months earlier he'd arrived from Montreal to manage Beach Pizza.

As Darlene would gather, there was a lurid reason for Larry's presence in Miami at Beach Pizza. On November 16, 1978, the original owner of Beach Pizza had been killed in his town house by three semi-automatic gunshots fired into his back and neck at near point-blank range. In his hand he'd been holding a pen. Two witnesses, the victim's wife and his school friend of 20 years, told North Miami Police they'd found him dead. Two days earlier, the victim and his wife had reported a home burglary in which they said a gun and \$3,000 of cash and jewelry was stolen. Marks on the front doorframe around the deadbolt looked like they'd been left by burglary tools.

The friend, Jean-Guy St. Amand, told police he was an officer in the Montreal police department. At the victim's encouragement, he'd bought a share of Beach Pizza. He'd arrived from Quebec only a week earlier.

But in a late-night interview, conducted by Metro-Dade Police, the victim's wife said her husband had made impossible sexual demands on her. He'd even wanted her to have sex with her eight-year-old daughter, from a previous marriage. She was glad he was dead—and said St. Amand had killed him, to protect her.

At dawn, police awoke St. Amand at his beach apartment and brought him in for more questioning. He said the victim's wife had told him her husband had threatened to kill her and the child if they didn't have sex together while the husband watched. She said her husband had taken nude photos; at the murder scene, police had found a nude photo of the girl, plus a leather suitcase full of sex toys. St. Amand said the victim had threatened to kill him as well, and yes, he had killed him and arranged the scene to look like a break-and-enter. In May 1979, St. Amand accepted a plea bargain to manslaughter and was sentenced to eight years in Florida state prison. While awaiting sentencing, St. Amand offered Larry a partnership in Beach Pizza if he'd come to Miami and run it. At the time of the killing, Larry had been St. Amand's supervisor at Montreal Police.

Darlene married Larry on a Saturday, ten days after her introduction to him. On Sunday she entered the hospital. "I never, never expected to walk out of that hospital. Never, never, never. I'd said goodbye to my children." But she proved her doctors wrong. Three weeks and two major surgeries later, she did leave, although they told her she had only another month. They were wrong about that, too.

Given a proverbial second chance at life, Darlene and Larry struck up a friendship. Larry was kind and generous to her as well as to her daughters, Denise and Robin. He helped pay for her hospitalization and set her up in a restaurant she called Sunshine, a lunch place serving salad and homemade soup, a sort of ladies' tearoom, she said. Although Darlene married Tex late in 1980, she stayed friends with Larry. By March 1981, she and Tex decided to sell Sunshine to Larry, and he remade the shop into Sunshine Sub. But when she and Tex would return home to Miami after driving a semi-trailer they bought, they kept tabs on Beach Pizza.

When their mother went on the road, Denise and Robin went separate places to live. Since Denise had worked at Sunshine, in April 1981 she went to work for Larry at Beach Pizza. Larry even had her stay at his condo, two blocks behind the store. "If Dahmer was on that beach, my girls would know it," Darlene volunteered. They knew every teenage boy within a radius, she said. She emailed them both the mug shot, but neither recognized it.

I expected somebody to recognize the name Houleb, but none of them did. Denise did remember a Ken, a mature man who worked at Beach Pizza. As she recalled, he made deliveries.

Pizza delivery. That required a vehicle. To Jack Hoffman, Dahmer's lack of one was his main alibi why he couldn't have come from North Miami Beach to Hollywood Mall for a kidnapping. But Beach Pizza made deliveries. And Sunshine Sub sold pizza too, I knew from the old phone book. Might they have delivered as well? Might Dahmer have made deliveries in a vehicle perhaps owned by Sunshine Sub or Beach Pizza, both owned by Larry?

In his interview, Dahmer hadn't mentioned pizza. Had Hoffman dug in the Miami library's phone books, might he have made the connection?

I asked Darlene to ask Denise, Could she remember whether Beach Pizza or Sunshine Sub had delivery vehicles? The answer returned, three. One was a Ford Escort, the other two were vans: a white one and a blue one.

A blue van, at the sister store where Jeffrey Dahmer worked, 15 minutes away from Hollywood Mall?

Darlene remembered it too. She'd used it when she moved, five times between summer of 1979, after she left the hospital, and the end of March 1981, when she began her trucking career and put her things in storage.

How easy was it, I asked, for drivers or just employees to take those vans?

"Easy," she said. "Anybody could grab a key to those vehicles. Larry ran such a mess."

I wanted to know more about Larry and his shops. Unlike Sunshine, Darlene said, Beach Pizza was a gold mine. For a time, it opened at six A.M. and closed at five A.M., and later it never closed at all. At different times of the day and night, it was a hangout for teenagers, college students, tourists, and after-hours people. A big part of the business

was delivering to the nearby tourist hotels on Collins Avenue. They'd deliver well into the middle of the night.

Employees were forever coming and going. "He would hire racier people than I would have—people a little off-color. Gay people," she said. "But if someone worked for Larry and didn't have a place, he slept on the couch in his condo." That came "out of the goodness of his heart."

By his own admission, Dahmer had been homeless, sleeping on the beach before he got work at Sunshine Sub. Was this a match? Did Larry, a gay man who brought drifters into his home, meet Dahmer, a gay young drifter?

Might Dahmer have even made a reference to Larry? He'd described to Hoffman, "I remember sitting after work one night right on Collins Avenue, and there was this guy from Canada, and he tried to pick me up—which is a switch..." Dahmer had denied going off with this man. And Canadians did tend to congregate around Collins Avenue in North Miami Beach. Still, the possibility begged further research.

Larry had a side he didn't want Darlene to see. "Larry went places very late at night—I have no idea where he was. He never slept—or for two hours. I don't know what he did, or where he did it, but he did it in good taste." Or so she had thought.

"Everything Larry did wasn't done openly," Denise told me about the drifters. "I realize now who they were—at 16, I didn't realize then."

Like her mother, Denise hadn't seen Larry's actions as nefarious, but questions were gathering in her mind. "Larry was a generous person. He was helping down-and-out people—that's what I'd like to think."

At the time, Denise also didn't realize Larry was gay. She'd never seen him show any affectations, nor even physical contact toward anyone, male or female. She'd always felt safe with him.

The strays were always male and between 18-25 years old, she recalled. (In 1981, Dahmer was 21, Larry was 36.) The area was a magnet for runaways from all over the U.S. and Canada—like the more famous strip on Fort Lauderdale beach and the southern tip of Miami Beach. Everywhere was open all night, she said, and drifters were part of that life. When they needed work, Beach Pizza was a natural place to come. Considering his constant employee turnover, Larry always needed help, and "at the end of the night, if they didn't have a place to go, he'd bring them home."

That summer, Denise worked until four A.M. on weekdays, five A.M. on weekends, many weeks without a day off. She'd come home to Larry's condo, where she slept in the second bedroom, then wake up and discover someone she'd never seen before asleep in the living room or alone in Larry's bed. She knew the drifter—employee—must have come in with Larry, but she never saw him touch any of them. "And I lived in the apartment."

Although some drifters were alcoholics or drug addicts, Denise said she'd never seen any of them cause trouble, drink or do drugs—and Larry didn't drink or do drugs, either. "There were lots of drifters, and they stayed various amounts of time—a week, a couple days, a month, longer. It depended on the amount of trouble they were in, if they were on the run."

Generally, she said, she didn't pay attention to them, or for that matter, most of the employees. "The amount of people through both stores—unbelievable. Most were addicted to drugs, drank, or were just here to party. They got money, then left."

I asked about deliveries. If Dahmer worked at Sunshine, even though he said he only worked inside the store, did that mean he didn't make deliveries? "Employees weren't limited to a single job. You did whatever you had to do," she said. That included deliveries—for either store. On holidays, or when the hotels were full and a flood of orders came in, whoever could drive, did.

"I knew some people didn't have licenses, or had suspended licenses, or Canadian licenses. It wasn't a concern to Larry."

Regarding the blue van, she said the white and the blue were the same model, although the blue came first. They were spartan inside, just the two front bucket seats, and the rears were empty. The white was for fetching supplies for both stores. The blue was "Larry's vehicle, for whoever needed it. Or if somebody wanted it for the night, whoever wanted it took it."

Did that include the drifters? "Yes, they had it too. A lot of times the drifters would just take a van and disappear for a day. I remember that van being taken and Larry not doing anything."

She couldn't remember the make and model of the vans, but they looked new, or maybe they were leased. The blue was a medium blue. It had automatic transmission, AM-FM radio, AC, windows on the rear doors but not on the sides, and blue seats. "They were never kept clean, there was no maintenance. They ran until they became a problem."

Darlene argued slightly with Denise's description. The color was grayish-blue, or a darker blue, depending on the light. "And you're talking to a former art student," she said. One of the vans had only a driver's seat, the other had only one seat additional. (Denise later agreed on one seat.) They were both extended vans, oversize. She doubted they were leased because then Larry would have needed to take care of them; otherwise, the leasing agency would have billed him penalties. "You have never in your life seen vehicles like these," she said. "You'd need a tetanus shot to look at them. I told him, do you realize you're delivering food? Do you know how unsanitary this is? This was a pigsty."

Next I wanted to find Larry. Over the years since leaving South Florida, Darlene and her kids had lost touch with him. I checked the Miami phone book, and he wasn't listed. Neither was his pizza restaurant (that is, its real name I am not using here). When I journeyed downtown again to read microfilmed county records for hints of where I could find him, I saw he'd recently sold his condo. A Fort Lauderdale attorney had handled the contract.

I obviously wasn't afraid of making cold calls, but since I'd have to leave a message with the attorney, I sensed this one might not be returned. I had enough trust in Darlene to ask to her to make the call, guessing that she'd definitely get a callback. She agreed. Three months before I'd first called her, Darlene's husband Glenn Hill had died of illness. When she called Larry's attorney she left a message there'd been a death in the family. Twenty minutes later, Larry called back, terrified.

They talked for a while, catching up. Larry had lost the restaurant and his condo, and was working in a church administration in Miami. To Darlene he sounded down-and-out.

Then Darlene explained why she was calling: a journalist was pursuing the idea that Jeffrey Dahmer killed Adam Walsh, and Dahmer at the time was working for Larry at Sunshine.

Darlene described Dahmer as an alcoholic living on the beach. Did Larry remember him? No, he said, but that was a long time ago. He'd had a lot of employees who fit that description.

Then he asked a question that struck her as odd: "Is he dead?" At that moment, Darlene said later, she got nausea.

When she raised the name Dahmer, she told me, Larry's voice quavered and his demeanor changed. Although he didn't seem scared, "Larry clearly remembered Dahmer." She hadn't posed the inquiry as a question. "I told him, not asked him, that Dahmer was at Sunshine, looking for a confirmation. That's when he asked me if he was dead."

He remembered the blue van—"that old van, with the carpet falling out, one seat in front." He couldn't remember the make and model, he said, but it had been stolen from him, and he'd personally reported the theft to county police—referring to Metro-Dade Police. It was returned with its ignition torn out. Unable to use it, he sold it.

I'd given Darlene a list of questions to cover. Larry solved the Ken Houleb problem—his name was Ken Hauptert, and two of them, father and son, both had worked for him. The father, about 20 years older than Larry, had worked at Beach Pizza then Larry had him run Sunshine Sub. He'd divorced his wife and married an English girl who worked there—Maria, then later he said Susie. Then the two left town together.

Ken might have hired Dahmer, he said.

Darlene remembered: Ken Hauptert had been a vice president for franchising at Nathan's, the Coney Island hot dog chain, but he'd quit or lost his job and went to work for Larry—a big step down.

After she left Sunshine, Larry installed a gas line and oven for hot subs and pizza. Larry had said the store had made deliveries.

Houleb instead of Hauptert—was that Dahmer forgetting? Or inventing a deniably close name that Hoffman wouldn't be able to track, given no other clues?

After the phone call ended, Darlene was dissatisfied. "I've talked to Larry a million times. He remembers. He's never not remembered—until now. All of the sudden, names changing, memory diminishing."

Larry offered to look at the mug shot, but he emailed her back, saying he didn't recognize it. On a second call, he was more reticent, she said. As she pushed for answers, he complained, "You've changed. You never used to ask a lot of questions." That was true, she told me. Many things about Larry and his business she either hadn't wanted to know, or at least hadn't tried to find out.

"Whatever he's hiding from, I don't think he'll stick his neck out," she told me. Yet after that, Larry stopped taking her calls entirely. Denise and Robin tried him too, with no success.

I tried myself. I called his cell, but after telling him who I was, he quickly said he was busy and would call back. He never did. My later calls went unanswered.



COULD I FIND ANYONE WHO RECALLED DAHMER and would admit it? And could I find, or at least document, the blue van? Could it still exist? If it did, might it still contain evidence from 20 years before?

A friend, Bob Foley, is a retired head of the crime-scene unit at the Broward Sheriff's Office. He had since become the head of the criminal investigation bureau of the Barnstable County Sheriff, on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. I called to ask him.

I knew about luminol. When it's sprayed onto surfaces, infrared light can detect a bloodstain, even if the blood is old or attempts were made to clean it. Spatter or pooling patterns indicate violence.

To find that in the van would be interesting, but DNA from the blood could be definitive. I asked Foley, can DNA be lifted from luminol-discovered blood? Yes, he said, and luminol can find 20-year-old blood on surfaces. He'd seen it detect 40-year-old blood.

Luminol works especially well in vehicles, he said, because conventional cleaning can't completely remove blood. On fabric, like a seat cover or carpet, blood seeps even into stitched seams. Imagine spilling ink, he said. "You can't ever get it all cleaned." On an exposed steel floor or wall, as in a van, blood would fill scratches and slight cracks. Swabs could remove samples even that small, and DNA could be detected.

I told Foley my progress, and he was intrigued. On reflection, he thought the cops and the FBI were "stupid" to not pursue Dahmer further. He made an offer: if I could find the van, and Hollywood Police didn't care to check it, he would do it himself.

To obtain the blue van's vehicle identification number (VIN), I called a county vehicle registration office, which looked up vehicles registered to Larry. With the VIN, my plan was to enter it at Carfax.com to find later owners. There is no registry for junked cars.

The answer that came back was doubly discouraging. First, Florida state vehicle records on computer went back only 12 years; before that, the information is spotty. Second, a block on his file had been placed, stopping public disclosure of his records. The clerk, who suddenly turned accusing, thought maybe it was because Larry was a law enforcement officer. Which through the Seventies he had been in Canada.

Dade and Broward phone books had no listings for Ken Haupert. In online county official records, in Broward I found two separate divorces under the name Ken Haupert, in 1984 and 1985. At the Broward supervisor of elections, I checked the voter registration public database and found an address and date of birth for a Ken Haupert that suggested he was the son. In the online phone books I found a matching phone number.

After several attempts, I reached Ken Haupert on the first ring. Cautious, I told him I wasn't sure I had the right person, I was looking for the Ken Haupert who'd worked at a sub shop in North Miami Beach 20 years ago. At first he tried to sound like he didn't know what I was talking about.

"You sound too young," I said. "The man I'm looking for is older."

"I think you're talking about my dad," he said.

When I mentioned Dahmer, Hauptert seemed genuinely surprised. He said he'd only worked at Sunshine and Beach Pizza to help out his father, and because he was between jobs. He didn't remember much because he hadn't stayed long. Susie was the name of the English girl his dad was involved with, although he couldn't recall her surname. "When I found out the relationship, what was going on, I got pissed off and left." He hadn't spoken with his father since.

But he did agree to help me find Ken Sr. Last he knew he'd opened a sub shop in Dewey, Oklahoma. He also gave me his father's full name and date of birth.

Ken Jr. wanted to see Dahmer's mug shot, which I emailed him.

I turned back to the Internet. Dewey was part of greater Bartlesville, Oklahoma, home of Phillips Petroleum, later ConocoPhillips. In the online phone books, Hauptert wasn't listed. Its chamber of commerce had no exclusively sub shops. It was time to call my Delphic friend Jean again. Searching through a database of non-published phone numbers, she found Kenneth G. Hauptert with a Dewey address. Yet the number seemed wrong. At first the phone just rang, then later, an electronic tone answered.

In the meantime, Ken Jr. called me back. As soon as he saw Dahmer's mug shot he recognized him from the shop. So did his younger brother, coincidentally named Jeff. "When I told him, he was floored, oh my God!"

They'd known him as Jeff, but may never have known his surname. "He wasn't anybody you'd remember. He just worked there. He cleaned tables, helped with food preparation. There was nothing that stood out about him. He was like the average person who came into work to make his money."

They had never had any meaningful conversation with him. Jeff Hauptert thought Dahmer might have been in the army.

Nor had they made the association in 1991 when Dahmer made the news. Checking other pictures on the Internet, they reported, "He looked different as he got older. It didn't click in '91, hey, I know that guy."

In the shop, Dahmer had looked presentable, clean, clean-shaven, not seedy-looking. Compared to the mug shot, he said, his hair, which was dirty blonde, was flatter on top, combed more to the side, and he had no mustache, unlike in the later-1981 mug shot. "But the face, definitely," he said. He wore thick, out-of-fashion eyeglasses. "He looked like one of your friends, a guy you'd hang out with." He remembered him wearing a T-shirt that read "Sunshine Sub." He didn't know who'd hired him. "Funny you'd work next to somebody like that. I guess that's a claim to infamy."

He also thought that the store had an Adam Walsh missing poster.

After leaving Sunshine, Ken Jr. worked at Beach Pizza as an evening pizza chef. He remembered Larry's kindness and generosity. "If you needed money, he'd help you and never ask for anything in return." Sometimes Larry loaned him more than \$100. Once when he tried to repay it, Larry wouldn't take it. He also knew Larry helped support Denise and Robin. "We wondered, what kind of person would do that?"

He also thought Larry had helped his father, who needed a break at the time, by setting him up at Sunshine and giving him money. "I don't think it was totally my dad's store. I think he was managing it."

He didn't know Larry was homosexual, though, or that he'd picked up drifters. He knew he didn't have girlfriends, but he never saw him make advances toward men, or

look at them in a homosexual way. Larry never made him feel uncomfortable. “You’d think of him as your brother.”

In about 1985, his father and Susan had had a child together, Ian. About ten years later his father reached out to him, hoping he’d want to meet his stepbrother, but Ken Jr. refused.

To track down Ken Sr., I called county records in Washington County, Oklahoma, which encompassed Dewey and Bartlesville. They told me the Hauperts might have moved from the address I had for them. They suggested I call the electric company, which told me the same thing.

Next I tried the Dewey municipal water department. Getting the same answer, I asked the clerk if she knew of another city database, or property book, to scour for better information. While I kept her on the line, her boss, the city manager, peered over her shoulder and noticed Haupert’s name.

Wait, said the clerk, my boss knows him. He moved to Bartlesville with his business—Ian’s Sub Shop.

Could I speak to the city manager? She took the call. His new shop was in the lobby of a Bartlesville Best Western hotel. She politely offered to look up the phone number.

When I called it, the desk clerk said the Hauperts were away, it was their break time between lunch and dinner. Call back in an hour.

I did. A woman who answered had an English accent. I asked for her husband and she quickly put him on the line. Ken Haupert Sr. was friendly and of course surprised. He said he only had a moment, they were preparing for their dinner business. After asking how I found him—I told him—he said Dahmer in fact had worked for him, for a few months.

It was a Friday afternoon, and he asked if I could call back Monday. When I did, he was ready to talk about Jeffrey Dahmer.

He met Dahmer, he said, when he saw him rummaging through the dumpster behind Sunshine Sub. He was picking out pizza slices, to eat. “I said, why are you doing that? He said, I’m hungry and I have no job. I said, Come in, I’ll give you something to eat.

“I gave him food, then a couple days later he was back at the trash cans. I asked, I needed a busboy.

“Who knows who you meet in life?”

Hauptert said he assigned Dahmer to general cleanup, including bussing tables and mopping floors. He worked Monday to Friday, part-time, mornings to afternoons starting between 10-11 and ending between 4-5. He paid him minimum wage, plus meals.

Dahmer’s first two or three weeks on the job were okay, but then he became erratic. “All of the sudden he came in filthy dirty—like he was drinking all night, drunk and dirty, unable to work. I’d send him home, and the next day he’d be okay.”

But it became a frustrating pattern, starting again a week or so later. Once, he recalled, Dahmer came to work stinking, his eyeglasses broken. “He explained, I was running and fell down and broke my glasses.” Losing patience, Hauptert told him, “Get out of here.”

Finally, after three months, “I got fed up and fired him.” That was their last contact. “He was a bum,” he said. “He turned into a bum.”

Could one of those weekday mornings when Dahmer came in drunk and Hauptert sent him home been Monday, July 27, 1981? Hauptert said he'd kept employee records, but hadn't saved them over twenty years.

I said, Dahmer had told the police he'd gotten unemployment compensation while he was working at Sunshine. Hauptert said he didn't know that and asked how. I said, Dahmer admitted lying to the authorities. "He was quite good at lying," he commented.

Dahmer was also extremely quiet. "I'd ask, did you clean the bathroom good? He'd answer, but he was not one for conversation." Nor did Dahmer seem to relate to employees. Hauptert took his staff to a corner bar for occasions like birthdays, and "once in a while he'd join us." And then, "he listened but never talked."

He hadn't wanted Hauptert to know much about him. He knew he'd just been discharged from the Army, but didn't know, until I told him, that the discharge was for alcohol abuse. He'd never seen Dahmer wear army clothing.

Dahmer had seemed "hateful" toward his parents, whom he said were divorced. "I said why don't you speak to your parents?" So one day at the store, Hauptert called Lionel Dahmer, spoke to him then handed Jeffrey the phone. That may have been when Lionel first learned his son was in Miami—and how he knew he'd worked for Sunshine Sub.

When I asked about store vehicles, Hauptert recalled a blue van. It was a Dodge, he said, and it was brand-new. Larry had bought it for both Sunshine and Beach Pizza. They used it for getting supplies and making deliveries.

Did Dahmer drive it? Given Dahmer's obvious alcohol problems, "I wouldn't let him drive anything. We had regular delivery people."

Unlike Darlene and Denise's description of the lax situation at Beach Pizza, Sunshine's copy of the keys was not easily accessible. Hauptert said he kept them in his pocket. But, as Hauptert described, Dahmer would have been familiar with the blue van—and undoubtedly knew it was shared with Beach Pizza.

Hauptert said Dahmer had no car of his own. "He had no money for a car."

Did Dahmer know Larry? No, he didn't think so. Nor did he see any indication that Dahmer was homosexual. I also asked if Susan—Hauptert's wife—was the English illegal alien who Dahmer said he'd been friendly with. No, he said, and she was legal. There were two other girls, one from England, another from Ireland, but they both had work permits. Or maybe one of them.

I emailed him the August 1982 mug shot, and he emailed back, "Yes, that's Jeffrey, but he had no mustache."

Next I looked for the two witnesses who in 1991 had told Hollywood police they'd seen Dahmer at the mall. Willis Morgan was in the phone book at the same number he'd given police in 1991. He still lived in Hallandale, sandwiched between Hollywood and the Dade County line.

Although 11 years had passed since his statement, 21 after the event, it was like he'd been waiting all that time for someone like me to call. No one ever had.

"I know the person I saw was the person who took Adam Walsh," he said right off the bat.

Was he still certain that the person he saw was Dahmer? Yes, 100 percent. But then he hedged, because the man he'd seen had long hair, to his collar, and Hoffman had told him Dahmer didn't have long hair because he'd recently been released from the military.

But he still thought that's whom he saw.

I asked him to describe what happened. He was in Hollywood Mall at Radio Shack, browsing the Red Tag sale table in the front of the store in the center aisle. The mall was dead, he remembered. Radio Shack was the second store inside the mall's north entrance, and in his peripheral vision, he saw a man come in through the mall's glass door and stop at the store entrance, about 12 feet from him. After they made eye contact, the man smiled and said, "Hi there, nice day, isn't it?"

"He was a nutcase. He wanted to talk to somebody. I didn't want to look at him. He stood and stared me down hard, for an eternity. If you asked me how long, I'd say probably 20 seconds, but it felt like 10 minutes."

When the man became angry, Morgan looked away, thinking he might leave. Instead, the man entered the store and approached him to within arm's length, hovering over him. As if he was starting over again, the man smiled and repeated—at the same volume and cadence as before, when he was further away—"Hi there, nice day, isn't it?"

Again Morgan didn't respond. "I was thinking, why is he talking so loud? He's standing right next to me. He must want someone to talk to really badly." Morgan pretended to be interested in the store item he'd already picked up, but he was keeping a peripheral eye on the man's hands. The man looked as if he was ready to fight or assault him. "A sense came over me—I thought he wanted to pull my arm and pull me out of the store. I thought, did he have a knife?" Just in case, Morgan used his left arm to cover his rib cage.

Because he had an artificial leg, the result of a motorcycle accident, Morgan couldn't quickly dart away from the man, nor did he want the man to notice his limp. Reluctantly he looked over his shoulder to look for a witness or someone to help. The only other person in the store was the clerk, in the back, stocking shelves. Then, abruptly, the man about-faced and stormed out, apparently feeling angry and rebuffed.

Morgan described the man as similar to his own size—5'10 or 5'11, 180 pounds. He wore blue jeans, but "everything about him was disheveled. He'd been drinking. He was totally unkempt."

What he remembered most about him was his eyes: "He had a look on him, like the devil was in him." When he'd stared at him, "I felt like he was trying to look at the back of my skull."

When the man left, Morgan decided he needed to follow him because he thought he'd approach someone else, and they might need help. He also decided he needed to commit his face to memory. "That's how scary this was."

From a safe distance, Morgan kept an eye on him as he walked the mall. He followed directly behind him, figuring the man would less likely turn 180 degrees than, say, 135 degrees, to the side. The man didn't realize Morgan was there. He continued following as the man entered Sears, then its toy department. As the rest of the mall was mostly empty of customers, so was Sears, he said. To hide, Morgan walked between clothes racks in the men's department, but because the toy department didn't lead anywhere further in the store, and the man would have to reverse his path, Morgan decided then to leave.

He thought about asking two young women at the perfume counter he'd passed to call security, but preferred to hurry on out of the store. He saw no kids in the toy department. He didn't feel safe until he got into his car and locked the door.

Morgan didn't think to note the exact time when he'd been in the mall, but thought it was sometime midday. In 1981, as in 1991, he was working four overnights a week, ending before dawn Sunday morning. He said after his work nights he usually slept until noon, but on the days he didn't work, such as Monday, he tended to awaken in the late morning after falling asleep shortly after midnight.

He did recall he went to the mall first thing that Monday, planning to eat lunch at the German deli. First he browsed at Waldenbooks for about 20 minutes. He remembered that because "it was a week or two before I went to Mexico. I was reading travel books at the bookstore." Then he passed Radio Shack and went in. After the incident, he ended up eating lunch elsewhere, at Denny's.

He said he first saw the Adam story on local TV news that night that a family was looking for their child lost in Sears's toy department. He was floored; he was sure it must have been a result of the man he'd followed. He told a neighbor the next morning, Tuesday, and when he returned to work Wednesday evening, his buddies urged him to report it to Hollywood police.

He stayed up after work and got to the police station around nine A.M., Thursday. In the lobby was an officer specially assigned to receive tips. To recall his name he thought out loud and said Officer Elvis—then said Officer Presley. He wrote down Morgan's name, address and information but wasn't much interested. He asked if he'd seen the man leave in a vehicle. He hadn't, he said; his encounter had been only inside the mall.

Did you get his license plate? the officer asked.

No, he said, I didn't see him outside.

Unsurprisingly, Morgan said police never called back.

I hadn't found any reference to Morgan in the file before 1991, but Hoffman had said a lot of early tips were lost.

Since his job was to prepare the presses, Morgan said part of his work was to read the newspaper's pages, cover to cover. Besides, the job had a lot of down time and he had nothing else to do. In 1983, he remembered, a *Herald* printing clerk named Monica showed him a front-page photo of Ottis Toole, destined for the press. She asked, "Willis, is this the guy?"

No, he said. But on a night in 1991, checking the inside pages before the presses would begin rolling, he saw a photo he did recognize.

"I was freaking out. This is the guy! This was the guy I followed in the mall! My supervisor had to calm me down."

The photo was Jeffrey Dahmer's.

When Morgan first sat down with Jack Hoffman in the detective bureau, Hoffman wasn't excited. Feeling ignored, Morgan decided to take his story to other ears. He wrote to John Walsh, went to Miami Beach police, who he said were rude to him (it wasn't their case), and spoke to an agent in the Miami office of the FBI. His sister Sondra even called Milwaukee police and talked to them at length, but despite a promise, they never called Willis back. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to get a *Herald* reporter and other local news people interested.

Three months after Morgan first called, Hoffman asked him to return and give a sworn taped statement. But later Hoffman told him, "It couldn't be Dahmer. Dahmer's been dismissed as a suspect."

“He so totally, completely discounted Dahmer. He kept convincing me it wasn’t Dahmer.”

His pressroom friends at the *Herald* began to tease him. When other serial killer stories hit the newspaper, they’d ask, “Willis, did you see this guy too?”

Much later, he said, he was watching John Walsh do an *America’s Most Wanted* segment about a child kidnapped from a Kansas shopping center. “He said, I can sympathize, that happened to me, and no witnesses came forward. I called the show to say, I came forward. But they hung up on me. I called three, four times, and each time they got rid of me, like I was some kind of nutcase.

“I’ve always been so certain it was Dahmer because of the face, but they convinced me of the hair. Who knows? Maybe he didn’t have long hair. I remember the eyes, the facial features. Maybe I got confused on the hair.

“I’m positive about what happened, how he approached me, what he said, and that I followed him to the toy department. Plus his eyes. Unusual eyes. The look.

“I stared at him about 15 seconds. I could be wrong about the hair.”

Curious about this point of doubt, I called back Ken Haupt Sr. to ask about Dahmer’s hair.

“He always needed a haircut,” he said. “It was long in the back. I kept telling him to comb it.”

That matched Billy Joe Capshaw’s observation about the Army’s lax hair enforcement in that era. I also asked Haupt if he’d ever seen Dahmer angry. He answered, he didn’t have time to get into it, but yes. “I saw hell in his eyes, once,” he said.

That sounded like Morgan’s description, too.

Carrying library books with still photographs of Dahmer plus an A&E documentary about him, I visited Morgan at his small ground-floor apartment in the tri-plex he owned. He was 55 with thinning blond hair and large eyeglasses, from Long Island, N.Y.—on the phone I thought I’d heard New England. I saw how his gait was affected by his leg prosthesis. In 1977 he’d had a motorcycle accident.

In the mall that day, he explained, “If I’d had two good legs, I wouldn’t have been so nervous.”

My first impression of Willis was kinda frumpy, and I wondered why Dahmer would have been interested in him. I think Willis picked up on this, and he showed me a photograph of himself, circa 1985.

The difference was striking. In the photo he looked like a male model. He wore a skin-tight polo shirt over a well-developed chest. His hand over his shoulder held a windbreaker, and he wore dark sunglasses. Willis said he was heterosexual (I apologized for having to ask) but in the photo he clearly matched a type that Dahmer had often repeated he sought out.

“I think I was his first choice. He went into the toy department, looking for somebody else.”

I showed him a color news photo of Dahmer walking to his first appearance in Milwaukee County Court.

“That’s the guy,” he said.

Later, watching the A&E show, in which Dahmer wore a red prison jumpsuit, he added, “There’s no doubt in my mind.”

One of the books had another Dahmer mug shot, also from 1982, not wearing glasses. “That’s him—with longer hair. I swear to you, when I look at the guy, that’s the guy.

“I’m looking at his eyes, his face. We made eye contact—we locked. It was frightening.”

On the videotape was the trial. Dahmer hadn’t testified in his defense, but at sentencing he spoke to the judge in an attempt to humble himself. I’d hoped Willis could similarly identify his voice, but his reaction wasn’t nearly as certain.

“That could definitely be the voice. But he’s sober.” At the mall, he said, Dahmer had been drunk, and was in a completely different mental state than in court. “I’m trying to give the most honest answer—it’s not the same situation. He was loud and aggressive. Reading that speech, he was docile.”

In 1992, he’d had a similar thought about listening to Dahmer, in person. When Hoffman told him he was going to interview Dahmer in Milwaukee, Willis asked if he could go too, so he could hear Dahmer say, “Hi there, nice day, isn’t it?” Willis even proposed to pay his own fare and expenses. Hoffman told him, “That’s not going to happen.”

After Hoffman’s Milwaukee interview, he called Morgan back. Hoffman said Dahmer had looked him in the eye and “was very, very frank with me. He even told me, I’ve got nothing to lose. If I did Adam I would have told you. And I believe him.” Again insisting he’d seen Dahmer, Morgan asked for a polygraph test, but Hoffman refused him. “Listen, Willis, Jeffrey said he was working 10 hours a day, seven days a week and never took days off. Every once in a while they would just give him a day off. He was sleeping on the beach, didn’t have a vehicle, and was drinking heavily.” He added, “That little kid doesn’t fit his M.O.”

When Morgan heard that Dahmer had been killed in prison, “my heart sank because I knew nobody would ever believe me.”

Online, I researched *The Miami Herald’s* initial coverage of the Dahmer story. It began with inside-page stories on Wednesday, July 24, 1991, and Thursday the 25th. On the front page of Friday the 26th they ran a photo, but the story was again tucked inside.

On Saturday the 27th, his story finally made the front page. On the jump page inside was the sidebar *Milwaukee mutilation suspect lived briefly in Dade*. On Sunday the 28th, the *Herald* ran its 10-years-after story of Adam’s kidnapping, technically a day late.

I wanted to know, which photo caused Willis to react so strongly? Was it before the Saturday story that Dahmer had lived in Miami?

Back at the Miami-Dade main library, I copied pages from the *Herald’s* microfilm. Both Wednesday and Thursday’s papers used the same thumbnail-sized Milwaukee County Sheriff’s mug shot of Dahmer from 1982.

I’d already shown Willis the photo of Dahmer entering the Milwaukee courtroom, which the *Herald* ran Friday prominently in the middle of the front page, two columns. Saturday, on the front page as part of a three-column layout, the *Herald* ran his profile and a different shot from the court appearance. I mailed Willis copies of all the photos.



The photo he remembered seeing first was the thumbnail mug shot—run both the first and second day. In it Dahmer looks straight ahead—the way Willis encountered him, he said. Plus, it was the photo of him nearest to 1981.

“That thumbnail is the spitting image. That is him. That’s the face.”

The only difference, he said, was that in the shot Dahmer had a mustache and glasses. At Sears he wasn’t wearing glasses, and Morgan hadn’t committed to memory whether he had a mustache, and “his hair was longer and scraggly-looking, unkempt and dirty,” like he hadn’t showered or was living out of a car.

So Morgan was saying he’d recognized a photo of Dahmer before any media had reported he’d lived in Florida. Prompted by seeing the 1991 pages, Morgan said he remembered when his supervisor, several days later, showed him the Dahmer-in-Miami story. “That’s when I got goose bumps.”

Although Morgan had left the *Herald* more than five years earlier, he suggested I speak to printers there who’d remember him. He gave me the name Richard Herland, and I reached him at work, by phone. Herland said he hadn’t spoken to Willis since he’d left, but vouched for his credibility and sincerity. He was able to recall the story Willis had told—he’d told everyone at the plant:

“He was at Sears mall, at Radio Shack, and a guy called to him, Hey! He saw the guy, a lunatic, staring at him, Oh no he’s talking to me. He got nervous, he only has one leg”—one real leg, that is.

He recalled Morgan’s description of the man: “crazy-looking, something definitely wrong with him. His eyes bulged out of his head. He had messy-looking hair.

“He started walking toward the back, then Dahmer left Radio Shack, and Willis followed him to Sears, the toy department.” Herland thought there was a commotion in the toy department, and that Willis had followed Dahmer to the parking lot, where he’d seen a van.

Save for the end, Herland echoed what Willis had told me.

Herland also remembered when Dahmer’s photo made the *Herald* in 1991. Willis’s story from ten years earlier stayed consistent, he said. “He’s definitely sane, and definitely telling the truth of what he saw,” Herland said. “Every time I heard the story, it was the same thing.”

William Bowen, the other witness who in 1991 identified Dahmer at the mall, was also easy to find. In an online phone book, he was listed in a suburb of Birmingham, Alabama. Like Morgan, Bowen also seemed to be waiting for my phone call. He told me he’d emailed *America’s Most Wanted* a year earlier, and although as a cameraman and director of production he’d once shot a segment for them, “nobody was very interested.”

“I was there at Sears. To see how violent he was, it wasn’t normal. I saw him take the kid up by one arm, like he was a sack of potatoes. He violently threw him into that car.”

Car? I asked. In 1991 he’d told Hoffman he’d seen a man throw a child into a blue van.

There had been a blue van nearby, he said, which screeched away. He described the car as big, white or off-white, with a Florida license plate lettered BAC or VAC. “I was distracted by the blue van—which may have had nothing to do with the white car.”

In his 1991 statement, Bowen hadn't mentioned any car—much less one that sounded like Ottis Toole's Cadillac. And BAC or VAC were the same letters he'd said were on the blue van's plate.

Rather than say more, I let him continue.

After finishing college, he said, in 1981 he'd come to Hollywood from Alabama and taken a job at Calder Race Track, in north Dade County. He stayed only eight months before returning home. On the day in question, he went to Hollywood Mall to pay his Sears bill—which he did in the moments after the incident. He remembered getting his statement time-stamped—but in 1991, ten years later, he couldn't find that month's statement.

[In 1991 Bowen had in actuality shown Hoffman a Sears bill, date-stamped for payment July 22, 1981. He said he'd returned to the mall five days later, to browse.]

In 1981, he didn't immediately tell police what he'd seen because it took a few days before he realized the possible significance. "I saw a missing poster at a Kentucky Fried Chicken drive-in, near the mall, and that's when I thought, maybe I saw what happened."

At that time, his apartment had been burglarized and his high school class ring stolen. When Hollywood officers responded, he told them what he'd seen at Sears, and they promised to pass it on to the case detectives, but when he got no callback he suspected they didn't.

Upset at South Florida's violence—in 1981, homicides hit an all-time peak—for Bowen his apartment break-in was the last straw. He impulsively resolved to go back home. "I literally loaded up my car one night and left." He thought he was back in Birmingham when Adam's head was found, but didn't know about it at the time because he didn't see the story in the local papers there. He finally read it several months after.

Two years later he read that Hollywood had solved the case. "Then [in 1991] I found out that they hadn't."

Talking to me, Bowen said he felt tremendous pain because he hadn't done more to tell police what he'd seen. "I feel to this day, if they [the officers responding to the burglary] would have taken this seriously, something would have happened."

In 1991, after giving his taped statement, he said Hoffman told him, "Thanks for helping, but we have our man."

I had Bowen start again from the beginning. He said the incident had occurred near Sears's customer pick-up entrance, which had a carport. That was on the Hollywood Boulevard side, facing the police station. It was around lunchtime, he thought, because he had to be at work at the racetrack between 12:30 to 1 o'clock. The mall was about a 25 minutes' drive to Calder.

[In 1991 he told Hoffman he was off work that day.]

He saw a small boy, maybe five years old, wearing a funny hat—he couldn't describe it any better, since he saw him from the back. He was wearing dark-colored shorts—blue, he thought, and a polo-type shirt the color he couldn't recall.

[In 1991, he told Hoffman the child was about five or six, had a Chinese bowl haircut, and wore a striped shirt, perhaps red and blue. He didn't mention pants or a hat.]

The man he saw had a balding spot on the back of his head and his pants were paint-splattered. "He was nuts. He turned toward me. He reminded me of David Letterman—the way he had a gap between his teeth."

I said he seemed to be describing Toole. He agreed. “It looked like Ottis Toole—from what I’ve seen of him.”

I then read Bowen his words to the police, as transcribed:

He said he’d seen a blue van leaving, with a screech. And the man who he’d seen throw the child into the van resembled Jeffrey Dahmer, whose photograph he’d just seen in the *Birmingham News*.

Bowen didn’t believe me. He insisted the newspaper story had been about Toole.

But I had the clipping, from the police file. I read him the headline: *Dahmer denies killings outside Wisconsin, Ohio*. And its subhead: *Florida police investigate possible links to Adam Walsh*. It had a profile photo of Dahmer. And handwritten on the photocopy page was a phone number for Hollywood police.

He still didn’t believe me. Look it up on microfilm in the Birmingham library, I said. I gave him the date—Sunday July 28, 1991. Page 4A.

A stunned silence followed. Bowen didn’t sound like a flake. He was 44, a media professional like myself, and university-educated. “Maybe I was confused,” he conceded, trying to save face. “It shocks me to think... the only name I remember was Ottis Toole.”

Turning off any trial attorney bluster I incidentally might have shown him, I began probing why he might have replaced references of Dahmer with Toole.

He thought he knew: he’d recently read *Tears of Rage*. For years he’d resisted, believing it would alter his memory. Oddly, he’d looked for his name, as someone Walsh would have criticized as a witness who hadn’t done enough to help at the time.

Bowen’s name wasn’t in the book. For that matter, Walsh mentioned Dahmer only briefly, while concluding that Toole had killed his son. Toole was in the photos, severely gap-toothed and badly dressed.

“It all happened in ten seconds,” he explained.

I needed advice, so I visited Brian Cavanagh, the Fort Lauderdale homicide prosecutor. Did Bowen’s reversal ruin his credibility?

No, he thought, he could be rehabilitated. He suggested I mail Bowen a full copy of his transcribed words, plus the *Birmingham News* clip. It was crucial to the case, Cavanagh said. “He is the hub of the wheel in which all of the circumstantial evidence comes together.” Without Bowen’s blue van, Dahmer’s access to a similar vehicle at Sunshine Sub or Beach Pizza didn’t matter.

Back to the online phone books, I obtained Bowen’s address. Apologizing in a letter for the intrusion, I mailed him the papers. A week later I called and left a message, then reached him the next night. The night of the first call he’d reluctantly read what I’d sent. “It was eye-opening,” he said.

The handwriting on the newspaper clipping was his, as I’d guessed. Yes, now he remembered, it was about Dahmer.

As he’d said in 1991, he’d only seen a blue van. He explained: “After I read the [Walsh] book, it tainted my memory and I saw a white car.”

He still thought the man was gap-toothed. But talking more, he agreed, the book might have affected that impression too.

What he remained certain of was that he’d seen a man who’d “lifted a kid by one arm, kicking and screaming, and slung him into the vehicle.” Later he described the

throw as “like a pendulum,” with a windup. The throw itself, when the child hit the inside wall of the van, must have injured or even killed him.

“That’s something you will never, ever forget. My memory of all this is very vague. Certain points I do remember; other points, I don’t know.”

On the abduction, I noted, he was consistent from Hoffman’s 1991 interview to mine.

“The guy was nuts, out of his mind, he was raging. He turned around for just a brief moment. I was scared to death. How could a father treat his child like this? Others around me were in shock, too.

“At the time I remember a blue van—it was nondescript. I read the book, thought maybe I’m wrong, it was a white car.”

Again, I thought, Willis Morgan had said when Hoffman told him Toole was the prime suspect, Morgan had questioned himself whether he’d really seen Toole.

A van is higher above the ground than a car, I reminded Bowen. You just told me the man lifted up the kid.

He agreed. “He had to lift the kid up into the van. Big blue van. Held him up. Threw him in, peeled off.” Again, later, he added the van sped off almost before its door was closed. In its dust was the sight and smell of burning rubber.

I asked if he could say for sure he’d absolutely seen Dahmer. He wouldn’t commit—but he hadn’t said that in 1991 either. I offered to email him Dahmer’s August 1982 mug shot.

Days later, Bowen called me. “It doesn’t ring a bell. But I saw the guy from the back. He turned around [for just a moment]. At first I thought it was an angry parent. Looking back, I’ve never seen a parent like that. Maybe this wasn’t an angry parent.”

Within the last year, he said, he’d watched an MSNBC documentary about John Walsh, which I’d seen too. After that he emailed *America’s Most Wanted* asking, is this solved or not? He then re-volunteered his information.

He got a callback from someone who said he represented the Walsh family. He’d said he’d follow up, but no one ever did.

“I don’t know how to make this right. I have a lot of guilt that maybe I could have helped more.” At that moment, he added later, “I didn’t think evil. Why would somebody abduct a kid in broad daylight? It just didn’t cross my mind. It’s been a thorn in my side all this time. What could I have done differently?”

I WEIGHED THE PROS AND CONS of sharing my information with Hollywood police. At some point they’d have to become involved, since it was their case. Especially if the blue van could be found, they’d have to do crime scene tests. Also, I needed help finding the van’s vehicle identification number. As well, it didn’t look like Larry would talk to me, but maybe he’d talk to them.

On the other hand, I expected they’d see me as intruding. Police don’t like reporters to compete with their investigations, certainly not to propose dismissed solutions in their department’s highest-profile case ever.

In November 2002, I re-contacted Mark Smith. It had been five years since we'd last spoken. As I expected, Smith was interested but skeptical. To give him the full context of my theory I offered a draft of my Dahmer chapters. He accepted, and I emailed them.

Smith was then chief of detectives, but was about to take a promotion to road patrol lieutenant, initially on the graveyard shift. For the time being he would keep the Walsh case but eventually his successor would inherit it. Because he wouldn't know details like Smith, it sounded to me like pretty much the end of the line. Smith insisted no, every new lead would continue to be investigated.

Smith promised to track the blue van and interview Larry and Darlene Hill after he finished reading what I'd sent. To keep after him, I'd call after midnight. During late-night lulls he'd read a few pages then put it down. Weeks of good-natured nudging turned into months.

In March 2003 he told me he'd heard Jimmy Campbell had died, of illness. The newspapers hadn't reported it. If so it would leave another permanent hole in the story. In 1995 Smith wanted to interview him, but Campbell's parents wouldn't say where he was. Smith said he didn't press because he didn't think Campbell was guilty.

Online I searched *The Miami Herald* and *Sun-Sentinel* and found death listings for James Campbell, 47, died on February 28, 2003. From the microfilm I had Campbell's date of birth, and I called the funeral home, in Hollywood, to confirm whether it was the same. It was.

Meanwhile, Smith said, he'd asked the head of the auto theft unit to check Larry's vehicle registration records. What came back, he emailed me, was an '81 Olds station wagon and a '76 Buick. Which was odd, because when I'd checked, months before, they'd reported a '76 Dodge, no Buick, and a Lincoln Town Car.

Months passed and Smith still hadn't finished my Dahmer pages. Finally, in July, he said the new chief of detectives would assume the case.

His name was Scott Pardon. When I reached him, he promised to read my material and interview Larry. Since it would be an official police action, he wouldn't let me be present, but he promised to share its results with me when it was written up in a police report.

In August Pardon gave me an appointment, with Smith present. They were looking for Larry—he'd since left the church. His driver's license gave the address of the condo he'd sold a year earlier.

Meantime a detective had spoken to Ken Haupt Jr., who couldn't remember a blue van, and was adamant that Sunshine Sub didn't have delivery vehicles before 1982. In '82 Haupt entered the insurance business and wrote policies on either vans or pickups Larry purchased that year. They were registered to Beach Pizza.

Reviewing my notes, Haupt Jr. wasn't my source on the blue van. His father was, as well as Darlene and Denise. I suggested Pardon contact them.

Scott Pardon said he'd found Larry—within the Hollywood city limits, at that. He was living in a motel, apparently fallen on hard times. He'd explained why he hadn't spoken to me—he doesn't talk to reporters.

The news was Larry said Beach Pizza never had vans, contradicting what Haupt Jr. had told them. He had white pickup trucks but never a blue van.

When he saw Dahmer's photograph in the news in 1991, he didn't recognize it. The sub shop might have had a guy named Jeffrey, but he never remembered him using delivery vehicles, and besides, Sunshine didn't even do deliveries. And he couldn't have taken a vehicle without Larry's knowing.

Also, Larry said he'd kept no records of his vehicles.

Between Larry, Haupt Jr., and a records search, police had failed to confirm the existence of a blue van. Pardon said he'd have his detective call Darlene and Haupt Sr. in the next week, but he expected to close out the investigation as inconclusive.

I'd been patient for most of a year, but as I'd originally anticipated, they weren't interested. They never called Darlene or Haupt Sr., and as a result I didn't call Hollywood police again, either.

I was going to have to document the blue van myself.

If it was no longer in state DMV files, where could an errant mention of it be hiding? A speeding ticket?

I asked Denise. Larry drove like a cop, aggressively, and he could have gotten tickets. Besides him, two kids who did deliveries, Gino Cocco and Joey Trapasso, would take the van. They liked to party in Broward, and neither had his own car. Joey would often take Larry's keys, say he'd be back in an hour, and not return for two days.

Darlene had told me Gino and Joey's names before, along with Joey's sister Connie, who'd also worked for Larry. The Trapassos were a family who'd lived in Salem House, and she'd introduced Joey and Connie to Larry for jobs. Connie became Denise's best friend.

At his core, Joey was a sweet kid, Darlene said, but wild. He was heavily into drugs and drinking, and likely would have gotten tickets or DUIs.

She thought about him some more. Joey was gay, and Larry had been very good to him.

"Do you see why my stomach got a knot when I talked to Larry?" she said. "Now I see a different rationale" for him helping Joey. "Joey's a handsome boy. But to get money for drugs, he did tricks. And Larry was taking care of this dumb-assed kid."

I searched for Gino and Joey. Gino was easy, because he had phone numbers in Hallandale. Joey wasn't. Darlene remembered his full name, same as his father, and Denise remembered he was born in 1963 and the month.

I called my Metro-Dade detective friend for a favor. Would he look up Joey to get a current address? He did and found he was dead. He gave me his Social Security number, which I looked up online in the Social Security Death Index. He'd died in 1996, in New Jersey.

Darlene was shocked to hear the news. I was deflated myself—another consequence of arriving too late. The next best thing was to look for his sister Connie.

A year before, Denise had told me about a 1983 car accident she'd been in. Connie had been driving in a car Larry leased for her. They were hit someplace around N.E. 163rd St. and W. Dixie Hwy.—inside the incorporated city of North Miami Beach. Hoping to get a VIN that could connect me to Larry's other vehicles, I'd gotten a copy of the report, but the car, a white Chevy Chevette, was registered to a rental car agency.

Now I was glad to have it. It gave me Connie's date of birth and Florida driver's license number. I called back the detective and he offered to run an "AutoTrack" report, a

database used by police and private investigators. I went to visit him, and he ran the AutoTrack on both Larry and Connie, amounting to 18 and 28 pages respectively. Most of the information was garbage—names of completely unrelated persons who over the years had lived at addresses used by, or near, the subjects. The more you knew what you were looking for, the more valuable the report.

Connie's married name was Daramola, and her most recent addresses and phone numbers were in Pennsylvania. Connie's phone numbers didn't connect, or weren't right. I tried the online phone books for any Daramola in Pennsylvania or New Jersey, and still found nothing useful.

Neither Dade nor Broward post traffic citations online. But they were available at courthouses. In Broward, the database goes back to 1980. For Joey I found a 1985 DUI and marijuana arrest by the Broward Sheriff's Office. It didn't list what he was driving. Because of later probation violations, the case remained open and active. That was good, because the file would still exist.

Larry had nothing—a 1999 citation for an expired license tag, driving a '94 Ford. Gino also had nothing old.

In Dade, online, I found a March 1984 Metro-Dade Police arrest of Joey for cocaine possession. I asked the department records office to search their microfilm and they sent the report: an officer saw him sitting at a bus bench at 4:40 A.M., asked him for ID and saw a baggie with traces of white powder in his wallet. Charges were later dropped.

At the same time, I asked for the 1982 lost/stolen tag report Larry had made on his '76 Dodge. Could I have overlooked that the Dodge might be a van? The report gave a license tag and VIN number, but when I called Chrysler customer service, the VIN corresponded with a Dodge Coronet sedan.

For Dade traffic records, at the criminal courthouse I had to take a number behind people waiting to pay their traffic fines. An hour later, given my unusual request, I was shown a supervisor who offered to look up all three names in purged computer records and microfilm for 1980-87.

A day later I got answers. Two more tickets for Joey: one in 1984, and an arrest by Florida Highway Patrol in 1985. I submitted Joey's three citation numbers to the state DMV records department. I also requested Larry and Joey's driving records and Larry's vehicle registrations (again), but everything that old was gone.

Darlene had thought she remembered Larry telling her in 1981 that the blue van had been stolen. Now she began to doubt that memory, but she didn't doubt that he had a van. "If Larry didn't have a blue van, then my furniture walked itself to storage."

"The van was there about a year," Denise said. She thought it was new—possibly a Dodge, as Hauptert Sr. said, but no more than a few years old. She didn't remember if it was stolen, or when, but she thought they had used it in 1981.

Gino Cocco called back. He didn't know Joey had died, but did recall a blue van—and its single seat. He agreed with Denise it was relatively new then, somewhere between a '79-'81 model year, and agreed with Hauptert Sr. it might have been a Dodge. It was dark-blue, regular-sized as opposed to extended, as Darlene recalled, and had automatic transmission and AM-FM. He didn't remember any dents or signage, but added that all Larry's vehicles "had a lot of shit in them—papers, cups, whatever."

"I remember driving it," he said.

He remembered Larry driving it in January 1981 when he picked him up at Fort Lauderdale airport after flying in from Montreal, as well as after other flights he took from Montreal. “Larry used that van. Early in the morning, he went to the farmer’s market” to buy supplies, he said. Gino knew because he worked the breakfast shift, starting at six.

But in April ‘81 Gino returned to Montreal, and when he came back a year and a half later, “the van wasn’t there anymore.” He didn’t know what had happened to it.

He remembered cleaning up the Sunshine store after Darlene left, before it reopened as a sub shop. But because he left just after that, he didn’t recognize Dahmer as an employee. “Larry was gay,” he blurted with a laugh, in case I hadn’t already heard. Most of the delivery drivers “were his boys,” including Joey (who was 18 in 1981) and Larry let them take the delivery vehicles for their own use. Without me asking, Gino said he himself wasn’t gay.

“Larry was weird. His life was sexually oriented. He was fat, bald, and had crooked teeth—not the most attractive guy on the planet.”

He was uninterested in making money. The “boys” would take from his cash register but “he didn’t care.” Once, Joey broke into Larry’s safe to steal money to buy drugs. In fact, Gino said he was with Joey at the time, and they both did drugs together. Gino added that he’s been clean since April 1985, after his second overdose. Had he then been alone then, he thinks he would have died.

One of Larry’s friends who was a waiter elsewhere would recruit drifters in Haulover Beach, a park two miles south of Beach Pizza. Larry would hire them for the shop and have sex with them. Coincidentally, that waiter was the same person who’d introduced Darlene to Larry after she’d been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He had lived in Salem House. She’d known he was gay, but didn’t know the rest of Gino’s story until I told her.

When I asked Gino where the waiter was, he didn’t know.

Gino also described gay prostitution on Collins Avenue around Beach Pizza. Once, while he waited at a bus stop, a man tried to grab his genitals—a pickup ploy.

That again reminded me of Dahmer talking about being solicited on Collins. Maybe he wasn’t referring to Larry. I asked, even if Larry hadn’t hired him, and he was working in his other shop, would Larry have had, in effect, radar for someone like Dahmer, a drifter?

“Absolutely,” he said.

On Gino’s list of other Beach Pizza insiders, the first I found was Chuck Marcus, who’d managed Souvenir World, next door. Gino said Larry would let Chuck eat for free, and Darlene said, “Chuck was in Beach Pizza more than Larry. He knows everything.”

Marcus agreed he’d hung around Beach Pizza. As for Larry’s delivery vehicles, he remembered Chevy S-10s—small pickup trucks, and either Chevettes or Escorts. I asked if there were any others. He thought about it.

“Larry’s blue van!” He described it as royal blue—“not regular blue-blue.” It was a basic van, two seats.

How easy was it to take any of the keys? “Real easy,” he said. “I used to take them myself.” He remembered the vehicles always had “that pizza smell.”



Marcus knew Larry was gay and also that he had guys stay at his place. He didn't recall Dahmer, from his mug shot, but thought he looked like one of Larry's boys. "He had the profile. He could have stayed at Larry's," he said.

Could he have had access to the vans? "Yes, definitely."

Marcus forwarded the mug shot to a friend, Robert Gaines, who also knew Larry and Beach Pizza. Gaines did recognize Dahmer, he said. He and Gaines were working together in Gaines's shop that made yacht blinds, and he gave me his phone number.

Back then, Gaines told me, his father had a clothing store in Sunshine's strip mall, and Robert managed the shop after five. "He'd bring food," he said, referring to Dahmer. "He bought something—a shirt."

You remember Dahmer bought a shirt from you?

"I have a good memory." When he saw the mug shot, he said, "That's him."

Dahmer was quiet, an introvert, he said. He wore raggedy clothes. I asked, do you remember him with Larry?

"I can't say yes, can't say no. Larry always had young guys with him." Robert's words for Larry were uncomplimentary, the most printable being, he had a "very weird personality."

He remembered the blue van—he thought it was a Chevy, a dull, dark, cobalt blue. "I was in the van. It was an empty cargo van." Echoing Darlene, he called it a "pigsty. It was always a mess."

The keys were easy to take. "Larry was around, then he wasn't. Drivers would take the vans for personal use."

Gaines thought Larry had bought the van, used, from a nearby dealer, Bill Kelley Chevrolet, in Hallandale. I called the dealership to see if they'd kept old records.

Bill Kelley Jr., the owner, told me he was the only employee still around from 1981. Just last summer, in 2002, he'd trashed all his oldest records.

I asked him, if I found the VIN, what were the chances of a circa-1980 standard van still being on the road?

"Very slim," he said. "Highly unlikely."

After leaving a voice mail for Linda Trapasso at a New Jersey number, she called back. She was shocked that I knew her son Joey was dead. I insisted I only knew from the Social Security Death Index, I didn't know the cause. Her reaction made me suspect it was AIDS.

But she said she'd pass on my number to Connie.

Days later Connie called. Joey did die of AIDS, she said. He spent his last two weeks in a hospice situation at his mother's apartment. Seven years later, Linda was still traumatized by it.

He'd been diagnosed as HIV-positive twelve years earlier—which meant 1984. Later, he'd also been diagnosed as paranoid-schizophrenic, a result of his drug use. After a while he got tired of taking his meds, both for the mental illness and AIDS. The only good that came from it was it inspired Connie to get a degree that enabled her to work in a behavioral hospital setting. Currently she was studying for a master's, at night.

But back when both she and Joey were working for Larry, Joey had confided in her. To Connie, "Larry was like my grandfather." He was also nurturing with young men, but for them there was an exchange that included sex.

“Larry gave my brother money, a job. There was a hierarchy for Larry; if he liked you, you got to do whatever you wanted.”

But Larry played favorites. “When Larry found a new boy, he would toss out the old boy—which was Joey. Then when he’d toss out the new boy, he’d come back looking for Joey.”

I asked Connie to recall the delivery vehicles. She remembered Escorts (Chevettes, actually), and a white van and a van she at first thought was green. When I asked, if it could have been blue, she said yes, it was dark-colored. It was old and cruddy, and missing a seat.

“Only my brother drove the vans,” she thought, he and Larry. And they were both reckless drivers, and likely got tickets in them.

Using the number I’d found, Darlene had called Linda to offer condolences. For three and a half hours, Linda had poured out her heart. “My blood was boiling,” Darlene agonized. “Joey wasn’t gay—Joey was gay for money, so he could take girls out, or get money for drugs.” Because she’d helped both Joey and Connie get jobs with Larry, “now the guilt is on me—I fixed it so [Larry] could stay there. I wasn’t unobservant, but never in a million years I thought he would do something [like this]. I knew my girls were fine with him. I never thought their friends would be at risk.”

Another name supplied by Gino, as well as Darlene, was Walter DiGrazia, one of Larry’s pizza chefs. Gino thought he was in Fort Lauderdale, and there I found his ex-wife Ella.

“Larry had a white van,” she recalled. I asked if there were others.

“Blue van. The picture just popped into my mind.”

She described it as not new, with old-style round headlights, its color between light blue and a darker sky-blue. It had just one seat, and its two back doors opened.

She remembered that Joey Trapasso did a lot of drugs. “I never had a problem with Joey. He was always sweet to me.” But she knew that he took Larry’s vehicles. “He even took the keys to our car one night. The car reappeared at eight A.M. Walter was very angry.” But with Larry’s vehicles, “that happened all the time.”

Larry, she said, was “always, always bailing out kids.” Walter would know more, she said, and gave me his cell phone number. But when I reached him, Walter didn’t want to talk. He didn’t recall Dahmer at one of Larry’s stores, or from his mug shot. He said he never worked at Sunshine Sub, although Darlene said Larry had told her he had, and Denise told me the same. He said he only vaguely recalled Sunshine Sub. He also said he didn’t recall the blue van, or any van Larry might have owned.

Although Connie didn’t remember Dahmer from his mug shot, I still counted four who did. For the blue van, I had eight witnesses, even if their descriptions varied. But I still lacked someone who saw Dahmer and Larry together. I called back Ken Haupt Jr. and asked how often Larry had visited Sunshine while he worked there.

“Anytime at all, day or evening,” he said. “He’d bring supplies, or sometimes I’d take supplies to Beach Pizza—cups, a box of pizza cheese.”

Sunshine didn’t have many employees, he said, two at night when he was mostly there, maybe three during the day. Unlike Beach Pizza, it wasn’t a moneymaker. “I remember no great rushes when you were so busy you couldn’t handle it.”

The third employee, unneeded at night, would have been the busboy—Dahmer’s job. Then likely, Larry would have known Dahmer, then? “I would imagine so, at least seen him.”

18  
25th Anniversary

HOLLYWOOD POLICE STILL AIM TO CLOSE  
ADAM WALSH MURDER CASE OF 1981  
—*Hollywood Gazette*

IN JULY 2006, AS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of the case approached, I learned that Mark Smith, now a Hollywood police captain, had once again taken charge of the case. To a monthly community paper called the *Hollywood Gazette* he said, “The best thing about cold cases is that the older they get, it actually works in our favor.” He added, “We do get some tips—none that have panned out. To this day, we’re still actively pursuing tips.”

In July, Congress passed then President Bush signed at the White House on July 27, in front of John and Reve Walsh and all their children born since Adam, the Adam Walsh Child Safety and Protection Act. Among other provisions it mandated the creation of a national sex offender registry.

In a White House press conference, Walsh spoke about the murder investigation:

I never give up hope. I always talk about how my wife and I have never gotten justice. A lot of people think that Ottis Toole, who died in a Florida prison for some horrible crimes, he died of cirrhosis and AIDS in prison, was never charged. The sad thing is that they found a piece of bloody carpet in his car years ago when he was a suspect, and there was no DNA, and unfortunately the Hollywood police over the years misplaced that carpet, which is a real tragedy, because the FBI lab said to me, ‘Mr. Walsh, if you could give us that carpet, even now, in one day we would tell you whether Adam was in that car or not and whether that man, who is the main suspect, murdered Adam.’

I made another attempt to bring my evidence to Mark Smith, and as well tried to enlist the Broward State Attorney’s office.

At a proposed meeting, I offered to bring in Willis Morgan, Gino Cocco, and Darlene Hill. On the phone I would present Ken Haupert Sr., Bill Bowen, Billy Capshaw, and Linda Swisher.

Although Morgan was willing to go to a meeting, he didn’t think Mark Smith would listen to him. In 1994, when Smith first took on the file as a cold case, Willis had called him. When he said he’d seen Dahmer in the mall, Smith replied, “Yeah, right.”

I spoke directly to Chuck Morton, the Chief Assistant State Attorney, whom I knew, but couldn’t convince him to commit one of his office’s investigators. Smith told me he was ready to take the meeting if the State Attorney became involved. In the end it didn’t happen, especially after I told Smith I wanted to bring in Willis.

Reviewing the case file, I found a reference to Neil Purtell, an FBI agent assigned to its Madison, Wisconsin, office, who in 1992 had called and asked Jack Hoffman to come to Milwaukee to interview Dahmer. When Hoffman did come, Purtell was supposed to have sat in on it but he was sick that day and Dan Craft had substituted. I found him easily on the Internet, now retired from the FBI and working as a private detective in Madison.

On the phone, Purtell was a friendly, folksy guy who still thought the Dahmer-Adam theory was viable. He was on the case starting the morning after Dahmer was captured. As police quickly learned from Dahmer where he'd lived over the years, Purtell said he made eye contact with a Milwaukee detective, both thinking the same thing: Could he have been connected to Adam Walsh?

The FBI's behavioral sciences unit had trained Purtell as a profiler. After Dahmer's murder convictions, he was able to meet with him a number of times in prison where he revisited the possibility he'd killed Adam.

"I asked, do you want to tell me anything about that?"

Dahmer paused. "Honest to God, Neil, I didn't do that."

"Let's leave God out of it," Purtell responded. "It's my experience, when people overemphasize their denials, it's usually an admission. When someone says, Honest to God, I know they're lying.

"Did he do Adam? I think he did," he said. "My impression was, he admitted it."

Later I found this: In a TED Talk posted in July 2011, Pamela Meyer, author of the book *Liespotting*, agreed with Purtell. Referring to Bill Clinton's denial of sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, she said if Clinton has said, "Well, to tell you the truth..." or Richard Nixon's favorite, 'In all candor...' he would have been a dead giveaway for any liespotter that knows that qualifying language, as it's called, qualifying language like that further discredits the subject."

As he'd said to Hoffman, Dahmer told Purtell he "didn't do children."

"Bullshit, you do," Purtell berated him, reminding Dahmer of his conviction for sexual assault on a minor. Dahmer then said that whoever killed Adam would not be able to live in any prison.

When Purtell asked if he'd take a polygraph, Dahmer responded that Florida had the death penalty.

I knew that Dahmer had kept photographs of people in his Milwaukee apartment, some of whom were his victims. I'd been trying to find if any children had been discovered among them. Purtell didn't know. I'd called Milwaukee Police, first speaking with a detective lieutenant who as soon as I said Dahmer referred me to the public information officer. That was Anne E. Schwartz, a former *Milwaukee Journal* reporter who'd written a book about Dahmer. After unanswered messages left on her voice mail, I obtained her email address from the police chief's office and sent her the question.

This was my response, in full:

Police thoroughly followed the lead regarding Dahmer and Adam Walsh, and it was proven to be false. There was no evidence to indicate that Dahmer had anything to do with Adam Walsh's murder. If I can help you in the future, please let me know.

I told that to Purtell. He wasn't surprised. He'd run into the same attitude in 1992, trying to get Hollywood Police to investigate even only as far as they did. They didn't want to spend the money, he said. He wished me good luck in changing their minds.

Serial killers usually fixate on specific kinds of victims, but Dahmer was an atypical serial killer, he said. In fact, "Dahmer broke our profile. He was morally indiscriminate. He'd do anything when he was in the mood." Although he had his victim preferences, he was willing to take whoever was available. Purtell called him "opportunistic."

"The whole motivation is power. If it was a woman, fine." Or a child, because he or she was easy to control. He paraphrased a line from prosecutor E. Michael McCann's closing argument at his Milwaukee murder trial, that Dahmer's ejaculations were more important to him than someone else's life.

Purtell was also shocked to hear that Billy Capshaw had said Dahmer had come looking for him in Arkansas in late 1981, driving what he thought was his father's old car. Neither Jeff nor Lionel Dahmer had mentioned that to any police, who therefore had discounted reports of killings or missing person from anywhere but Milwaukee, Chicago, and Akron. "We always thought, what if he had a car?" Purtell said. "That would break open everything."

Purtell suggested I speak to Dan Craft, also since retired from the FBI, who'd also interviewed Dahmer several times in prison. He too had been trained as a profiler. I found him on Internet, teaching criminal justice classes at Metropolitan State University, in Minneapolis.

Craft had believed Dahmer's denials. I let him read my full argument then he called me back with a mixed response. It remained his personal and professional opinion that Dahmer told him the truth. Yet he thought all the new information leading to Dahmer seemed real. "Dahmer was very, very believable. I looked him in the eyes and pressed him. His answers looked truthful, and sounded truthful," he said.

But, he said, as a polygraph examiner for the FBI, he was used to people lying to him, and he'd even complimented Dahmer on how good he was at it. "I know that people can lie, and very convincingly. I'm very good at detecting lies. But with that said, I'm not naïve enough to think I can't be fooled."

He spoke what sounded like Rule One to his classes: "In law enforcement there are no coincidences. There may be coincidences in real life, but not in law enforcement. They don't pay us to believe in coincidences, they pay us to get off our ass and talk to people and to investigate every lead thoroughly."

Craft agreed when I said that nothing Dahmer said should have been believed on its face and that Dahmer didn't give up anything he didn't have to. He had no choice but to detail his murders of those whose skulls, other body parts, identifications and photographs were in his apartment. He gave up Steven Hicks, in his hometown of Bath, but sooner or later police would have approached him on that, too. Since his father knew he'd been in Miami and worked for Sunshine Sub the summer of 1981, he had to talk about that, too.

“If I had the case, even feeling how I feel, if somebody came to me with what you did, I’d take a look at it. Put him in or put him out. Don’t let it sit there, like a matzo ball.”

Craft said he’d seen everything taken from Dahmer’s apartment, and although Dahmer had a large amount of porn, there were no photos of children as young as Adam. And because he’d handled a number of sexually motivated crimes, he’d learned that the offender’s “motivating turn-on” was usually consistent, especially in pedophiles.

“Homosexuals usually don’t like sex with the opposite sex. Bisexuals will swing both ways. But occasionally you will find a ‘try-sexual,’ meaning they will try anything, with anybody, at any time. Sometimes it just boils down to convenience—any port in a storm, or as the song goes, ‘If you can’t be with the one you love, love the one you’re with.’”

## 19

### Was Willis Morgan Right?

HERE WOULD HAVE BEEN MY ARGUMENT to Mark Smith and Chuck Morton:

That summer of 1981, Dahmer was clearly in South Florida. By then he’d already killed at least once and maybe more times, severing the head of at least Steven Hicks. He was interested enough in children to masturbate in front of them, in Germany, as he did later in Wisconsin. Where he worked that summer of 1981 there was a blue van at the sister shop close by, and access to its keys sounded easy. In addition, some days when he went to work in the late morning he was drunk and immediately told to go home. Two identifications placed him that midday at Hollywood Mall, and later in Dahmer’s career he picked up at least three victims in shopping malls—the last of whom he “didn’t know from Adam.” Plus, an FBI agent who’d interviewed him thought he’d admitted the murder.

In the other corner were witnesses William Mistler and Mary H., who said they’d seen Toole at the mall that day. The credibility of all the mall witnesses suffered because none were in the police records before 1991. However, Willis Morgan and Bill Bowen said they’d told police what they’d seen just after the murder.

No one but John Walsh thought Mistler was a reliable witness. Only Phil Mundy and Walsh thought Mary H. was useful. Neither of their stories was well corroborated. Jack Hoffman’s dismissal of the Dahmer witnesses had stopped anyone else from seriously considering them, but in fact, Morgan and Bowen’s stories were well corroborated.

As to identifying Dahmer, Morgan was more valuable than Bowen. Bowen had been an observer, Morgan had been approached as a pickup. But Bowen connected Dahmer with a blue van.

Both said they’d never forget the essence of what they’d experienced. About that I believed them entirely. Potentially suspect—certainly at any trial, which would never happen because Dahmer was dead—were their memories of details.

The problem with all four witnesses was time—and continued publicity so long after the case, much of it generated by John Walsh. His belief in Toole’s guilt muddied Bowen’s recollections, and possibly also Mistler’s and Mary H.’s. Morgan seemed the least affected, since his 1991 statement was so consistent with what he’d told me later.

Since I'd gone as far as I could to put Dahmer in a blue van that might match Bowen's statement, I decided to work a second track. I organized similar fact evidence from descriptions of Dahmer that might match Morgan's statement.

### ***Was Jeffrey Dahmer the man Willis Morgan saw in Hollywood Mall?***

Morgan said the man he saw in 1981 was 20-25, 180 pounds. That matched Dahmer, 21, 180 pounds.

#### **1. Drunk and disheveled.**

One of the most striking remarks Morgan said to me was: "Everything about him was *disheveled. He'd been drinking.* He was totally *unkempt.*"

a. To me, Ken Haupt Sr. said that after he hired Dahmer, he was sober for the first few weeks. "Then all of a sudden, he came in *filthy dirty—like he was drinking all night. Drunk and dirty*, unable to work. *I'd send him home*, next day he'd be okay. Two months later [as his problems persisted] I fired him."

b. The Army had discharged Dahmer early for alcoholism. David D. Goss, his platoon squad leader, said Dahmer's heavy drinking began late in 1980 when he'd go on three- to five-day binges: "It started to *affect his job and appearance.* He started missing work. He would come to work at battalion aid station under the influence. You could smell it on his breath. *He'd be staggering.* Or he wouldn't show up for work."

According to an August 16, 1991, FBI document, Dahmer's military records show that he'd been counseled on seven dates between August 8, 1980, and March 9, 1981, "regarding his behavior and actions that were a result of his alcohol abuse." On February 5, 1981, he was enrolled in an alcoholic rehabilitative program but refused treatment, indicating "he was not willing to control his alcoholic intake."

c. In his book *A Father's Story*, Lionel Dahmer wrote that at the end of the summer 1981, Jeff had phoned from Miami Beach asking for money because he was broke and had no prospects. Taking the call, Lionel's second wife Shari instead offered to buy him an air ticket home to Ohio. "I picked him up at the Cleveland airport a few days later... Once he came closer to me I saw that Jeff was *filthy and disheveled.* He'd grown a mustache which he hadn't cleaned or tended and was now *scraggly and unkempt.* His clothes were unwashed and covered with stains. *He stank of whiskey...*"

d. Later, Lionel Dahmer wrote, his son's alcoholism revealed a vicious edge: "Only two weeks after returning home [from Miami], Jeff was *arrested* at the local Ramada Inn. He'd been asked to leave the lounge because he'd been drinking straight out of a vodka bottle... The police had finally been called, and at their arrival, *Jeff had suddenly turned violent.* It had taken three officers to restrain him."

e. Speaking in his interview to Robert Ressler, Dahmer spoke of how he'd found hitchhiker Steven Hicks, his first admitted victim, near his parents' home in 1978. "I had the car, about five o'clock at night, and I was driving back home, *after drinking...*"

Ressler pursued the connection between Dahmer's alcoholism and his desire (or need) to find sexual partners.

**Q:** *Were you always drinking when victims were picked up?*

A. *Mmm-hmm.*

f. Although Dahmer didn't drink all the time, he drank a great deal, said Billy Capshaw. "*The drunk Jeff will kill you,*" he said.

## 2. The Devil in Dahmer's eyes.

Also interesting was how Morgan described to me the man's eyes, which had briefly locked with his: "He had a look on him, *like the Devil was in him*. It was so scary, I was afraid to look at him... *Eyes. Unusual eyes. The look.*"

a. In summer 1978, just before Jeffrey left home for his only semester of college, Lionel Dahmer recalled in his book when Shari discovered two rings missing, one garnet-and-diamond:

Jeff denied that he had any knowledge of the robberies. He appeared insulted by the accusation, and actually rose to leave the room.

At that moment, Shari, a woman who is over six feet tall in heels and who has a commanding voice, told Jeff in no uncertain terms, that he was to sit back down. For a single, chilling instant, Shari, as she later told me, *glimpsed a flash of terrible rage as it passed into Jeff's eyes*. In an instant the rage was gone, but in that moment, Shari had seen the other Jeff, the one who looked out from behind the dull, unmoving mask.

Shari told the *Milwaukee Journal* something similar in 1991. After Jeff was released from jail for molesting Somsack Sinthasomphone, she said "He had no light in his eyes."

b. On July 22, 1991, after Tracy Edwards escaped Dahmer's apartment, he ran to a nearby police car and gushed: "He threatened me, and made advances. Suddenly he had this big knife in his hand and pressed the blade on my breastbone, right here, by my heart. He said, 'You die if you don't do what I say.' *His face was completely changed*. I wouldn't have recognized him. *It was like he was the devil himself.*"

c. Talking to me, Ken Haupt Sr. said that during an argument with Dahmer, "*I saw hell in his eyes once.*"

d. Another Dahmer victim, Ronald D. Flowers, Jr., 25 at the time of his sexual assault by Dahmer, testified at Dahmer's murder trial that the day before Easter in April 1988, Dahmer met him at a gay bar. Flowers's car wouldn't start, and Dahmer offered to help. They took a cab to Dahmer's grandmother's house, then, unknown to him, Dahmer drugged his coffee:

The next thing I recall happening was thinking to myself, '*Why is he looking at me like that?*' *For the first time his eye contact was solid. He didn't divert it at all*. It was almost as though he was waiting for something. So, naturally, I started drinking the coffee quicker because I was getting uneasy to get out of there. The next thing I remember was becoming extremely dizzy and my head started to go down and that's it.



Flowers awoke in a Wauwatosa hospital with contusions to his head and hip, his underwear inside out. Dahmer told police he wanted to kill Flowers but didn't because he thought his grandmother had seen him.

e. In another recollection of Dahmer making concentrated eye contact, wrote Richard W. Jaeger and M. William Balousek in *Massacre in Milwaukee*, "Jeffrey once pulled out a can of beer in a McDonald's restaurant and drank it in front of a police officer sitting a few tables away. *The officer stared at Jeffrey but the young man just stared back, finally backing the officer down.*"

f. During his interview, Robert Ressler asked Dahmer about the yellow contact lenses he liked to wear:

**DAHMER:** The two central characters in both of those films [*Return of the Jedi* and *The Exorcist III*, two of his favorites] had glass tints to their eyes that exuded power. And that was part of the fantasy.

**Q:** You actually wore these [contact lenses], did you not, sometimes?

**DAHMER:** Only in bars.

**Q:** Did people comment on it?

**DAHMER:** They noticed it. *I didn't get a sense of power from wearing them, but it fit in with my fantasy.*

g. In trial testimony, Dennis Murphy, the Milwaukee detective who took Dahmer's confession, said Dahmer *likened himself to a character in The Exorcist III*:

Murphy: "He states that he felt the main character was driven by evil and *he felt he could relate to him because he was driven by evil.*"

h. In closing argument at trial, Dahmer's defense attorney Gerald Boyle quoted his client: "*Now I'm totally evil, totally depraved, totally out of control.*" ... *He says, "I'm Satan. I'm Satan."* Milwaukee police, in his confession, quoted him, "I have to question whether or not there is an evil force in the world and whether or not I have been influenced by it. Although I am not sure if there is a God, or if there is a devil, I know that as of lately I've been doing a lot of thinking about both, and I have to wonder what has influenced me in my life."

i. Capshaw had described Dahmer's eyes, when he was about to turn violent, as "kind of like he was cross-eyed. An expression like he just wasn't there. I've never seen it on anyone else's face. *In a millimeter of a second, he turned from good to bad—and then he'd attack. If you've ever seen that—I promise you, you will never forget that eye contact.*"

j. Linda Swisher's snapshot of Dahmer was of him smiling, but "*his eyes were like ice.*"

"It was so clear to me at that minute of time. The violent evil I was looking at in his eyes. I've been haunted by this one tiny piece of information."

### **3. To gain control of victims, Dahmer grabbed arms and used knives.**

In my interview, Morgan said of the man, "*I felt he was going to pull my arm and pull me out of the store... I thought, did he have a knife?*"

Bill Bowen said he saw something similar. “As I looked up toward the Sears to start walking I heard the racket of *a man dragging a boy out by his arms*, really manhandling him...”

a. Inside his Milwaukee apartment, Dahmer was showing Tracy Edwards his aquarium, blandly talking about how the catfish cleaned the bottom of the tank.

Edwards: “A split second later *he throws a handcuff on one arm and (presses) a big-ass military knife right below my rib cage, right below my heart.*”

b. In his interview, Jack Hoffman asked Dahmer about the types of tools he used to dismember his victims:

*Large hunting knife with a rubber grip, very large.* Bought it at the knife store in the Grand (Avenue) Mall (in downtown Milwaukee)... Just slit from the sternum to the, you know, pubic area, removed the internal organs and then cut the flesh starting from the calves, legs, and then up, removed the head and put that in the freezer, and, uh, the bone, the skeleton that was de-fleshed I would put in that large 80-gallon cooking pot that I had, pour in a box of that wall-cleaning solution, I'd strip the remaining flesh off, turn up to a boil, and did the same with the heads so I had a clean skeleton...

Occasionally, Dahmer said, the drugs he used to subdue his victims weren't sufficient. “I had to *stab him in the throat with a knife* ‘cause he wasn't completely out...”

c. When Capshaw opened Dahmer's Army locker, *he found an ice pick and six-inch buck knives*, which Capshaw would dispose of each time he found them but Dahmer would always replace. Once he saw blood and mucus on one. Capshaw said they were easily purchased at the camp Post Exchange. He added that Dahmer always carried a six-inch lock blade knife with him, concealed in the pocket of his all-weather green army jacket. He also said that Dahmer would attack him, unpredictably, *by lunging*.

### ***Did Willis Morgan fit the profile of Dahmer's victims?***

In 1981, Morgan was 34 and only slightly smaller than the man who approached him. Back then *Morgan had a well-developed body and the look of a male model*. But he also had a subtle handicap; an above-the-knee leg prosthesis, from a motorcycle accident. He said when the man came closer he hovered over him.

a. From his book, Robert Ressler:

I moved on to victim selection. The *people Dahmer picked up from malls or on the street were not always gay*. He said that hadn't mattered, because *he had been looking for physique*, and in any case, the sexual activities that he performed were not consensual and took place while the victim was unconscious or dead. He said that *one of every three he approached in a mall would agree to come back to his place* and be photographed, while in the gay bars the proportion was two out of three.

I asked him again about his sexual preferences—if all things had been equal, what sort of person he would have wanted as a sexual partner.

**DAHMER:** I would have liked to have, like on the (gay pornographic) videotape, a *well-developed white guy*, compliant to my wishes...And if I had met, like, *one of the guys that did a striptease act*, but it's awfully hard to find somebody like that.

b. Dahmer told Jack Hoffman, "As I said, I was interested in finding the type, the *Chippendale-type, good-looking swimmers-type build.*"

c. A man who *Newsweek* described as a *muscular black model* said Dahmer had picked him up at the end of the night at a Milwaukee gay bar. Dahmer's line was, "*Hi. I'm Jeff. I like the way you dance.*" The man had gone back to Dahmer's apartment, saw that his mattress was bloodstained, and managed to escape.

d. *Dahmer looked for victims he could control, and that usually meant smaller or younger.* As well as being smaller, at 17 Capshaw was two years younger than Dahmer and before joining the Army had never left his Arkansas hometown. *Told of Morgan's leg prosthesis*, he said, "*Jeff preyed on people who had that kind of problem.*"

e. When Morgan refused his blatant pickup offer, the man in Hollywood Mall became extremely upset and left Radio Shack for Sears. Rather than Adam Walsh, Morgan said, "I think I was his first choice."

***When Jeffrey Dahmer lived in North Miami Beach, did he prowl for partners (or victims)?***

Dahmer had a history of being beaten up and mugged. Either he had a black cloud over his head, or, a more logical explanation, the assaults were responses to his failed homosexual overtures.

a. Ken Haupt, Sr.: "He came in once, *eyeglasses broken*, stinking... he explained, I was running and fell down and broke my glasses." Haupt later said that Dahmer came to work on three occasions with broken glasses—each time, Haupt bought him a new pair, and the money was repaid from Dahmer's earnings.

b. Dahmer told Jack Hoffman, "I would hate going back to the beach to sleep on the beach and so I'd stay up drinking til maybe three in the morning and this one time *I got mugged. The guy took a hundred from me.*"

**Q:** Did you report it to the police?

**DAHMER:** No. Another time I remember going back to the beach... where I had my sleeping area set up and there were some other guys there and *I almost got knifed* 'cause they didn't know who I was.

c. Lionel Dahmer wrote, while Jeffrey lived with his grandmother in West Allis:

He roamed around bars and repeatedly stayed until closing time, then he'd demand more drinks, they'd usher him out, *sometimes there'd be fights, he'd get hurt badly*, several times he got hurt resisting arrest.

He was *attacked several times and had stitches over his eye and broken ribs. He had \$300 stolen from him* outside a bank downtown.

d. Reporting trial testimony reflecting Dahmer's police confession, the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote that in Milwaukee, "a man he had hoped to get into his apartment *struck him from behind in a stairwell and took \$350 from his pocket.*" In a Chicago bathhouse, a man "realizing he had been drugged, *slugged him in the face.*"

Also, while he was in the Army, "he was beaten bloody once by two angry privates."

e. Capshaw said soldiers sometimes violently answered Dahmer's advances. Once, he was *slugged in the face so hard he needed dental surgery.*

### ***Was Jeffrey Dahmer a thief?***

Although Ken Haupt Sr. said he never let Dahmer drive the blue van, Larry owned all the delivery vehicles and, according to Darlene Hill and Denise Sortini, left keys to them at Beach Pizza, available to anyone who needed to make deliveries. Larry, they and others said, kept exceedingly poor tabs on those vehicles, and delivery drivers and others occasionally took them for personal use. That is, they disappeared from time to time.

Knowing that, could Dahmer have taken the keys to the blue van from Beach Pizza—blocks from Sunshine Sub—and used it, perhaps after Haupt Sr. had sent him home on a weekday morning for coming in drunk? Might this have been the blue van Bill Bowen saw at Hollywood Mall, where he said a boy fitting Adam's description was tossed into it by a man fitting Dahmer's description—similar as well to Timothy Pottenburgh's statement to police?

In fact, there are many instances of Dahmer's thefts:

a. After Dahmer drugged his coffee at his grandmother's house in April 1988, Ronald Flowers filed a theft report with the West Allis Police Department. *About \$250 in his wallet was missing, as well as a gold bracelet.* When Milwaukee police in 1991 asked about it, Dahmer said he gave Flowers a dollar and walked him to a bus stop. Flowers awoke at a hospital.

b. Lionel Dahmer: "My mother told Shari that she had found a full-size department store *mannequin* in Jeff's closet. It was a male figure, dressed in sports shirt and shorts... I called him up... Jeff's reaction was completely calm and unemotional. *He said that he'd taken it from a store only to demonstrate that he could do it...*"

c. When Dahmer briefly attended Ohio State in 1978, wrote Keith McKnight for Knight Ridder newspapers, "campus police questioned him as the only *suspect in the theft of a watch, a radio and \$120 that were taken from another room in the Morrill Tower dormitory.*"

d. Capshaw called Dahmer "a good thief." *He stole anatomy posters from the hospital, hid a small stereo in a box with a larger stereo he purchased, and apparently diverted Capshaw's direct-deposited Army pay to his own account. He also said Dahmer pilfered drugs from the base hospital to administer to Capshaw.*

### ***Could Jeffrey Dahmer be trusted to tell the truth?***

Dahmer consistently denied murdering Adam Walsh. However, even before Jack Hoffman interviewed him, Hollywood Police told the *Miami Herald* they'd dropped Dahmer as a suspect. After the interview, Hoffman wrote for the file that he believed

Dahmer, citing that he'd confessed to more murders than the evidence would have proved against him. Also, his likely lack of a personal vehicle—as well as his denial of knowing where Hollywood Mall was—to Hoffman suggested his innocence. He also told Morgan that he'd looked Dahmer in the eye when he denied the killing, and he believed him.

Again, Pamela Meyer in her TED Talk about detecting lies said something that Hoffman didn't seem to understand at the time: "We think liars won't look you in the eyes. Well, guess what, they look you in the eyes a little too much just to compensate for that myth."

In fact, Dahmer had a long history of lying to law enforcement, as well as to his father.

a. Lionel Dahmer:

*Jeff would lie, and we'd catch him in lies.* At other times, he would be absolutely frank, and I'd check up and find him to be frank. You can't tell with a person like that whether you're getting the truth or not.

He had become that most *artful of all deceivers, one who mixes falsehood with just a pinch of truth.*

However, he also wrote: "I allowed myself to believe Jeff, to accept all his answers regardless of how implausible they might seem."

b. To Hoffman, Dahmer explained his work at Sunshine Sub:

**DAHMER:** I had all types of positions, *cashier, cook, cleaner.* And the guy was paying me under the table so he wouldn't have to, you know. And *at the same time I was collecting unemployment.*

*I was working every day, about every day,* once in a while I'd get one day off on the weekend, I was working *ten, twelve (hour) shifts,* um, days from morning to night, uh, didn't leave any time for recreation at all.

**Q:** Do you remember your supervisor's name?

**DAHMER:** Yeah, he was, uh, let's see, Ken Houleb I think his name was.

**Q:** What was his last name?

**DAHMER:** Houleb, I think. H-O-U-L-E-B.

c. Ken Hauptert, Sr. described his employee's responsibilities differently:

"I paid him minimum wage and meals." He said Dahmer's hours were *part-time,* weekdays, roughly midmorning to late afternoon. *He worked "bussing tables, mopping floors, cleanup."* In Hauptert's entire career, managing restaurants, he said he never overworked employees the way Dahmer described.

Asked whether he knew Dahmer was collecting unemployment at the same time, Hauptert said no, but he'd recognized that *Dahmer "was quite good at lying."*

d. Arrested in 1988 for sexual assault on 13-year-old Somsack Sinthasomphone, Dahmer denied intent to molest a minor. Lionel Dahmer:

'I'll never do anything like that again, Dad,' he reassured me. But with this assurance came another lie.

*'I didn't know he was a kid,'* Jeff said.

e. Somsack Sinthasomphone told Milwaukee Det. Scott Schaefer *that he'd told Dahmer he was a high school freshman*, and that Dahmer had intentionally drugged him, touched his penis, placed his head on his stomach to listen to it, and then kissed it.

The night of the arrest, *Dahmer denied all of that*. If the victim was drugged, he said, it was from leftover sleep medication that Dahmer hadn't washed out of his cup before serving coffee to his guest. Police located the coffee cup, and found traces of Halcion and Irish Cream liqueur.

f. In court on the sexual assault offense, Milwaukee County Assistant District Attorney Gale Shelton told the judge that *Somsack Sinthasomphone didn't look like an adult, and that Dahmer preyed on him because he looked like someone who could be easily victimized*. The boy told her that Dahmer had asked him what grade he was in. He answered, "a freshman." "So, Dahmer knew full well he was not dealing with a consenting adult. He instead was tricking a person who he knew was a child."

Further, Shelton said, the boy remembered Dahmer pouring white powder into his mug, and Dahmer had repeatedly suggested he keep drinking.

g. After his guilty plea to the sexual assault, at his sentencing Dahmer blamed his actions on alcoholism. Appealing to the judge for leniency, he asked for treatment, which, he suggested, he'd more likely get outside of jail.

Don't buy it, said Shelton, who asked the judge to impose a five-year prison term. She called Dahmer "*very manipulative*":

Mr. Dahmer's version is simply not the truth... His perception that what he did wrong here was choosing too young a victim—and that's all he did wrong—is a part of the problem. He appeared to be cooperative and receptive, but anything that goes below the surface indicates the deep-seated psychological problems that he is unwilling or incapable of dealing with.

After listening to the prosecutor, Dahmer personally addressed the court:

What I have done is very serious. I've never been in this position before. Nothing this awful. This is a nightmare come true for me. If anything would shock me out of my past behavior patterns, it's this.

*Please give me a chance to show that I can, that I can tread the straight and narrow and not get involved in any situation like this ever again. This enticing a child was the climax of my idiocy. I don't know what in the world I was thinking when I did it. I offer no defense. I do want help. I do want to turn my life around.*

**h. Lionel Dahmer:**

On the day before Jeff was scheduled to be sentenced for child molestation, I drove to my mother's house in West Allis in order to accompany Jeff to his court appearance.

*... as I went through his room, I found a small wooden box with a metal rim. It was about one foot square, and its lid was tightly sealed and locked.*

I asked “What’s in here?”

“Nothing.”

“Open it up, Jeff.”

“But why, Dad?” Jeff asked. “There’s nothing in it.”

“Open it.”

Jeff suddenly grew very alarmed. “Can’t I have just one foot of space to myself? Do you have to look through everything?”

“What’s in the box, Jeff?”

... I turned and started for the basement to get a tool with which I could open the box myself.

Jeff leaped in front of me... “You’re right, Dad,” he said quietly. “It’s magazines, that kind of thing.”

Jeff promised to open it the next morning, out of the presence of his grandmother. The next day he did—revealing pornographic magazines.

Watching him as he faced the judge that day, it was hard to believe that this same son would never be more than he seemed to be—a *liar, an alcoholic, a thief, an exhibitionist, a molester of children...*

i. Billy Capshaw said Dahmer made a cat-and-mouse game out of outsmarting others. He was “*sneaky, conniving, and cunning. He c[ould] make you believe things that weren’t true.*” That’s why he kept me in that room so long.”

j. In a memo written on FBI stationery dated August 16, 1991, entitled *Jeffrey L. Dahmer: Foreign Police Cooperation - Murder*, found in the Hollywood Police file, an investigator wrote that Dahmer “*denied any homosexual activities while in Germany.*” He further denies ever having traveled to any location to meet with homosexuals and *has not had any correspondence with anyone residing in Germany after his return to the United States.*” Dahmer did say he’d traveled on short trips around Baumholder but never stayed overnight.

k. From Dahmer’s interview with Hoffman:

**Q:** There was another incident... where the police came, which was after the arrest of (Somsack) Sinthasomphone and they searched your apartment and you had the skull.

**DAHMER:** That was, uh, even before that there was a time, well, I’m not going to say that on tape. That was the time I had that mummified head... *They searched my apartment*, I had an apartment on 24th Street (in Milwaukee) and they looked, *they just didn’t pull a towel up, that’s why they didn’t see the skull...* And another time *I had that mummified head in the, uh, small metal chest I had in the closet* and I took that to work, that’s where I kept it, at work, for about a year. And then the time that the police came around asking questions about the guy that was shot upstairs or strangled upstairs, he came into my apartment and looked around and didn’t see anything... Then the time that 15-year-old guy I met working at the gay bar, he ran and told the police that I had assaulted him and they didn’t believe him...

I. Dahmer continued to insist that Somsack Sinthasomphone was older than he looked:

**DAHMER:** ... I never intended to hurt him.

**RESSLER:** This was a young guy, wasn't he? How old was he?

**DAHMER:** Thirteen, fourteen. I thought he was older. *You know, an Asian guy can be 21 and still look like he's a young kid.*

m. Two 18-year-old girls, out after midnight in Milwaukee in May 1991, *saw 14-year-old Konerak Sinthasomphone butt naked, bruised, bleeding, and dazed*. They called police, who responded, but by then Dahmer had showed, beer under his arm. He tried to regain control of the situation.

"Look, we've been drinking Jack Daniel's, and I'm afraid he's had too much." *When an officer asked how old the child was, Dahmer answered nineteen.* "We live together, right here at 924 (25th Street, his address). We're boyfriends, if you know what I mean."

One of the girls argued that the dazed boy was obviously much less than 19, but trusting Dahmer, the officers told the girls to leave and escorted Dahmer as he took Konerak home.

Inside his apartment, Dahmer kept the officers in the living room. *Had they entered the bedroom, they would have found a body.* When the police left, Dahmer admitted, he killed Konerak then dismembered him.

n. To Hoffman, Dahmer spoke of yet another close call with police, in 1978 after he'd killed Steven Hicks and was taking bags of his dismembered bones to the dump:

In the middle of the night, 3 o'clock on a deserted road where I was pulled over by two policemen in Bath, Ohio, and *had the body parts in the back seat* and they gave me a ticket for driving left of center. Had to take the drunk test and everything and *they asked me what's this stuff? And I said, it's just garbage* that I hadn't gotten around to drop off at the city dump earlier today.

o. In 1986, *Dahmer was arrested for masturbating* in a Milwaukee riverfront park, pants around his thighs, *in front of two 12-year-old boys*. He told an officer he'd done it about five times before in the last month, but *to his probation officer he said he was merely urinating* after drinking too much beer:

After a few cans of beer, I needed to go, so I did, behind some trees. I was sure there was no one else around, but I was wrong. Two boys saw me and called the police.

However, to Jack Hoffman, Dahmer admitted that the event was not unique, besides his getting caught:

In West Allis there was some *lewd and lascivious behavior in a park that I was involved in for about a year...* There was no assault on any children or anything, it was just masturbation.



Capshaw said *military policemen caught Dahmer at least twice in Baumholder masturbating in a local park where children swam*, and brought him back to his room, although they never charged him..." They told Capshaw that Dahmer was doing it in front of "kids."

**p.** At trial, psychiatrist George Palermo, a prosecution witness, testified that *Dahmer "has lied for years and still lies today."*

He lied to the judge in 1989 [in the sexual assault case]. He lied to his lawyer. He lied to many doctors to get the [sleeping] pills [he used to drug his victims]. It is my feeling he has embellished a great deal in the things he has said he did.

In a 2007 interview, Palermo said he never believed that Dahmer didn't kill between 1978-87, and thought the German murders likely were his. Dahmer told him, he awoke once in Frankfurt with no memory of how he got there. Frankfurt is about 25 miles from Bad Kreuznach, where five mutilated women had been found in the vicinity while Dahmer was stationed at Baumholder, another 50 miles south. The cases were never solved.

He also thought Dahmer might have lied about not killing Adam in order to avoid Florida's death penalty.

**q.** In his closing argument, Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann suggested that Dahmer might have killed elsewhere in addition to the instances he'd admitted:

Don't be fooled by him. He fooled the police in Bath, Ohio. He fooled the West Allis police. He fooled the Milwaukee police. He's fooled a lot of people, including the court who gave him probation for sexual assault.

Ladies and gentlemen, *he's fooled a lot of people. Please, please don't let this murderous killer fool you.*

**r.** To Dahmer, Hoffman summarized Morgan and Bowen's statements identifying him at Hollywood Mall on the day Adam disappeared:

**DAHMER:** Coincident.

**Q:** Excuse me?

**DAHMER:** *What a coincidence, huh?...* And people said they seen me in Arizona and in California... never been there. And uh, but the, I can't prove I didn't do anything to them but the biggest, the biggest I can, I can say is Why would I have admitted to half of them (the 17 murders) that they would have known nothing about and then leave him out?

**s.** To Milwaukee police detective Patrick Kennedy, who asked if Dahmer had killed more than 17, Dahmer was quoted in his confession:

Pat, what good would it do for me to admit to just half of my victims, or to a few of my victims, or not to tell you of a couple, when I know that in the long run, it

will be me that has to stand before God and admit to my wrongdoings and He'll know if I was truthful and honest when I finally was caught.

(Elsewhere in the confession, Dahmer said he considered himself an atheist.) At the end of the session he concluded, saying "*I'm telling you the truth now and I've not left anything out.*"

Not entirely so, pointed out reporter Bob Springer of the *Akron Beacon Journal*, who wrote:

"Yet he had left something out—about cannibalism." In his statement on August 8, 1991, Dahmer asserted he'd only cannibalized one of his victims. But on August 22 he told Kennedy and Det. Dennis Murphy, who wrote, "there were other times in which he had eaten part of the victim." When the detectives asked him about this revision, Dahmer said he'd held it back "because it was not very appealing and he did not want us to think less of him."

t. Donna Chester, a Wisconsin state probation and parole officer, supervised Dahmer after his release from jail on the sexual assault charges. She called Dahmer "one of the most cooperative clients [she] ever worked with." She referred him to a psychiatrist, who found no serious mental disorder or any threat he might pose to others. Chester asked her supervisor for and got approval to waive any home visits at his apartment. Unknown to Chester at the time, during the more than year he was under her supervision, Dahmer killed 12 times.

### ***Did Dahmer decapitate Adam as he decapitated so many others?***

Adam Walsh's head was found, seemingly discarded, although no other part of his body was ever discovered. Eleven skulls, some still with flesh, were found in Dahmer's Milwaukee apartment. He also admitted to mutilations of additional bodies.

a. Regarding the body of Steven Hicks, his first admitted victim, in 1978, Dahmer told Ressler:

And then I cut the arm off. Cut each piece. Bagged each piece... put them back, under the (house) crawl space. *Took the head, washed it off, put it on the bathroom floor...*

b. Regarding Steven Tuomi, who Dahmer said was his second victim, in 1987, when he was living in the basement of his grandmother's house in West Allis:

**DAHMER:** When my Gramma goes to church for a couple hours, I go down and get it; take a knife, slit the belly open, masturbate, then de-flesh the body and put the flesh into bags; triple bag the flesh, wrap the skeleton up in an old bed sheet, smash it up with a sledgehammer; wrap it up and throw it all out in the trash on Monday morning. *Except the skull. Kept the skull.*"

**RESSLER:** *How long did you keep that?*

**DAHMER:** *About a week.* Because I put it in undiluted bleach. That cleaned it, but it made it too brittle, so I threw it out.

### ***Did Dahmer victimize other young children he didn't acknowledge?***

The man who rented the Milwaukee apartment directly beneath Dahmer's, Aaron Whitehead, told the *Milwaukee Sentinel* he'd often been awakened and scared by loud pounding and "tussling noises" above him. "*One night, I heard what sounded like a kid up there. He was crying like his mother had just walloped him. Then I heard a big falling sound. Sounded like he was being hurt.*"

In the days after Adam's head was discovered, both the police and press had turned to criminal profilers. Hollywood police spoke to a Los Angeles Police psychologist, Dr. Mark Reisner, the *Miami Herald* asked Dr. Sanford Jacobson, director of forensic psychiatry at Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital.

I thought I'd compare their opinions at the time to the case's later main suspects, Campbell, Toole, and Dahmer.

Reisner had thought the killer was male, white or Latin, 19-35, but probably early to late 20s.

All three were white males. In 1981 Campbell was 25, Toole 34, Dahmer 21.

Reisner thought the killer had borderline psychopathic/psychotic personality with a tremendous homosexual conflict expressed in violence and rage. He was probably a loner and not liked by many people. He was unlikely to brag or talk about the murder, nor was it likely he'd show remorse, guilt, or confess to it.

Jacobson had agreed that the killer was a loner and as well as about remorse; he expected none, at least that was sincere.

As Reisner used the word rage, Jacobson used the word hate. He thought the killer's choice of a weak victim reflected both self-hate as well as envy. It may have referred to how he himself had been a victim of child abuse, possibly sexual.

"There is a hatred of what they were and what they still feel about themselves. By doing this to the victim, they identify with the person who aggressed against them in childhood and kind of master their own trauma."

Campbell had had some childhood conflicts, but otherwise didn't seem to fit these extreme descriptions. The Jacksonville psychologist who examined Toole in July 1983—before he volunteered he killed Adam—told a judge Toole should be committed for psychosexual problems, among others. Toole was a loner and admitted his homosexuality, he wrote. However, "he has no homicid(al) thoughts and he is not given to violence."

Some people who knew Toole saw his occasional fury, but the profilers' descriptions seem closest to matching Dahmer.

Dahmer was a loner and clearly had a homosexual conflict expressed in violence and rage. At four, he'd had a double-hernia operation, after which he asked his mother if the doctors had removed his penis. The same year he first became fascinated with dead animals. By six his first-grade teacher noted he was profoundly unhappy. At eight, his father said, an older boy in the neighborhood sexually abused him. Even if Dahmer wasn't repeatedly physically or sexually abused, he was noticeably embraced less by his parents than other children around him—his younger brother and their middle-class neighbors and friends.

Dahmer confessed to murders, but only when police found skulls in his apartment. And only at sentencing, in the glare of high-publicity television, did he show even the

least bit of remorse. If he killed Adam he never admitted it, except possibly to Neil Purtell.

Reisner thought the killer had little formal education and came from a lower socio-economic background.

Campbell was one semester from getting a B.A. and came from a military family. Dahmer also came from the middle class, but spoiled his chance to get a good education. Toole fits this one best—he dropped out of seventh grade and lived in a flophouse neighborhood.

Reisner thought the killer probably had held a number of unskilled or minimally skilled jobs. Jacobson agreed that he was able to function and go about his business, seeming merely unusual to other people, but not outrightly strange.

Campbell was Adam's baby-sitter, but later he opened a business, renting beach watercraft. Later he was a self-employed landscaper. Toole worked for a roofing company, picking up trash. Dahmer was an army private, a busboy at Sunshine Sub, then later mixed chocolate in a Milwaukee factory.

Reisner said the killer identified with and was attracted to children. He had poor relationships with both females and males.

Campbell liked Adam very much, but his affair with Reve showed he could have good relationships with women. Toole told his analyst that although he was homosexual he didn't have sex with children. Milwaukee police arrested Dahmer for masturbating in front of 12-year-old boys in a park in 1986, exposing himself in front of 25 people including women and children at the state fair in 1982, and according to Billy Capshaw, in 1980-81 military police removed Dahmer two or three times from a German park where he'd masturbated in front of children.

Reisner thought Adam's decapitation indicated there had been sexual contact. The killer "almost certainly" had abducted or tried to abduct a child in the past, "almost certainly" had sexually assaulted a child in the past, and "very likely" had been arrested and imprisoned for such acts.

Campbell fit none of those criteria. Although Toole confessed to abducting and sexually assaulting children, those confessions were dubious, vague, often recanted, and hadn't stuck. Dahmer had a sexual assault conviction on a 13-year-old, although it came later.

I'd already presented my case to a Broward prosecutor who I cannot name. He'd given me his opinions freely, but in July 2006 his boss Chuck Morton implied that my using his name would risk his career. I assured that prosecutor I would not place him at such risk. Morton's reasoning was it would compromise the case if one of his prosecutors was on record saying that Dahmer killed Adam Walsh and the office ever brought charges against anyone else.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor still agreed with me.

I'd asked him, if official investigators found that my evidence checked out—plus the hypothetical that Dahmer was still alive—would you accept this case for prosecution?

Yes, he said.

Looking for weaknesses in the evidence, which the defense would likely exploit, we discussed the problem of memory, 20-plus years later, of Morgan and Bowen. Morgan

seemed strong, but Bowen was on thinner ice because of his initial statements to me contradicting his 1991 interview with Hoffman.

But that could be explained and was mostly rectified after I re-familiarized Bowen with his police statement, the prosecutor thought. Back in 1991, it was compelling that both Bowen and Morgan so quickly contacted police, and that Bowen—who happened to be in town from Alabama days later—came in to give a statement.

We agreed that Bowen seemed to be describing the same incident outside Sears, of a man dragging a child into a blue van, that 10-year-old Timothy Pottenburgh told in 1981. But their descriptions of the blue van differed. Was that a problem?

No, he thought. Witnesses commonly vary in their recollections of specifics. In fact, it would be more suspicious if they matched perfectly. That might suggest a later witness was influenced by what an earlier one said, perhaps by reading about it in a newspaper.

“Assuming the IDs are good, absent an alibi that [Dahmer] was elsewhere, you’re in the realm of probable cause” for arrest, the prosecutor said. It was clear that Dahmer was in South Florida that day; he’d already admitted it to Hoffman. So yes, even without physical evidence, there was “certainly enough” to take the case to a grand jury and ask for a first-degree murder indictment.

“Whether it would be proof beyond a reasonable doubt” at trial, that at present was a question mark, he said. But what I’d presented him, he said, met the American Bar Association ethical standard for a prosecutor to bring a case to a jury: he or she must believe it has a reasonable prospect of conviction.

Then he discussed similar fact evidence—that Dahmer severed his victims’ heads, possibly in the same manner as Adam’s head was severed. He complained that in his Florida state judicial circuit, the court of appeals has made it difficult for trial judges to admit such evidence, and that in this case, the defense would argue that the murder of Adam wasn’t a similar fact because of the age difference between him and Dahmer’s acknowledged victims.

But he would still argue for its inclusion. Applying the legal test, he asked, “Does the relevance outweigh the prejudice? I think it does. If evidence of Dahmer’s other crimes came in, conviction is certain. The jury would never let him walk out the door. It’s overwhelmingly damning—which is why the other side would fight so hard to keep it out.”

That part of the trial would be a contest of behavioral experts, he said. The prosecution would need to establish that Dahmer could have been interested in a boy of Adam’s age. Dahmer was a pedophile, at least of older boys. As for whether Dahmer admitted the murder, as Purtell thought, the prosecutor said he often reviews defendants’ statements with psychiatrists, who testify whether or not innocuous statements are actually admissions.

I explained a theory, proposed by my friend Christina Spudeas, by now working for the state defending its death row inmates: Although a 15-year age difference existed between Adam, 6, and Dahmer, 21 in 1981, Dahmer later chose victims with similar and even greater age differentials. At 31 he killed a 14-year-old, and another 14-year-old at 28. His youngest acknowledged attempted murder victim was age 13 (when Dahmer was 28), and he’d been arrested (at 26) for masturbating in front of 12-year-olds.

Dahmer, white and raised middle-class, chose white middle-class young men as his first two admitted victims, in 1978 and 1987. In an abrupt switch, the next 14 he admitted killing were persons of color, mostly black, of the urban underclass, including runaways and homosexual patrons of gay establishments. Most themselves had criminal records, from male prostitution to rape to use of a weapon. In general, Dahmer's choice of these victims was suspiciously notable for the lack of priority and attention police and media gave them once they were missing.

Was that because he'd learned a lesson after killing Adam Walsh?

Until forced to face the families of his victims in a Milwaukee court, Dahmer seemed to hide behind a conceit that the people he'd confessed to killing were nobodies. But the parents of white, middle-class Adam had relentlessly gone to the police and press, turning Adam into a media figure, later even launching his little league photo into a crusade, a permanent national awareness of missing children. Every high-energy TV appearance John Walsh has since made—and that Dahmer would have had trouble avoiding—continues to remind the public of the torment of his son's brutal murder.

If Dahmer killed Adam, might he have been sufficiently shocked not to repeat the mistake of killing such a young child—perhaps, a young white child?

Then I asked the prosecutor a slightly different question: Aside from whether it's a prosecutable or winnable case, do you think I'm right?

He told me: "I think you're right."

I recalled a comment Dan Craft had made:

"I'm old school," he said. "We work for God. It doesn't matter the subject's dead. Who speaks for the victim? Adam needs to be spoken for." If he were still at the FBI, he'd sit down with John Walsh and ask, What do you want to do?

On the day Adam was found dead, John Walsh was quoted making a remark that now seemed prophetic:

Whoever did this had to have a vehicle, it had to be registered somewhere. He was functioning in society. And now he'll probably just move to another state and get another dishwasher's job.

## 20

### The Dahmer Story Breaks

IN DECEMBER 2006, I BROKE THE STORY in the *Miami Daily Business Review*, then in February 2007, local news stations WSVN in Miami and WISN in Milwaukee did their own versions. Within days CNN picked up the story, followed by the Associated Press, and other television networks, newspapers, and Internet blogs.

In advance of the *Daily Business Review* story, I called *America's Most Wanted* for comment. They offered none, but the night before publication I did receive a call from Joe Matthews—who'd polygraphed Walsh for Hollywood Police in 1981, helped the Broward State Attorney during their cold case investigation, and was now representing either the show or Walsh personally—and shared with him case facts as I had discovered them.

After two hours, I asked Matthews what he thought. Although he remained convinced that Toole killed Adam, he called my work “an impressive piece of investigation.”

For the story, the paper quoted a Broward State Attorney’s Office statement calling the theory “hunches and suspicions.”

On WISN, reporter Colleen Henry quoted Mark Smith: “If we found no more on Jeffrey Dahmer, and I don’t believe we will find any more than this circumstantial evidence we have now, we would never get to a conviction. I don’t believe we’d ever get to an indictment.”

Dahmer’s trial attorney Gerald Boyle told Henry he didn’t believe Dahmer killed Adam because doctors had spent hundreds of hours interviewing him, and not one suggested Dahmer was withholding information. “He was very honest. By that, I mean, he seemed to unload everything. I don’t see any reason he wouldn’t have said that he killed the boy. But of course, that was not his profile. Young boys was not his profile.”

John Walsh wouldn’t let himself be interviewed, but did respond on camera to questions from WSVN’s Patrick Fraser, the tape of which WSVN shared with WISN. Walsh said he wanted investigators to talk to the witnesses who said they saw Dahmer at Hollywood Mall. “I think the ball is back in Michael Satz’s court, the Broward prosecutor’s court, to thoroughly look at this case, even though it’s a cold case. People have come forward who are claiming one thing, who are saying we were not taken seriously back 25 or 26 years ago, so I think they have to look at this case.”

Added Colleen Henry, Walsh said “more than 25 years later, he can’t believe he’s still fighting for a competent investigation into Adam’s slaying.”

Walsh: “That’s a bitter pill for me to swallow. As someone who’s a big supporter of law enforcement, that the law enforcement agency investigating my son’s murder would lose—blatantly lose—key pieces of evidence and not interview people who thought they had important information about the case, it’s really a tough thing.”

Henry reported that the Broward State Attorney’s Office told her they would investigate. But five days later, *America’s Most Wanted* posted a release on their website:

Despite news stories prompted by the publication of a recent article in a Florida newspaper, *America’s Most Wanted* is aware of no credible information connecting Jeffrey Dahmer to the murder of Adam Walsh...

According to the police in Hollywood, Florida, where the abduction of Adam Walsh took place, a potential Dahmer connection was first investigated in 1991, and nothing was found to validate the story. Then, two years ago, when writer Arthur Harris approached the Hollywood Police Department with his theories, a detective was assigned full-time to reinvestigate the Dahmer leads and any new information provided by Harris. According to investigators, they found Harris’s claims to be totally unsubstantiated.

The remainder of the release restated that Walsh had long believed Toole killed Adam, but Walsh did repeat that the Broward State Attorney’s Office should thoroughly investigate any potential new information.

To a *Daily Business Review* staff reporter, Hollywood Police spokesman Capt. Tony Rode said police had re-interviewed Morgan and Bowen after I went to the police with

my information. Morgan responded in a letter to the newspaper, calling that “blatantly untrue.” His last call from Hollywood Police was in 1992, and his last contact was in 1994, when he’d called Mark Smith to say that Dahmer had approached him in Hollywood Mall, and Smith dismissed him, “Yeah, right.” On Fox News Channel, Bowen said he hadn’t been re-contacted either.

Within weeks, Morgan and Bowen got calls from Chuck Morton personally. On March 10 Morton took Morgan’s sworn statement. He also told Bowen he would fly him in for a similar interview. However, on March 21 after a producer for ABC’s *Primetime* had tried to reach Morton, office spokesman Ron Ishoy called him back to deny that Morton was investigating the case because Morton “doesn’t investigate anything. We rely on the police for that.” He added that “we and Hollywood Police and John Walsh all believe it was Ottis” who killed Adam.

Mark Smith told the same producer, Geoff Martz, “to a high degree of certainty” Hollywood Police had ruled out that Dahmer used the blue van, and therefore they would not be investigating any further.

Morton never got back to Bowen, so that interview never happened. But in April State Attorney’s Office investigator Terry Gardner interviewed Larry (the former owner of Beach Pizza) then Darlene Hill. According to transcripts of their taped statements (released two years later as public records), Larry changed his story slightly from what he’d told Hollywood police five years earlier. According to what Scott Pardon had told me, Larry said he had no vans, only pickup trucks. However he told Gardner he did have a used van, which he described as plain. It was for his personal use, but it was also used to move stock between his stores. He said he thought its color was beige, and he’d told that to Darlene when she’d called and asked him about a blue van. He added, “Listen, I might be wrong. I don’t know. I really, I really don’t, ah, to me it was always beige.”

Gardner asked Darlene about it two days later. “He said he told you that he recalled a van, but his recollection was that it was beige, not blue,” Gardner said.

“No. He recalled a blue van,” she answered.

Unlike the other major witnesses I’d found, I’d never had the chance to spend unrushed time talking to Ken Hauptert Sr. When I tried to call him in 2007, I found he’d since closed his Oklahoma sub shop and his home phone number wasn’t working. To find him, I used the water records at Dewey city hall—again. When he answered the phone, he was just as surprised at how I’d found him as the first time. He was in the process of opening a new restaurant across the Kansas border in Caney, not far from his home.

He’d seen Morgan’s quotes in the *Chicago Tribune*, how Dahmer had looked at him. “That could only have been Dahmer,” he said. “The way Dahmer looked at people he disliked, you wouldn’t know it unless you saw it. There’s not another person in the world who had that look.”

Hauptert recalled again the moment Dahmer had given him a similar look. Hauptert told him off: “You ever look at me like that again, you’re in big trouble.”

Hauptert also remembered something he hadn’t thought of before. A week or two after he hired Dahmer, Jeff told him there was a dead man behind the dumpster. For two or three days he’d been stepping over him.



“Why didn’t you say something to me?” Hauptert asked him, sounding exasperated to me. “Maybe he needed help, maybe he was still alive.”

When Hauptert saw the body it had already turned blue and had flies. He immediately called police. He thought the man was about 50, sickly, and didn’t look like he’d been beaten. Hauptert guessed he’d been eating out of the dumpster—as he’d seen Dahmer eating out of it before he hired him.

Hauptert said there was a police report of the incident. He didn’t know the date, but the address must have been the store’s, 17040 Collins Avenue.

I called Miami-Dade Police Central Records. Although they had 1981 police reports on microfilm, without a victim’s name I needed a case number.

I knew the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner kept good records. I asked a clerk there to search their deaths in June and July 1981 for a body found at that address. Days later, she had it. The M.E. had his name as Jaida Bohumil, age 55. He’d been identified by his fingerprints—he had a record in Dade County for vagrancy and drunkenness. The police report date was July 7, 1981—20 days before Adam disappeared.

The medical examiner had the police case number. I ordered it from Miami-Dade Police, as well as the autopsy report from the M.E. When I received the police report it listed as the reporter of the crime “Dahmer, Jeffrey.” For his address and contact phone he gave the address and phone of Sunshine Sub.

Finally, here was official evidence, which Hollywood police had failed to find, that Dahmer had been in Miami. And Jeffrey Dahmer finding a dead body, how suspicious was that? No one in the larger Dahmer case seemed to know about it. Apparently, in those hundreds of hours of interviews when he admitted everything, he’d forgotten about it. Nor when Geoff Martz asked Lionel Dahmer did he know about it.

The report was three pages, its supplement written by a homicide detective:

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPT. ME 713-8P		NATURAL DEATH INVESTIGATION CONTINUATION/SUPPLEMENTARY		21421 - 48	CASE NO.
DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA					2302428
VICTIM'S NAME	BOHUMIL JANDA	AGE	SS 55	SEX	MA
RACE	W	ADDRESS	TRANSIENT		
OCCUPATION	COOK	EMPLOYER	N/A		
VEHICLE (MAKE, YEAR, LIC. TAG)	N/A		RES. PHONE	UNK 127-28-7652	
VEH. STORED AT	N/A				
PLACE OF DEATH	17040 COLLINS AVE		DEATH OCCURRED	UNKNOWN	
FOUND DEAD (DATE & TIME)	7-7-81 6P		IN THE PRESENCE OF (ADDRESS)	N/A	
BY WHOM (ADDRESS)	JEFFREY DAHMER 17040 A COLLINS AVE		IDENTIFIED BY (ADDRESS)	FINGERPRINTS ID 133903	
DATE & TIME VIEWED	7-7-81 7:55P		TYPE OF PREMISES	REAR PARKING LOT & DRIVEWAY	
HISTORY (WHAT HAPPENED PRIOR TO DEATH)			WEATHER CONDITION	HOT	
ADDRESS OF OCCURRENCE 17040 COLLINS AVE					
ACCORDING TO MR. JEFFREY DAHMER THE VICTIM WAS AN OLD DERELICT LIVING AT THE REAR OF HIS BUSINESS IN THE METER ROOM - THE VICTIM WAS ALWAYS SEEN WALKING AROUND ON					

According to Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer the victim was an old derelict living at the rear of his business in the meter room. The victim was always seen walking around on Collins Ave. and had been complaining of ill health. The victim was discovered by Mr. Dahmer face down directly south of the meter room on the gravel. The victim was known [as] “Bobby” possibly Janosky (phonetic).

In fact, all the information taken at the scene was “according to Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer.” But Dahmer clearly knew the dead man. On his rap sheet, two of his arrests were as Robert Janda. Another, that sounded closer to his given name, was as Bohumil Vaclau Janda.

It wasn't obvious to the detective this was a homicide. The body had no bleeding or obvious marks of violence other than indentations from gravel. He was found cold, and was wearing only one tennis shoe—the detective found his other shoe in the meter room, about 20 feet away. His last known address was from 1970, and police had found no kin to notify.

According to the report of his autopsy, done the next day, he was 5'4" and 78 pounds. His stomach had less than a half-ounce of fluid—he must have been hungry. Assistant Medical Examiner Charles Wetli wrote that his probable manner of death was natural, caused by chronic ethanolism. His findings were fatty metamorphosis of liver—suggesting alcoholism—dehydration, and cerebral edema with possible encephalomacia. But in a note for the file dated six days later, after viewing microscopic slides, Wetli handwrote, intriguingly, “no fatty metamorphosis.”

Hauptert remembered there had been a man living in the meter room, although Hauptert said he never went in there. Too smelly. Around the time of the police report, he realized that Dahmer didn't seem to have anywhere to live—which would have been consistent with Dahmer giving his address as Sunshine Subs. Of course, Hauptert had hired him after twice seeing him look for food in the store's dumpster. Within the next week or two after the deceased person incident, Hauptert said, he arranged for Dahmer an inexpensive room at the Bimini Bay, which rented by the month or week. He advanced whatever money was needed to get Dahmer in, and Dahmer later paid him back in full out of salary.

When I told the story to Billy Capshaw, who believed Jeff had lied about killing only 17, he thought Jeff likely had murdered the man. He said Jeff knew how to suffocate someone without leaving a trace. It was simple—he'd sit on the person's chest or upper back until he stopped breathing. Jeff had done it to him, and Billy had learned to breathe shallowly and not complain, otherwise Jeff would clobber him with an iron bedpost. That the homeless man was so small made it that much easier for Jeff, who was very strong. Hauptert had made the same point about Dahmer's strength, especially in his hands. He'd seen it when he scooped ice cream.

I also told the story to Willis Morgan, and it was he who made the next connection. What if Dahmer killed the homeless man so he could sleep in his room? And then he made a larger leap—what if Dahmer used that room 20 days later to keep, kill, or disembody Adam?

From the police report description, Willis found the room, in the rear alleyway of the 170th Street Shopping Center in Sunny Isles Beach. It was at the end of a low-trafficked gravel-floored hall, underneath exterior stairs to the second floor, steps from a large dumpster and a back door marked 17040. On the room's brown painted door, one of its wooden jalousie slots busted out and rotting, was a red posted sign: Meter Room No Storage. It was unlocked, and he entered.

Immediately facing him were a group of electrical boxes. The room turned to the left and extended about 30 feet by 10 feet. It was impenetrably filled with storage junk—old pipe, a toilet, bricks, a shopping cart, plastic milk crates full of miscellaneous hardware, and a wheelbarrow. The floor was cement, and a light bulb shone from the ceiling at least 12 feet above.

By then Geoff Martz from ABC News and I were closely working together, and I told him the theory. We agreed that the room needed to be checked out.

Another ABC producer, Shana Hildebrand, asked shopping center manager Danny Katz for permission to let us search. His answer was slow in coming. Finally Katz agreed, but only if we worked in the middle of the night, so as not to attract attention or distract from business.

We needed a crime scene professional, and Martz and I debated whether we should call Miami-Dade Police, which did detective work for Sunny Isles Beach Police. I had long since faxed the Bohumil police report to Chuck Morton, with a brief explanation and an invitation to call me, not that I was surprised when I never heard back. So we were already in agreement not to call the Broward state attorney or Hollywood police, who we expected would dismiss us.

I asked Bob Foley, in Cape Cod, and he suggested we hire someone privately but not from South Florida, because the crime scene people here all knew one another. On one of Martz's contact's advice he found Jan Johnson, a criminologist recently retired from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. She lived upstate, in Pensacola.

The day before we went in, seeing the room myself for the first time, I had a feeling: wild goose chase. Martz reassured me, although yes, it probably was, still here was a space Dahmer had likely controlled. The two other places where possibly there was a trace of Adam weren't available. The Bimini Bay had been leveled before 1991, and for all I'd tried I could never locate the blue van. This newly discovered meter room was the only remaining place where Dahmer might have had some privacy. Besides, as Willis suggested, this spot made more sense than his hotel room. It didn't have his name on it, so he wouldn't have had to be as meticulous about cleaning it up. I added that Dahmer liked to take his time cutting his bodies. He probably would have taken it somewhere, rather than do it in the van.

With Jan, ABC's two producers, and a camera crew, we arrived at the meter room in the four o'clock hour on May 24. As we lugged out most of the junk inside it, we anticipated an inquiring patrolman but one never arrived.

Inside, we all scanned the bare concrete walls and floor for stains that might have been blood. There were a surprising number of spots and smudges, and even a handprint. I thought, if there was something in the room, it would be on the west side, in one of the two furthest corners from the door. Leaning on the wall between those corners was an old waist-high lumberman's rusty axe. Couldn't be, I thought. Next to it was an equally old sledgehammer.



**Behind an unlocked door marked “Meter Room” in an alley behind Sunshine Sub, we found a sledgehammer and an axe. Photos courtesy Jan Johnson**

Something else our removal of the junk revealed was a trap door in the floor. It was a two by two foot piece of wood with a knob handle, and it had a fairly new Home Depot sticker. When I raised it, below was a gravel crawlspace, about four feet in depth. Martz lowered himself down to examine it, and said it was about 15 by 15 feet. Aside from two empty plastic grocery bags and some PVC piping, he saw nothing else.

I knew that Dahmer had admitted dismembering Steven Hicks in the crawlspace beneath his childhood home in Akron. That was in 1978, three years before Adam. Police had searched the space in 1991 and found blood and a few human bones. When Dahmer returned home in 1981, after his South Florida adventure, he said he'd exhumed Hicks's remains from the drainpipe he said he'd left them in, then sledgehammered and scattered them in the woods behind his backyard.

A news broadcast videotape Martz later found showed the crawlspace looking remarkably like the one we'd just uncovered. But we didn't have the time to excavate ours.

Jan marked interesting stains on the walls with stickers printed with arrows. But it wasn't until she pulled out colored goggles for us, and aimed a colored light on one of those corners, that a pattern emerged to our eyes.

On the southern wall, almost at the southwestern corner, strikingly obvious, was a rain of stains, maybe a hundred droplets, starting about a foot above the floor to above where we could reach. When Jan turned off the light and we removed our goggles, it was no less obvious.



**In a back corner of the meter room, next to the axe and sledgehammer, we found a rain of stains that rose up the wall. Right, a close up of some of the droplets, which field-tested positive for blood. Photos courtesy Jan Johnson**

The rain of stains was in two directions, she showed us. Assuming a chopping motion down, the cast-off droplet stains rose, climbing the wall. As the chopping instrument was pulled back, other droplets were cast off in a down direction, the reverse. There were less of those.

Looking at the scene clinically, I thought it was spectacular. Jan agreed. I asked if it looked to her like it might have been related to a homicide. She did.

Was this blood? Using a swab kit, first she showed us what a positive result would look like, using a control. She soaked the swab with distilled water, placed a drop from a vial she'd brought containing horse blood, then doused it with phenolphthalein. The swab turned magenta—to my eyes, the whole swab burst with blood color.

Next she tested a spot on the wall about ten feet from the spatter corner. She dabbed the water-soaked swab onto the concrete wall, hoping for transfer then added the chemicals. Concrete, she said, is one of the toughest surfaces to get transfer from. The swab failed to turn color at all.

Then she took a sample from a spot in the corner. The swab reacted just as it did in her control test.

I shivered. In an obscure room that connected to Jeffrey Dahmer, paces away from where he was employed that summer of 1981, was a large pattern of spatter, possibly indicative of a homicide, which tested positive for blood.

Was this Adam Walsh's blood?

Unfortunately, this was the peak moment. Nothing else would get us further. After taking two more phenolphthalein samples that indicated blood—then one that didn't—Jan tried a field test called Hexagon OBTI, a sort of litmus paper that can determine whether blood is human or animal. The emergence of one band on the paper would indicate negative but that the test is working, two bands positive, that the blood is human. The horse blood resulted in one band. And so did our sample, twice. We were left to

wonder whether we'd just proved the blood was animal and not human, or merely gotten an inconclusive result, as Jan suggested. The field test shouldn't be relied upon, she said.

By now the business day had begun and our time was up, as the shopping center management told us in no uncertain terms. To earn time for Jan to gather a few more samples that she could submit to a private crime laboratory, outside I stalled the maintenance men, regaling them with the story of why we were there, what infamous person had trod these steps. If the lab could prove the blood human, we were hoping they could spin DNA from it—which potentially could be tested against hair samples of Adam kept by the Broward Medical Examiner. But when the results came back about two weeks later, the news was uninspiring: the samples, as biologic material, had degraded and told us nothing. Probably because they had been in that warm, humid room for years they simply weren't testable.

Jan wanted to return to the room and chisel off some of the stained concrete and submit those samples to the lab. She also wanted to take, with permission, the axe and sledgehammer to test for blood, and excavate the crawlspace to look for bones.

I'd never heard of a crawlspace anywhere in sea-level South Florida. What a stroke of luck for Dahmer to discover one in that room—if in fact the crawlspace existed in 1981. I checked the Miami-Dade Building Department for plans. The original architectural records, from the fifties, were on microfilm, but unreadable. We'd noted that the scalloped cut in the concrete floor looked modern, as of course was its Home Depot door. Had the cut in the floor been enlarged, or was this the first cut? We had no way of knowing.

Also to note was that the concrete cinderblock on the corner adjoining and above where we'd found the blood had been partly (and sloppily) repaved, who-knows-when. As well, higher above on the adjoining wall was post-original construction metal and PVC pipes. However, where the blood was the wall seemed to be original. After we got the cold case squad of the Miami-Dade Police interested in the room, a detective tried to get shopping center manager Danny Katz to sign a legal consent to search. Instead, Katz told the detective there had been a fire in the shopping center in October 1994, and that the electric room had been completely redone after that.

Katz hadn't told us that. When I checked online in *The Miami Herald*, there had been a large fire in the shopping center when Katz said. Chemicals in a print shop on the second floor had ignited, and flames collapsed its floor—the ceiling of a Chinese restaurant. As to whether the electrical room had been upgraded and that wall repaved then, building permit plans might give the answer. I asked a researcher at the county Building Department to check their files. He found two demolition permits for the shopping center dated November and December 1994, but no records of rebuilding or electrical permits. From our look into the electrical room, most of the electrical boxes looked upgraded from 50 years ago. But one box seemed original. Inside it, I had noted, handwriting referring to the fuses was in fountain pen ink. Later, Darlene Hill told me, when she had run Sunshine in that space, there was no second floor. It was logical that the new electrical boxes were installed when the second floor was first built, sometime in the 1980s.

Speaking himself to Jan, a Miami-Dade police lieutenant had thought he understood her to say that her negative field test result for human blood meant we had proved the

blood was animal, not human. By contrast, Jan told us the negative result was merely inconclusive. I checked on my own.

I emailed Bluestar, the company that marketed the Hexagon OBTI test, and received a reply from the president, Jean-Marc Lefebvre-Despeaux, in Monaco. He wrote back that a negative result could mean three things: that the sample wasn't blood; it wasn't human blood; or it was human blood but the hemoglobin was too degraded to get a positive reaction. Although he doubted the last explanation, he added that the Hexagon OBTI is "only a presumptive test," and that DNA testing could tell more. But we'd already tried that.

I then spoke to Mike Grimm Jr., vice president of Evident, located in Virginia, a distributor of forensic investigative products including the Hexagon OBTI test. "In general, the test is very inconclusive," he told me. Rather, it's meant "to point the investigator in the right direction." Before the Hexagon test existed, officers would make arrests for stains on a suspect's clothing that a crime lab would determine weeks later was red paint, or dog blood.

The result of a single bar on the test, as we'd gotten, doesn't even indicate blood, he said, it only indicates that the test is working. He suggested I speak to a criminology expert in blood and stain pattern analysis—Jan Johnson. When I told Grimm we'd already hired her, he said, "I would to defer to Jan."

In April 2008 I received public records from the FBI's Adam Walsh file. One document stood out. It was an interoffice teletype stamped-dated April 30, 1992, sent by the FBI's Miami bureau and read that "Miami received information from [blackout] that three separate witnesses have come forth and have placed Dahmer at the Hollywood shopping center the morning Adam Walsh was kidnapped from a Sears department store.

"[blackout] described his witnesses as being reliable ordinary citizens and not individuals seeking notoriety or publicity. One of the witnesses is a [blackout] in the Fort Lauderdale area, and like the other two, after seeing Dahmer on the news they independently contacted [blackout] at different time frames. There is no information to reflect that the witnesses know each other."

Three witnesses. There was nothing in Hollywood's file to reflect that. And no way in this document to identify who it was.

It continued about efforts to interview Dahmer about Adam. An FBI supervisor had spoken with Dahmer's attorney Gerry Boyle, who'd initially agreed to assist "if it meant not placing his client in jeopardy. As the Bureau and Milwaukee are aware Dahmer has refused to implicate himself in case in those states which carry the death penalty."

Boyle never did let Dahmer speak to the FBI about Adam. (When Dahmer spoke to Jack Hoffman, it was after Boyle had withdrawn from the case.) Boyle "indicated that Dahmer had information (possibly an alibi) that would eliminate him as a suspect in the Walsh case; however, this information was never shared with Miami."

The last interesting line in the document was that the Miami Bureau "would still like to interview Dahmer since he is currently the only suspect in the case."

I asked Neil Purtell if he knew about a third witness at the Hollywood Mall. He didn't, aside from what he'd told Geoff Martz and I in 2007 of a man in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, who had called the FBI's Knoxville office to say that he had been in a mall in Hialeah and thought he had seen Dahmer there. That mall, I knew, was called Westland

Mall, it also had a Sears, and was approximately as close to where Dahmer was living on the beach as was the Hollywood Mall. Hialeah is in west Miami-Dade County, Hollywood is in south Broward.

Martz and I had failed to find the man but there was a report in the FBI file about him too. He'd first called the FBI on July 29, 1991—the day after Bill Bowen first called Hollywood police—after he too had seen Dahmer's photo in the newspaper. He said that he'd seen “at the mall a man who looked just like Dahmer propositioning young males. He was carrying a camera and taking pictures. His behavior was strange and remembers him because of his actions. He also describes him as a cold-eyed, very disturbing-type person.”

In a second conversation days later with the Knoxville office the man went into more detail. He said that in 1981 he'd had a business near the mall in Hialeah, and about a month before Adam had disappeared, he'd taken his son shopping to that mall.

He recalled “standing outside a shop window and noticed a guy there he now believes to be Jeffrey Dahmer taking photos and passing out cards. This person asked [blackout] if he knew of some young men who wanted to get into the modeling business. [blackout] recalls this person because of the scene created by him. A young man was approached by this individual. The young man cursed, backed off and said ‘Hell no, you son-of-a-bitch.’ The young man tells [blackout] ‘He thinks I’m a queer and wants me to pose nude.’”

I mailed a letter with copies of these documents to the newly installed chief of Hollywood police, Chadwick E. Wagner. He forwarded the letter to Det. Lyle Bien, and he returned my call. He said he wasn't familiar with any third witness of Dahmer at Hollywood Mall and he'd asked the FBI to provide him an un-redacted copy of the documents, but frankly, it didn't make any difference to him. “It's of no value to us,” he said. “I don't believe there's anything there.”

He didn't believe the stories told by Morgan or Bowen. Willis had recently demanded that Bien re-interview him, and as Bien recalled (and Willis had told me), Willis “didn't leave here happy.”

“I don't believe that Morgan came face-to-face with Jeffrey Dahmer,” Bien said, although he did think that Willis had “convinced himself it happened.” A normal person, he said, does not do what Willis had said he'd done, following a suspicious person through the mall. Willis had told me he'd done it because he'd expected the man would approach someone else, who'd need help.

Nor was Bowen credible. He'd had just a “brief side profile encounter. I just can't believe somebody saw that and remembers it so many years later.” He said that wasn't how it went in police work.

Willis's complaint to Bien was that he, currently in charge of the case, had dismissed Dahmer without re-interviewing any of the important Dahmer witnesses—despite Capt. Tony Rode telling the press in 2007 that they had. I got Bien to admit that he hadn't spoken to Bowen, Ken Haupt Sr., Jan Johnson, or gone into the meter room. He said our inconclusive field test results were enough that they didn't have to do their own.

He thought a dead bird in the room was the source of the blood on the wall. The Miami-Dade police cold case detective had seen the bird when he'd gone inside.

In fact there had been a dead bird on the concrete floor of the meter room. It was a baby bird—a chick—the day I was in the room I'd only seen it because I'd put my pint



container of orange juice on the floor right next to it. It had come to its final rest inches from the wall opposite the bloodstains, about 10 feet away. There was no blood on or around the bird, or any trail from it to the bloody wall. Frankly, the idea that that little birdy was the source of so much blood, rising so far up the wall—well, it was ridiculous.

Bien also tried to convince me that the meter room had been rebuilt since the fire. I told him about the meter box with the fountain pen writing. He dismissed that too. “That’s in TV crime shows. That doesn’t prove anything.”

I wasn’t getting anywhere. At least he didn’t suggest to me that I had done the murder, as he had to Willis. (Since I mentioned it, I have an alibi. I was then living in Los Angeles.) I mentioned the eight witnesses who’d seen the blue van, none of whom they’d questioned. “We proved there was no blue van from the guys we talked to,” he said.

In October at an award dinner for Broward County prosecutor of the year I ran into Mark Smith, who Wagner had promoted to Assistant Chief of Police. He said he was still working the case. In the next few weeks he was about to pursue a new lead, although it probably wasn’t earth shattering, he admitted. All he would tell me about it was that it didn’t connect to Dahmer or Toole.

## 21 Resolution

THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 16, 2008, Hollywood Police Chief Chadwick Wagner announced he would hold a press conference that afternoon to close the Adam Walsh case. His killer? Ottis Toole.

It seemed like a Christmas gift to John and Reve Walsh, who were present. At last they could have closure, the killer of their little boy, taken 27 years before from the shopping mall across the street from the police station, finally determined. The event was carried live on cable TV news networks. In the room the media had an edge of skepticism, but it seemed inappropriate to argue with the crying victims.

Also on the dais was Mark Smith. Someone asked him what he thought of the decision; he said he agreed with it. That contradicted what he’d told WSVN, broadcast February 1, 2007: “There are people who say they saw Jeffrey Dahmer. There’s more people that say they saw Ottis Toole, who I’m not totally convinced is involved in this case.”

National media presented the news as a good day for the Walshes. Bloggers generally agreed. If it was a fiction or wishful thinking, it didn’t much matter because Toole was dead (as was Dahmer), and the Walshes felt so relieved.

But it did matter. Closing a murder case on the wrong, if convenient suspect doesn’t inspire confidence in the police. Endorsing it didn’t make for the media’s most shining day either. Some in local Miami media dissented. That evening, WSVN aired *Questions Still Surround Adam Walsh Case After Its Official Closure*. Outside the police station I was quoted: “I came here because they said they had new evidence. There was no new evidence.” In the following days, the Associated Press ran *Case Closed? Questions Linger in Adam Walsh Probe*, and the *Miami Herald* led a Sunday paper with *Doubts About Adam’s Killer Loom Large*. The brashest headline was in a *Broward New Times* blog, *According To No New Evidence, Deceased Pathological Liar Killed Adam Walsh*.

But what everyone saw on television was only the surface story. For the last two years I'd repeatedly asked Hollywood to open the remainder of their case file as public records. Florida state law requires the police to make their files available on request unless the case is in active investigation. I kept arguing it wasn't. They kept responding that it was. Now, with the case officially closed, they had to open the file. In fact, the police had already prepared copies of it on CD-ROM to hand out to reporters that day. Because I was there I got a copy. On one CD was everything that had been released in 1996, on a second everything since then.

One of the most notable things about the case had been that police for years had not felt they had any credible witnesses, aside from Reve Walsh, who said they had seen Adam at Sears that day. Actually, they had Timothy Pottenburgh, but within a month they had dismissed him, Jack Hoffman thought his timeline was an hour too late. In 1991 came William Mistler, but none of Hoffman, Mark Smith, or Phil Mundy had considered him credible enough. Like Pottenburgh and Mistler, Bill Bowen had reported seeing Adam and an abductor, but he had been dismissed. Willis Morgan had only seen a possible abductor.

So in the end, what was this vaunted case against Ottis Toole? Besides his confessions. There was the 1996 statement Mary H. gave to Mundy—from the new files we learned her full name was Mary Hagan, but she had died in 2006, at age 85. There was little more in the transcript of her interview to Mundy than he had told me in 1997. There was Bobby Lee Jones, who had worked with Toole in 1982 and was with him in the Duval County Jail in 1983. Mundy had re-interviewed him in 1996, but again, he'd already told me most everything in that statement. And then-security guard Kathryn Shaffer, now Kathryn Shaffer-Barrack, had changed her mind in 1996 to say she had thrown Adam out of the store. Whether her first or later impressions were correct—and it seemed that her first impression was best—we knew in 1997 what she had said.

There was one new name, Nellie Schreck, who in 1996 said she'd seen Toole hold open for her an entrance door to Sears. She remembered his ugly face and that he tilted his head to the side. But she said she'd been in the store between two and five that afternoon, which was when she always did her shopping. And could she have seen and been influenced by WSVN's oft-repeated 1984 jail interview with Toole, where he notably tilted his head to the side? Schreck had died in 2006 too, at age 86.

In 1996, when I'd first approached this story, I'd speculated that the police had the solution in their files, they just didn't know it.

Thirteen years later, in the first weeks of 2009, going through the new case file reports, I finally realized for certain I'd been right.

There were at least four additional witnesses who had all seen Adam at Sears that day. Two had seen him with his abductor, the others had seen a suspicious man nearby. Their statements were dated 1996 and 1997. As I found each of them in the file, I interviewed them.

Phil Mundy had interviewed three of them and showed them a six-picture photo lineup that included Toole. All three had failed to identify Toole as the man they had seen that day. On that, Mundy seemed to have dismissed each as a significant witness.

A fourth witness's statement was on a tip sheet page from *America's Most Wanted* that had been forwarded to Hollywood police. Neither Mundy nor Mark Smith had

interviewed her. Why not? Because she'd mentioned seeing a blue van outside Sears? And Mundy was looking for an old white Cadillac?

When I interviewed them, I showed them a photo of Toole. All four had seen him before. The three who hadn't identified him for Mundy emphatically said to me the man they saw wasn't Toole. The fourth, who hadn't been interviewed, thought maybe that was who she had seen.

Then I showed pictures of Dahmer. All four knew who Dahmer was, although one didn't know his face.

What happened next, I have never experienced anything like.

Each of the four reacted emotionally. The woman who thought she'd seen Toole got goose bumps. It was Dahmer, she realized, not Toole who she'd seen. Another woman cried at the mention of Dahmer's name. Seeing his picture years ago she had concluded it was him, and she identified the first photo of him I showed her.

A man who was 9 years old in 1981 and said he had been playing videogames with Adam, and had seen him leave with a man, stared at a picture of Dahmer I showed him. His voice broke and tears came. Although he wouldn't say absolutely it was Dahmer he'd seen, he admitted having an emotional reaction. "You know what's bothering me?" he asked. "That it's bothering me."

Another man did a double take when I first showed him Dahmer's picture. He was skeptical that he was the same man he'd seen until a couple weeks later we looked at a number of photos of Dahmer on the Internet. Then he came to one and stopped. "Oh, my, god," he said. "You have a picture that is strikingly similar to the man I saw." He said if Mundy had shown him that picture in a lineup, he would have picked him out.

What's more, two of the four, entering Sears that day, saw a blue van parked in the store's fire lane just in front of the toy department entrance. Police had dismissed Timothy Pottenburgh's similar statement, and then Bill Bowen's, but now there were four witnesses total who had seen a blue van in the same spot all at about the same time.

In the order in which I found the witnesses:

### **Phillip Lohr**

A 1997 summary memo written by Phil Mundy attached to an interview he'd done with Phillip Lohr was dismissive. Lohr had already sought out Mark Smith, who told him what he'd seen had no relation to Adam. Lohr had complained to Smith's sergeant then found Mundy. Mundy agreed with Smith. When Lohr got sarcastic, Mundy wrote, he decided his best course was to just take his statement.

Mundy wrote that Lohr couldn't say for sure he saw Adam, couldn't be certain it was the same day as the abduction, and his description of the man he saw didn't fit Toole "or any of our other 'suspects.'"

In the transcript of his statement, Lohr said he'd passed a man carrying a child out the west side lawn and garden entrance of Sears, and overheard the child say something unnerving: "You are not my daddy." The child was about six, too large to be carried. For comparison, in 1997 Lohr's own son was then six. The child had a freckled face, brown hair, was missing his front teeth, and looked flustered, like he'd been crying. Lohr couldn't be certain of the day it happened, but recalled it had been a day or so before he first heard the news about Adam missing and had seen search helicopters flying. The time of day could have been anywhere from noon to three P.M.

The man, he described, was about 25-30, 6-foot, medium build, brown hair, wearing glasses, sideburns, and a “short chin beard” hair connected to a mustache, possibly like a goatee.

He said when he saw Adam’s picture on the news he immediately thought it was him. Mundy asked why he didn’t immediately contact police.

“Well, I was forced to make a determination as to whether did I see something significant or was it not significant... I hate to bring it up but it boils down to I was able to convince myself that it probably wasn’t the same child, the police probably have other witnesses, that I couldn’t have been the only person who saw anything. Every reason in the book just so that I don’t have to say that I was the one who could have stopped the man.”

Mundy asked why he was talking to police now. Before he went into the store, Lohr mentioned, outside the entrance he’d seen a van parked. It was blue. “Let me sum it up, I guess I have always felt that I made the wrong decision in not going to the police. Maybe I’ve felt a little guilty about not doing that.”

The van had been parked in a traffic lane within twenty feet of the store entrance, and no one had been in it. To Lohr’s annoyance it had interrupted the traffic flow. He didn’t know if it was connected to what he’d seen moments later, but “to make a long story short with the van, every time we get behind a van I eventually start to get bothered by, should I have gone to the police, and every time that happens I just put it out of my mind... I do U-turns in the middle of the street because I quite frankly... I don’t want to go through another one. I don’t want to actually end up being somebody that sees this thing twice.”

On that, Mundy ended the statement.

In 1996-97, Mundy was trying to prove the case against Toole. Toole had a white Cadillac; rightly or not, Pottenburgh’s blue van had been discredited. So had Bowen’s blue van. When Lohr brought up a blue van, Mundy seemed not to want to hear about it.

On the other hand, I was very interested in a sighting of a blue van. Although Lohr recalled it as somewhat deluxe, as had Pottenburgh, he’d also placed it in nearly the same spot as Bowen and maybe Pottenburgh had said it was.

“I know absolutely it was Adam Walsh” I saw, Lohr gushed when I came to his Hollywood home to see him. He was also “absolutely positive there was a blue van.”

He’d expected someone to contact him after the Hollywood press conference. He was equally positive Toole was the wrong man.

I took his story from the top. He was a regular shopper at Sears’s tool department. That day in 1981, driving in the parking lot lane next to the west side of Sears, headed south, Lohr had spotted a good parking space. Next to him in the northbound lane was a blue van, inappropriately parked and stopping traffic. A county bus was behind the blue van and then a white car, possibly a Ford (not a Cadillac, he insisted). He was about to make a right turn into the parking lane when from behind the bus the white car darted into his lane, cut him off and turned towards the spot.

Lohr was incensed—enough to animatedly recall it for me so many years later, as if it had just happened. It was weird but I understood. I knew from living in South Florida back then, you sneaked into someone’s intended parking space at the risk of violence.

The white car didn't take the spot but Lohr remained irate by the episode. On his way into the store he walked past the van, the root cause of the problem—it was right in front of the entrance, about 20 feet from the door.

As he passed through the door, a man exiting was carrying a child. Something was inappropriate; the child was about 6 years old, too big to be carried. And he was either crying or had just stopped. That child was Adam, he said after seeing his picture in the news.

“I heard Adam say, ‘You’re not my daddy.’” The man responded, “I’m taking you to your daddy.”

“It startled me. I thought, everybody down here is divorced. There’s a boyfriend. Okay, maybe he’s taking him to his daddy.” Stopped in his tracks, Lohr wondered, “Should I do something? Go out there and take a look?”

He didn't follow them but did decide to commit to memory what he'd seen. He focused on the child. He noted his three-color striped shirt, khaki shorts, his face covered with freckles, and that his front teeth were missing. Also, “I remember saying to myself, sailor’s cap.” Later he called it a captain’s hat. “I thought, what kind of parents would give a kid a captain’s hat?”

All that matched Reve Walsh’s original description of Adam, except for the color of his shorts. Reve had said they were green.

He didn't concentrate as much on the man. All he could say was, “He was not really dirty. He had reasonably acceptable clothes, a neat appearance. I did not consider him to be unsavory.” He recalled the man was wearing glasses, possibly sunglasses, and was maybe 6 feet tall, or in any event, a few inches taller than Lohr, who is 5'6". He had a very calm voice.

“Oh God, could I have done something? Could I have stopped it? I don't want to be known as the person who didn't stop it,” he said. He's felt guilty all these years—although he realized that at the time he couldn't be sure there was any reason to do anything. “Ever since Adam, I've stopped people when their kids say, I don't want to go!”

In 1997, with the case back in the news, he saw another blue van driven by someone who made him think of the man who carried the child out of the store. Considering now his own son, he thought, what if “Oh my god, he's back!”

He called Mark Smith at Hollywood police and came in to give a statement. Smith gave him a photo of a small boy who looked like Adam but wasn't, then left the room. Lohr got the feeling he wasn't being taken seriously. At the State Attorney's office he found Mundy, who showed him a six-photo lineup that included Toole. Lohr insisted Toole wasn't the man.

I showed him a photo of Toole, from John Walsh's book. “He ain't got enough hair,” he said. “That is definitely not the person.”

I showed him Dahmer's 1981 black-and-white mug shot. He was dubious. Then I showed him a color shot of Dahmer at his first appearance in a Milwaukee courtroom in 1991. He did a double take. Pending showing him more pictures, I left that day with his conclusion: “I can definitely say that I cannot rule out Dahmer, but I cannot rule him in.”

Lohr had an email address but warned me he wasn't good with the Internet. I sent him links including A&E Biography's Dahmer story, then realized he probably hadn't opened them. Two weeks later I arranged to put him in front of a computer.

After a few minutes, he said, “For every picture I see that says, that looks like him, I see another that says, that’s not him.”

Dahmer’s 1981 mug shot came on the screen. I printed it, and Lohr borrowed a black felt pen and drew on it glasses, longer hair brushed to the side, and a mustache and goatee. “If I had a police officer set this down in front of me (in a photo lineup) and ask, can you I.D. any of these people, I would gravitate to that,” he said. “He has the eyes.”

A few pictures later, he added, “He’s demonstrated he has facial hair, and combs his hair over,” as Lohr had just drawn. He was looking for a shot of him wearing glasses, if possible photochromic lenses, which in sunlight darken to sunglasses. Lohr called them PhotoGray, a brand name.

And then we came across a family portrait, first published in Lionel Dahmer’s book *A Father’s Story*. Jeffrey was about 17, he wore his thickest mustache, and a hint of hair lined the bottom of his chin (although it might have been only a shadow on the photo). He also was wearing dark amber glasses. Lohr stopped.

“Oh... my... god. That’s getting real close. And he’s wearing sunglasses indoors.”

He thought about it for the next few minutes. “I find it amazing how similar (that picture) is to the man I saw. You have a picture that is very, very similar.” He wouldn’t commit to certainty, but he repeated about the “striking similarities.”

“I only saw the man for a split second while I was doing the left/right dance to get around him, when I heard Adam say, you’re not my daddy.”

“I’m amazed that Jeffrey Dahmer could be that similar to the person I saw. Seeing that picture there starts making it real creepy.”

I later asked Billy Capshaw whether Dahmer had ever worn transition glasses. He had. “They were a smoky color when they changed,” he said. “I had never seen glasses like these, I was pretty impressed with them.” He remembered they weren’t army-issue, and were in the 1970s style of pilot glasses, square-looking. That description matched the glasses in Dahmer’s family picture.

### **Vernon Jones**

In 1994, Vernon Jones wrote a letter addressed to John and Reve Walsh in care of John’s show:

“I was playing Atari and Intellivision with your son Adam on that eventful day in July [1981]. The reason why I am informing you of this is to give you my sincere apologies for my being too young and naïve to realize that I possibly could have made a difference in the outcome of your family’s life.”

In 1981, Jones was nine. He offered further explanation to the Walshes or anyone who would get back to him. He wrote that he’d just spoken to 1500 people at a convention for a group called Youth Crime Watch and told them what had happened to Adam “could have been me” instead, or possibly it might have happened to both of them together.

*America’s Most Wanted* forwarded the letter to Hollywood police, which never called him. Rummaging through the file in 1996, Phil Mundy found it and went to Jones’s office to speak to him. Jones was then working for a youth crime prevention program funded by the U.S. Attorney’s office for the Southern District of Florida.

On tape, Mundy spoke to him for fifteen minutes. Jones described a man who motioned toward both he and Adam while they were playing the videogame. Jones knew

not to follow a stranger. But a short time later he saw Adam leave with the man. Towards the interview, Mundy showed him the photo lineup that included Toole. Jones couldn't pick out the man he'd seen.

Mundy thanked him, and in his summary wrote that Jones didn't match what Mary Hagan and Kathryn Shaffer-Barrack had told him. And despite that Jones had sullenly written to John Walsh he'd played a videogame with Adam, Mundy wrote that Jones did not identify Adam as the boy he'd played with, and likely was in the store at some other time than when Adam was there.

In fact, Jones had told Mundy on tape he'd identified Adam as that child when he'd first seen his picture in the news in 1981, and that he and his grandfather had tried to tell the police what he'd seen. Instead of asking whether they'd made such a report, Mundy ended the statement there.

Jones was anxious to talk to me and had a lot to say. It was definitely Adam who he'd played with. He'd been telling that to people for years, even in other speeches he'd made to Youth Crime Watch groups. He'd even mentioned it to Attorney General Janet Reno and Florida Senator Bob Graham when they were honored by the organization, and a number of local police chiefs. That the man he saw wasn't Toole, that was true.

Adam's murder changed Jones's life. He knew how close he'd come to Adam's fate. The man had motioned to either or both of them, and what probably saved Jones is that he was three years older than Adam, plus Jones is black and the man was white. He thought, "Oh, man, I'm not goin' with you," and turned away.

Just after that, Jones's parents enrolled him at a karate school for kids, to learn self-protection. Five years later, Jones opened his own karate school for kids, which he still has. He earned a black belt and taught his dad to be a black belt.

That summer he was staying with his 78-year-old grandfather Otis Williams at his home in Hallandale, next to Hollywood. They got up early each weekday to cut lawns. Often they would be in Sears because Williams would need to replace a broken blade or some other yard tool. While he shopped in the tool department, Vernon played videogames.

That day in 1981 he was playing Intellivision's baseball game with Adam. They were both standing, Vernon on the left, Adam on his right. It was the last inning, Adam trailing but he had the bases loaded.

It was at that moment that a man tried to get their attention. Or was it just Adam's attention? Vernon thought he remembered hearing a noise, like Hey, hey. "I looked over, you talking to me? I didn't know him," he said.

Distracted, Vernon returned to the game. "I pitched the ball. Crack! Grand slam home run! Oh, man!"

He remembered Adam's smile at having beaten the bigger boy. As the loser, Vernon put down his controls and moved around the side to another game in the store's display, probably Donkey Kong. A bit later he looked to his right and saw Adam leave with the man. There was contact between them, possibly the man's right hand holding Adam's left hand. They went out the closest door to where they were playing, the west door.

He couldn't remember if it was the same night or just after when an aunt called his grandfather to turn on the TV news about a little boy missing from Sears. At least two of Vernon's aunts worked either at Sears or elsewhere at Hollywood mall.

He remembered seeing Adam's picture. "Grandpa, grandpa, that's the boy I was playing with," he said. "Are you sure?" his grandfather asked. "Yes, sir."

Next morning, before starting work, his grandfather took him to the Hollywood police station. "I'll never forget it. Parked the truck, getting out, walk the walkway, holding his hand." An officer was "hanging out" and Vernon's grandfather "literally ran into him, bumped into him." Vernon explained that his grandfather always had a fast walk.

"I'm sorry, sir," his grandfather excused himself. Vernon never knew the officer's name, but remembered his gun belt and his belly. It was Vernon's first encounter with a police officer. "My boy here, my son here..." his grandfather tried to say.

The officer spit a black wad of what might have been tobacco at Vernon's grandfather's feet. It hit the ground but splattered back onto his shoe.

"Listen boy," said the officer, "I don't have time for this." "I'm sorry, sir," said Vernon's grandfather, who grabbed Vernon's hand again. They turned around, walked back to the truck, and went to their first job that morning, cutting a lawn in Bal Harbour.

Vernon said that was the first time he'd encountered racism. "Why was he calling my grandfather boy?" he wondered then. The result was, Hollywood police never got his tip.

I showed him a Toole picture. "*Uh uh*," he said. "I would have remembered a face like that." Then I showed him a 1991 courtroom shot of Dahmer.

"Wow," he said.

I put him in front of a computer screen and played MSNBC's 1994 prison interview with Dahmer. He stared, rapt. He knew who Dahmer was but hadn't associated his face.

I watched what was happening to him. He narrated for himself. "Looking at him, hearing his voice is bothering me. I feel my eye twitching, I feel my heart rate elevating. Looking at him right now, putting the headphone on and hearing his voice is literally bothering me."

As well, his voice was breaking, and the eyes of this black belt karate teacher were tearing. "When I heard the case being closed, my family and others know I've been talking about this for years..." he trailed off.

"Looking at him, I wouldn't have been scared. The other guy [Toole], I would have gone ecch, get away from me. He was revolting."

### **Janice Santamassino**

On September 21, 1996, the night *America's Most Wanted* ran what was supposed to be its last-ever segment, a full hour about Adam's case, a show operator taking tips wrote this down:

"Hollywood, Fl. Caller saw by toy entrance a dk color van was parked there (maybe blue) w/curtains in windows (old beat up van). It was around 11 A.M. (morning hours). Caller reported this information to Hollywood Police that night Adam disappeared. Caller had seen Adam playing near the arcade when she walked in, and 10-15 mins later she heard on the loudspeaker he was missing."

The caller left her name and phone number.

It was the same night Mary Hagan had called. The show had forwarded the tips to Hollywood police, along with others as they had gotten them. There was no evidence in



the case file to show that Hollywood police had called back her or Hagan. Phil Mundy had found Hagan, but to me or in the file he hadn't mentioned this caller.

I found her easily. Her name was Janice Santamassino, and in fact my call was the first time anyone had ever gotten back to her about Adam Walsh. No one had called her back in 1981 either.

She first wanted to talk about the van. Before she'd entered the store, it had been inappropriately parked directly in front of the toy department entrance, and in trying to get around she'd almost rammed it. She'd gotten her first driver's license only months before. "I wasn't too good at making turns then," she said.

She was so upset about the van that she'd tried to remember its license plate number, to tell police. That afternoon, when she'd called Hollywood police immediately after seeing Adam's photo on the 5 o'clock news to tell them that was the boy she'd seen, she'd mentioned the van to an officer, even volunteering that if they'd arrange a hypnotism session she possibly could recall the whole plate number. Twenty-seven years later, the letters and number still in her head were K, L, and 6. The only other description of the van she could add, besides what the show operator had written down, was that it may have had heart-shaped windows in the rear, covered by a curtain.

She described Sears that day as "relatively like a morgue—empty. The only person I saw was Adam." She estimated it was between 10 A.M. to noon. She had brought her 11-year-old son Anthony and 4-year-old daughter Lori to buy white little girls' sandals. That Monday was the first day of Janice's vacation and she'd planned to spend the rest of the day poolside with the kids.

Walking through Sears on their way to Kinney Shoes, they passed the videogame display. Lori wanted to play.

Adam was already playing, Janice remembered. "The kid was talking about the video. He was telling her how it worked. She had her hands on the game. We were there a good ten minutes—too long, I thought. She wanted to stay with him. I thought it was a little strange, the boy being there alone so long."

She remembered Adam wearing a cap—she thought it was a baseball cap, maybe blue or red or white.

Lori, now 31 and married, had a memory of it too. "He was standing to my left. It was a game with a joystick, I remember where his hand was, on the joystick. I was watching him play. I just remember, it was me and him. He was slightly taller."

"I wanted to pull her away from that game," Janice said. Lori had responded, "Five more minutes!" "No!" said Janice.

Leaving the games they walked through the toy department, Janice holding Lori's hand. There was a man with his head down holding a toy, possibly reading it. He looked up at Janice and briefly their eyes locked.

"I remember thinking he was weird" and out of place, she said. "He was scuzzy and he had no kid with him. I had a creepy feeling."

She described him: disheveled, unshaven, no mustache, thin face, no glasses, about 6-feet tall and lanky, in his 30s. His hair was brownish or sandy-brown, and "was a wreck. He was scary-looking". I asked if she was scared of him. "Now that you mention it, yes, for a fleeting moment."

She'd seen Ottis Toole's picture—obviously, since she'd watched that episode of *America's Most Wanted*—and although she said she couldn't be 100% sure, she thought it was Toole.

They'd gotten to Kinney Shoes but when Janice found they didn't have the white sandals she was looking for, they went back to Sears and saw a pair in its shoe department. When I came to meet Janice at her home, she showed me the shoebox they'd come in, now stuffed with old bills. Sears's price tag was still on it: \$4.99, children's size eight and a half.

While back in Sears, she recalled hearing the store's public address page for Adam, missing. On her way toward the garden center exit, passing the catalog desk, she saw a woman who she figured was the mother of the missing boy. "She looked distressed, crying or about to cry," she said. She was leaning on the counter with one hand, the other hand holding what Janice remembered was a lampshade or a lamp. Her hair was disheveled, like she'd just gotten out of bed.

She was with someone, "I thought, a husband, a friend." His hair was similarly disheveled. She described him as late 20s to early 30s, dark hair. Janice left the store, expecting the child would show up. Maybe he was just hiding.

On television, Janice recognized John Walsh. She knew him because she'd worked at the Diplomat Hotel for a number of years. She remembered he worked for the hotel's convention services; she'd seen him in the catering department. He was good-looking, she added.

But the man she'd seen with Reve at the catalog desk wasn't John. When I showed her two newspaper photos of Jimmy Campbell she said it might have been him.

I was more interested in the man in the toy aisle. She had gotten two good looks at him; his profile and straight on. On her computer screen I found on the web MSNBC's Stone Phillips 1994 prison interview of Dahmer and played a few seconds.

"He's got the right nose," she said.

I skipped to A&E Biography's Dahmer show. They had him walking into a Milwaukee courtroom for his first appearance.

"That's his profile!" She got excited. "His hair. That's what I saw, when he was looking down. I can't believe it, this is like the profile."

I found Dahmer's 1991 color mug shot, with both a profile and a forward shot. "That's it! His hair was a little bit more messier. I'm getting goose bumps." She was; I saw them on her arms. "I never thought I would get that emotional. But that is him. That looks like him. I can't believe it! I was 99% sure it was Toole until I saw this."

We talked about the forward-looking mug shot. "That's what I saw, at me." I said others had told me that Dahmer could look right through you. "Right!" she said. That's what she thought he was doing in the mug shot, and when they'd locked eyes.

"Wow. It's so eerie looking at him. He's scary."

### **Jennie Warren**

A report by Mark Smith briefly details a phone call he got from Jennie Warren on October 30, 1995. She told him she had never before spoken about Adam's case to Hollywood police. She said on the day of the abduction she was in Sears with her 8-year-old granddaughter, and had seen Reve and Adam enter the store from the catalog desk door. Reve then left Adam at the videogames.

Several children were already playing the games, so Adam had to wait his turn. Mrs. Warren left her granddaughter in the toy department then followed Reve as she walked toward the lamps department. Mrs. Warren continued on to the store's business office. When she returned to toys, she saw a suspicious man she described as 5'9", 30s, dirty blonde hair, wearing khaki-colored shirt and pants. He was talking with a catalog department employee she knew. Although she felt "uneasy" about the man in khakis, she didn't think much of it and left the area with her granddaughter. About 30-40 minutes later she heard an intercom page for a missing child.

Smith had tried to find the catalog desk employee who had been talking to the man. Sears referred him to two men, both of whom denied working on the day of the abduction. One suggested another employee who was homosexual and effeminate and during his tenure at Sears had been arrested for a fraudulent report about a stolen vehicle.

Smith found the police report, dated 1978. A criminal check showed the man also had arrests in the Sixties and Seventies for soliciting lewd acts in Hollywood, New York, and Phoenix, and in the summer of 1982 in California. Also in California he also had a 1979 forgery arrest. Sears couldn't confirm that the man had worked for them. Smith later found him in Oklahoma. Smith had grilled him, but he wouldn't back off on his story: he'd left Florida before 1981 and therefore wasn't working at the Hollywood Sears that day.

Almost a year after Mrs. Warren called Smith, Phil Mundy taped an interview with her. She was then 73. It turned out Smith in his earlier report had made some mistakes.

First, Mrs. Warren said she'd gone to Sears with her three granddaughters, ages 14, 8, and 3, the youngest in a stroller. It was "between mid-morning and mid-afternoon." They had entered the west side and first gone to toys, where the 8-year-old wanted to look at Barbie dolls.

Mrs. Warren saw a mother and child she later recognized as Reve and Adam. Reve "dropped off" Adam at the videogames. Elsewhere in toys, Mrs. Warren did the same with her 8-year-old.

Adam was standing behind and watching two boys about 12 already playing the games. Smith had written that Mrs. Warren saw the man in khakis when she returned to the area, but she told Mundy she saw him before she left. He was "right beside Adam." Although the man in khakis and the catalog department employee were talking while watching the boys play the game, she described the khakis man as "alone".

She thought he was wearing a cap but underneath it he had dirty blonde hair about two inches below his ears. The khakis were "like army fatigues clothes" and he had a T-shirt underneath. His hands were in his pockets. "He was just standing there watching," she said.

She followed Reve as far as the lamp department, then Mrs. Warren continued on to the business office to pay her Sears bill. She took a service ticket but because she had to wait she got an "uneasy feeling" about leaving the 8-year-old alone. She told her 14-year-old let's go, and when she didn't move fast enough, Mrs. Warren said she kicked her in the rear to get her going.

She hollered for the 8-year-old, who answered. She didn't notice whether the khakis man was still there or not. They left Sears and went into the mall, then later heard a store announcement about a missing child. Mrs. Warren took the moment to lecture her 14-year-old on why you shouldn't leave a child alone.

Mrs. Warren said she was a hairdresser, so she had taken note of Reve's hair. It was damaged, she said, probably bleached and permed. Since it was straight at the roots and frizzy at the ends, it looked to her like she was trying to grow it out. All she could remember about Adam was he wore dark clothes, and she wasn't sure about a cap or hat. "But I know he was engrossed in watching the Nintendo," as she called the videogames.

Mundy showed her his six-picture lineup that included Toole. She picked out Toole but not, as Mundy wrote, to identify him. She said Toole's picture gave her "a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach when I saw him but I can't really say that was his face."

At the doorstep of her Hollywood home, at the mention of the case, Jennie Warren, now 85, began to cry. Blubber. She knew that the man the Hollywood police had just decided killed Adam was the wrong man. It was the other guy.

Jeffrey Dahmer.

Warren couldn't say exactly when she'd made the Dahmer connection. But her grandson-in-law, married for the last ten years to the granddaughter who'd been 14 in 1981, told me she'd said it to the family a few times.

The story she told me of her day at Sears was consistent with what she'd told Mundy except for naming Dahmer. At the computer games, Dahmer was there when Adam arrived. The two boys already playing were white, and Dahmer was standing right behind them. Adam took a place on Dahmer's left, and they both watched the game.

"Adam could have cared less who he was next to," she said. "He was wanting to play the games." Did Reve see Dahmer too? She must have, Jennie answered. "I was right behind her." Reve also must have seen the catalog department employee, she said. Did she see you? Probably not, Jennie said. "Reve was all wrapped up in herself."

When Mark Smith had discovered that the former catalog department employee he thought was the right person had a record for homosexual solicitations, he'd pursued him hard because, it seemed, he thought maybe he was the abductor's inside guy. That would have been wrong, Jennie said, the catalog guy was only there because he wasn't busy. They were just talking. He was valuable to find because he was another witness, she thought.

Since the man she said was Dahmer was wearing army-type clothes, did she think he'd been in the army? Yes, she said. Bill Bowen had described the man he'd seen outside as wearing an army shirt, but he'd said it was green. Khaki meant beige, she said.

"He was kind of shy," she said. "His expression was, he was sad, or lonely. After I left I had the sense he was intent on watching the boys."

We looked at Milwaukee courtroom pictures of Dahmer. "See where his hair is? It came that far down, below his ears." To another one, she said, "The hair, the beard, an overgrowth. That's him."

To the picture on the cover of a Dahmer book, she said, "That's the man I saw. All these pictures, he has hair below his ears. I'm a beautician, and I notice all these things."

I showed her a picture of Toole. "That's not him. He's ugly. This Dahmer was not ugly."

At Sears's business office, when she decided she needed to retrieve her 8-year-old, she told the 14-year-old to hurry up. When she didn't, Jennie said, "No! I want to get back there, let's go!" When the girl still didn't react, she threatened, "I'm going to kick you in the buttinski if you don't move!"

Back in the toy department Jennie called the 8-year-old's name. "Yes, I'm here! What do you want?" she answered. "Come here!" "But I want to see the dolls!" "Come here right now!" "Okay, nanny."

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Two of the four new witnesses had first contacted authorities in 1996 or 1997, but the others had tried to tell Hollywood police what they'd seen within the first days of the case. That made six witnesses at Sears that day who saw Adam's possible abductor and said they'd gone to Hollywood police in 1981 with their tips: Santamassino and Jones, plus Morgan, Bowen, Pottenburgh, and eventual-Toole witness Mary Hagan. All but Morgan saw Adam as well.

Here was the problem: of the six, the original detectives only knew of Pottenburgh. In fact, he was the only one of the six who hadn't on their own volunteered or tried to volunteer his or her information to the police. Acting on someone else's tip, detectives had found and interviewed him. Then they dismissed him—as police would eventually dismiss, ignore, or repulse each of the six individually, except in Phil Mundy's case Hagan in 1996.

Had the police had all six from the very beginning, they could have shown them lineups of Campbell in 1981; Toole in 1983; and Dahmer in 1991.

The case would have been over in 1991.

The Walshes would have been spared the last 18 years of grief. The citizens of Hollywood wouldn't have had to pay for all that police work, documented in this story. Toole and Campbell would have been eliminated early on. Dahmer would have gone to trial and faced Florida's death penalty. Wisconsin didn't have a death penalty, and he wouldn't have faced it in Ohio had they tried him there for Steven Hicks.

What seemed increasingly obvious through all my work was now certain. The Hollywood police blew this case beginning on the very first day, when Janice Santamassino called them with what she knew and was never called back. The cops also blew it every day after, up to the very last day in December 2008 when the chief closed the case on Toole, choosing to ignore the most important witnesses who even gave them second chances to listen to them.

John Walsh said it himself, in 1982, to the *Miami Herald*: "There were thousands of leads that they never followed up. And I saw detectives write them down on matchbook covers, scraps of paper. I'm afraid that in their ineptitude they've let the real killer get away. That's the horror of this thing."

Walsh was wrong about Toole in 1996 and after. But give him credit, in 1991 and 1992 he was right about Jeffrey Dahmer. He let the cops talk him out of it.

###

**JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET:  
THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH  
IS A TWO BOOK SERIES**

NEXT:  
BOOK TWO: FINDING THE VICTIM

# JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET

THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH



**BOOK TWO: FINDING THE VICTIM**

**The body identified as Adam Walsh  
is not him. Is Adam still alive?**

*A True Story*

## ARTHUR JAY HARRIS

HARRIS TRUE CRIME COLLECTION

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*The body identified as Adam Walsh is not him.*

*Is Adam still alive?*

**BY ARTHUR JAY HARRIS**

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JEFFREY DAHMER'S DIRTY SECRET: THE UNSOLVED MURDER OF ADAM WALSH is a journalistic account of the actual investigation of the abduction murder of Adam Walsh in Hollywood, Florida in 1981. The events recounted in this book are true. Names that have been changed are noted in the text as such. Research has been done using author interviews, law enforcement and other public records, published and broadcast news stories, and books. Quoted sworn testimony has been taken verbatim from transcripts.

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## A FRIEND REQUEST ON FACEBOOK

“I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED to know that J. Dahmer did kidnap me... I have to give you credence outright for laying most of the blame on the man behind my own abduction.”

It was signed, “Sincerely, Adam J. Walsh.”

[Introduction](#)  
[Book Two](#)

RARELY DOES A BOOK SEQUEL CONTRADICT ITS ORIGINAL TITLE, but it does in the instance of *Jeffrey Dahmer’s Dirty Secret: The Unsolved Murder of Adam Walsh* (Book One: *Finding the Killer*, and now Book Two: *Finding the Victim—Is Adam Still Alive?*)

These books represent work I’ve done over much of the last eighteen years, beginning in 1996 when police in Hollywood, Florida, were forced to open their Adam Walsh murder file to the public although they had not solved the case. In court, counsel for news media argued that the police investigation of the then-fifteen-year-old case was dormant, and therefore under Florida public records statutes was eligible for public exposure. A judge agreed, and for the first time in Florida (if not elsewhere), reporters and everyone else had nearly full access to copies of an unsolved murder file.

The question became: if the cops couldn’t solve the case in fifteen years, could fresh, non-police eyes reviewing the same material do anything with it?

These books are my answer to that question.

Don’t expect the police to be grateful for the help. They aren’t.

In an era when my adopted home of South Florida was renown (infamous, really) for its murders, the Walsh case was arguably the biggest one here of its time—and the most awful. For a young child left alone just a few minutes in a public place like a shopping mall department store to disappear and two weeks later emerge monstrously dead seemed to speak to the illness of the community, if not all of modern America.

As I wrote in Book One, regarding a suspect, the police never got far beyond Ottis Toole, the Jacksonville drifter who in 1983 had volunteered a jailhouse confession. On his initial statements alone, Hollywood Police quickly after held a press conference announcing that the case was solved. But without confirmation the state attorney had declined to prosecute, and when detectives did the legwork, intense months of it, they could not corroborate anything Toole said. Released as public records in 1996, transcripts of the detectives’ interviews with Toole showed they had prompted him with information about the entire case, including photographs of the crime scene and Adam. As bad as that sounds, the problem seemed to be not that the detectives acted unethically but rather that

Toole tricked them. You might not think that Toole, who had a low-intelligence manner, could play the police so well, but that's what he later explained he did in this case as well as in confessions he'd made to other murders elsewhere.

Although Toole was a willing confessor, at the outset it was apparent that his information ranged on a scale from worthlessly vague to inaccurate to completely wrong. Reading the interviews, I kept wanting to shout at the detectives, Leave! Go home! This guy obviously knows nothing! But the detectives had just traveled on short notice on a police plane across the state to Jacksonville, and, it looked like, they decided to stick it out. By prompting Toole little by little to see if maybe he could recall details that were real, they may have figured they had nothing to lose. In fact, that's what one of the interviewing detectives later told me.

In the end, Toole added nothing of value. I can understand that Toole was easily and probably often underestimated, but it was a mistake to think he was dumb. I also understand that Toole and his partner Henry Lee Lucas, then in the midst of their confessional reign of terror, sort of wrote the book on false confessions. Up to then, police tended to consider confessions as the gold standard of crime-solving. Still, what I've never understood is why anyone, after reading Toole's initial interview, took seriously what he said. I don't think the two Hollywood detectives who interviewed him ever understood that, either.

By the end of 1984, after Hollywood couldn't prove anything Toole had said that they hadn't shown or told him or he haphazardly later added, sometimes reversing himself, police publicly dropped him as an active suspect—only to revive him once again in 2008, although by then he was twelve years dead and there was, to Hollywood's admission, no further new information against him.

Jeffrey Dahmer did not become a suspect until his arrest in Milwaukee in 1991, ten years after Adam's disappearance. And to Hollywood Police, he never became much of a suspect at all. But as I showed in Book One, Dahmer was in South Florida when Adam disappeared. That was by his own admission, the witnessing of others I found who knew him, and if that wasn't enough, a Dade County police report I uncovered which documented him finding a dead body.

Days after his 1991 arrest, two separate witnesses had contacted Hollywood Police to say that they had been at the Hollywood Mall at the time Adam disappeared and they'd seen a man there they now thought they recognized as Dahmer. Police weren't enthusiastic. However, an FBI agent who later interviewed Dahmer thought he'd implied to him that he'd taken Adam; the agent got word to John Walsh, who had to lean on the state attorney to get the lead Hollywood detective to fly to Wisconsin to interview Dahmer. If Dahmer would confess, Walsh even got the state attorney to agree in writing to waive the death penalty, which Dahmer hadn't faced for his admitted killings in Wisconsin and Ohio. However, at the interview, there was no indication that the detective mentioned the concession on the death penalty, and Dahmer just simply denied having anything to do with Adam. For the police, that was pretty much that.

The argument against Dahmer has always been that Adam, at six years old, didn't fit his pattern of victims. His closest acknowledged murder victim in age to Adam was thirteen years old. But that argument relies on a bit of popular forensic science, that serial killers necessarily have known or knowable M.O.'s that don't change. Another fallacy is

that Dahmer, who for his murderous career had kept his own counsel, should have been believed when he said soon after his capture that he'd admitted all his killings.

I found much reason to think that Jeffrey Dahmer, after arrest, left out a great deal of his story.

For one thing, I found Billy Capshaw, Dahmer's roommate for a year during 1980-81 in the U.S. Army at a base in Germany. Although after his capture Dahmer never mentioned him, Billy had a story of mental and physical control and torture by Dahmer, which included repeated druggings, rape, hits from metal objects that broke bones, cuts and stabbings, and even surgery. Although Billy often didn't think he'd survive, as a result he had the most intimate knowledge of Dahmer of anyone, arguably better even than his family.

He was also a secondary witness to what was likely violence Dahmer had done in Germany. Dahmer often took weekend leave to travel around the country, and Billy saw him return with dried blood soaked through his clothes to his skin. He also repeatedly found blood and mucus on hunting knives that Dahmer hid. In 1991, after his arrest, German police investigated him for about a dozen mutilation murders, seemingly a pattern, mostly of women and within fifty kilometers of his base while Dahmer was there, which ended after he was kicked out of the Army in March 1981. At the time, the entire country of Germany had only about two hundred or so murders a year. When asked, however, Dahmer denied the killings—he said he was only interested in men and boys. And again, that was pretty much that.

In fact, Dahmer denied killing anyone between what he said was his first murder, in 1978, and a spree that began in 1987 and ended with his 1991 arrest.

After Germany, to avoid going home where he'd have to confront his failure to stay in the Army, Dahmer chose to go to Miami, where he spent the spring and summer of 1981. In July 1981, Adam Walsh's mother said she last saw her son when she left him alone for an intended few minutes at the videogame display in their neighborhood Sears that was, as it turned out, about twenty minutes by vehicle from where Dahmer at the time had a cleanup job at a sub and pizza shop.

Dahmer told the police he had no vehicle then but I learned that the sub shop had a blue van that employees could, and often did, take for their personal use without asking permission. Hollywood Police's first hot clue in 1981 was a blue van; at about the time that Adam disappeared, a man was reported throwing a small child into a blue van in the parking lot just next to Sears. Based on that, Hollywood stopped all the blue vans they saw, requested other police agencies to do the same, and as well asked the public through the media to report to them all their sightings of blue vans. After about a month of attempting to track a deluge of blue van sightings, Hollywood declared the lead invalid.

One of the 1991 Dahmer witnesses also had him throwing a child into a blue van. Then in 2008, after Hollywood Police declared the case solved at last, they released most of the remainder of their case information, which showed five previously-undisclosed witnesses who apparently also had seen Dahmer at the mall that day in 1981; three of them as well had seen a blue van there. Four of the five reports had the van parked or standing in the same spot, just outside the entrance to the Sears store, and the fifth had it close to there.

Still, Hollywood wouldn't budge from their position that Toole took Adam.

With the publication in 2009 of what I now refer to as Book One, I thought that after years of work I could finally put the story down.

I was completely wrong, the story was just starting again, I hadn't gotten the half of it.

By a Facebook message that arrived in my email, a man wrote me that he was Adam Walsh. Yes, that one. And that Jeffrey Dahmer, in fact, had taken him from the mall, in a blue van.

Wasn't Adam Walsh, um, dead, wasn't that what this story was all about? A severed head had been found in a canal more than a hundred miles north of Hollywood two weeks after Adam was reported last seen at the mall, and an upstate medical examiner had announced a positive identification: it was Adam. No other part of his body was ever found. Adam's parents gave him a public funeral service, they as well as the very scared and traumatized community cried their eyes out, and the Walshes had rededicated their lives to helping other parents of children who were missing. And at Hollywood Police's 2008 press conference, they'd accepted with gratitude the police chief's decision to finally close the case with the declaration (again) that Toole had killed Adam.

So much else in the story had turned out contrary to what the police and the Walshes had insisted upon. The message to me didn't read like a malicious drive-by prank; it was too detailed, well-written, and sincere-sounding. The date he sent it was a few days before what would be, or would have been, Adam's thirty-fifth birthday, though I only realized that much later. At its conclusion he asked to talk. Which was riskier, replying or not? I decided to ask for his phone number, and that day's call to him turned into a week of stomach-churning conversations, for me and though at the time I was not thinking of him as well.

Right off the bat I asked him for his legal name, the one on his driver's license. Of course it could not be Adam Walsh. He gave it to me, and answered all the other questions I asked him. He said Dahmer had kept him for possibly a month. He let him hear the news about the discovery of Adam, dead. After that, Dahmer tortured him horribly and left him near-dead himself. Unconscious, he had been rescued but didn't know the details. After life-saving hospitalization and a good deal of reconstructive surgery, another family took him in and raised him, giving him the name and birth certificate of a child of theirs who had died, who had been born in a third-world country. They spoke a language other than English, and he had to learn it.

Could I speak to anyone in who he called his "foster family?" No, they were "in denial." Anybody else who could confirm it? No. Documents? No. I already knew there weren't any news stories. He was a super-smart guy and very personable and I didn't doubt that he believed his story, but self-delusion was becoming the likeliest explanation.

Yet I couldn't be sure.

I brainstormed an answer. Although it seemed impossible to prove that he was Adam Walsh, I might be able to prove that he wasn't. The answer would be in the medical examiner's file: the evidence supporting the positive identification of the found child as Adam Walsh.

A little background on public records exemptions in Florida: under a state statute, local police case files are public record unless the case is under "active investigation," that is, police must expect to make an arrest in the "foreseeable future." After fifteen years without an arrest, Hollywood Police had continued to insist that the Walsh case fit

the definition for an exemption from public release. But in 1996, despite emotional pleas by the Walsh family, a judge ruled otherwise and ordered police to make the file available to the public.

Since then, I'd repeatedly asked the police to release the rest of its file, generated after 1996, arguing that the case hadn't risen back to the statutory definition of active investigation. But Hollywood brushed me off like a fly, or better put, a gadfly, and I'd never taken them to court. So despite how it looked on the surface—a very public rebuke of my Dahmer theory—police's closure of the case in 2008 turned out to be a great, unexpected favor to me. With the police case closed, that is, no longer under active investigation, all of the official investigative files in the case at last became public record.

The morning after police closed the case I'd called the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office, asking to see its file.

Up to then, only bits of the Broward M.E.'s file had been in the public record, those exposed in Hollywood Police's 1996 release. A preliminary autopsy report, written by the upstate M.E., showed that he'd made the identification of the found child as Adam by relying on Adam's pediatric dental records. (Because the remains were only a head there were no fingerprints, and forensic DNA technology was still off in the future.)

As well, he wrote, a Walsh family friend had made a visual identification at the morgue. (When police told the Walshes that remains had been found, they were in New York, hours before a scheduled appearance on network morning television to promote the search for Adam. Either disbelieving or in denial that the remains could be Adam, they turned down the show's offer to immediately fly them home.) However, as Walsh wrote in his book *Tears of Rage*, the family friend did not on first sight recognize the child as Adam, he'd made the ID only after seeing that the child had a "small, emerging tooth." Days before Adam had disappeared two weeks earlier, when the friend had last seen him, he'd seen the same thing, he said.

The autopsy had been done in Broward, according to a single page generated by the Broward M.E. For comparison, I had a report of another autopsy the Broward office had done less than two weeks before the date of Adam's; its equivalent page was in effect the cover sheet, which was followed by a narrative of the details of the external examination then the internal examination after a dissection. Both cover pages attributed the cause and manner of death. On the Walsh remains, the upstate M.E. had done only an external, that is, visual examination. He had not dissected the body.

Since the ID was made strictly by teeth, I mainly wanted to confirm that Adam's dental records matched the teeth in the found child. Then without regret I could walk away from this guy who said he was Adam Walsh.

There had been so many interesting leads to pursue in the newly-released police file in 2008 that I'd kind of forgotten about the Broward M.E.'s file and hadn't followed up. One thing I've learned about asking for public records, at least on the local level, if you ask only once you may not get them.

So a year later when I again asked the Broward M.E. to see its Adam Walsh file, this time they told me that the file was lost. *Lost?* The most famous homicide case in the county's history? But the next week they called to tell me they'd found it and I could see it.

Here's what wasn't in it:

It didn't have any more of any autopsy report than I'd already seen, that is, its cover page. As such, it didn't have a charting of the found child's teeth; the upstate M.E. in his report had done an inventory of its teeth but he mainly counted them, he made little attempt to identify which teeth were in its mouth. The comparison autopsy report from less than two weeks earlier had included a signature by the medical examiner who performed the autopsy. Missing those additional pages, the Walsh report had no signature. Further, there were no photos of the autopsy.

It didn't have Adam's pediatric dental records, nor a chain of custody report or narrative proving receipt of them. Better than Adam's dental charts to make an identification would have been his dental X-rays, if they existed, but they weren't in the file either, nor was there any mention of an attempt to get them.

Considering that the ID was made strictly by teeth, it was hard to reconcile that there was no forensic dental report or any mention of one.

The upstate preliminary autopsy report had just a single line stating that the Walsh family friend had made a visual ID but no narrative of what he had said. Besides a duplicate of that upstate report in the Broward file, there was no other mention of the family friend's visual ID. Nor, when I later checked, was there any further mention in the upstate M.E.'s complete file, or in Hollywood Police's file.

A Florida state statute in the Medical Examiner's chapter requires that "the detailed findings of autopsy and laboratory investigations shall be maintained by the district medical examiner."

I'd expected to prove to myself that the guy who told me he was Adam Walsh couldn't possibly be Adam Walsh, but instead I'd discovered something maybe more inexplicable: there was no clear, slam-dunk ID at the M.E.'s office that the child who all along they'd said was Adam Walsh was in fact him.

Two successive chief M.E.'s of the Broward office confirmed for me the absence of all those documents and materials and more. None of the other official investigative files had duplicates. Did the pathologist who performed the autopsy, an earlier chief Broward M.E., keep a personal copy? He would not speak to me. To get some kind of answer, I made a public records request to the Broward M.E.'s office asking them to ask him. If he had it, upon my request the M.E. was obliged by statute to get at least a copy and place it in its file, then give me a copy. He responded, in writing, that neither he nor anyone else in his office ever wrote a report, it was the upstate M.E.'s case. It was, originally, but in writing they'd authorized Broward to do the autopsy, and now there was no narrative report of it available anywhere.

Did Adam's dentist still have a copy of Adam's records? He wouldn't speak to me, either, so I asked the upstate medical examiner's office to ask him. He told them no.

The Broward State Attorney had signed off on the Hollywood Police chief's 2008 decision that Toole killed Adam although the chief admitted they'd found no new evidence against Toole since Hollywood's original investigation of him had ended, which was in 1984. Toole died in 1996, so there had been twelve years the state attorney was sitting with the same evidence that was later deemed sufficient. Why hadn't they prosecuted the case while they could, while Toole was still alive?

On the other hand, given these absences in the files, how could the state attorney have proved at trial that the identification was correct, that the dead child was Adam Walsh?

I asked the Chief Assistant Broward State Attorney, then in charge of the case for his office, whether he was bothered by those absences in the file—the ones by then I'd realized, which was most of them. He said he was not.

Yet this was not the largest problem.

The last known photo of Adam is his since-famous “Missing” picture in which he was dressed in his baseball league uniform and held a bat. His smile revealed, endearingly, that he was missing some top baby teeth, as was age-appropriate at six and a half. I wanted to know just which ones. There was confusion about this in the local newspaper stories published while he was still missing, as well as in the description on his “Missing” poster which the family had written and distributed as widely as possible. Was he missing one or both of his top front teeth?

On the Internet there were a number of copies of the picture but when I attempted to enlarge them I realized that their pixel counts were too low.

I solved this by finding an original. It was a studio shot, same as a school picture, all the kids in the league sat for individual shots and parents bought multiple prints. On the day their son disappeared, the Walshes gave them out to the local newspapers, including the Hollywood paper I had worked for as a reporter two years before the incident. It's long since defunct but its photo archives remain, and from there I got a high-resolution scanned copy.

That copy of the photo clearly answered my question: Adam had neither of his top front teeth. But when had the picture been taken? In his book, John Walsh wrote it was a week before he disappeared. From the studio photographer who took the shot and others, I found it was closer to a month before.

I also found Adam's last best friend, and among other things asked when he'd last seen him. He said it was a week or two before Adam disappeared. Did he notice whether either of his top front teeth were in? They weren't, he said, and he'd specifically noted that to himself, thinking that Adam was awfully smiley for a kid missing his two front teeth.

More specific than the family's last-seen-alive description of Adam's teeth in the “Missing” poster was a Hollywood Police teletype to another police department that read that Adam was missing his right top front tooth but his left top front tooth was partially in.

Adam had been missing two weeks when the child's remains were found, and the Chief Broward M.E. told the news media and Hollywood detectives that the child (Adam, he said) had been dead for possibly all fourteen days. Forensic dentists and medical examiners told me that teeth do not continue growing after death.

For the found child to be Adam, its top left front tooth should have showed about two weeks growth beyond eruption, maybe less.

How much is that? To compare, the pediatric dentists and parents I asked said that a child's permanent top front tooth, once erupted, on average takes about six months to fully come in. Two weeks is a thirteenth of twenty-six weeks. Let's round that up to a tenth—ten percent. That gives you a probably fair idea of how far Adam's top left front tooth should have been in.

Through public records requests, I got or saw all of the photos of the found child that were in the files of the Hollywood Police and the Broward M.E. There weren't many, and they weren't particularly good, especially to show the teeth. The best police photo of the

child's top front teeth shows its left tooth stuck out like a buck tooth. Although the M.E. had no photos of the actual autopsy, it did have pictures taken later of the cleaned skull. No visible gum line remained, but viewed next to the other teeth in the top jaw, the left front tooth looked like it was in about two-thirds of the way. The police, years later, had consulted a forensic anthropologist who had taken his own set of pictures of the cleaned skull. Although a few were available in public records I could not get the rest through a records request. However, the anthropologist agreed to look at them and describe how far in the top left front tooth was. "Almost all the way," he told me.

I showed and told all this evidence to a number of forensic and pediatric dentists. Given all this, I asked, could the found child be Adam Walsh?

None thought so. The bluntest reply I got was, "No way in hell."

If this is right and it isn't Adam Walsh...

... then who is it?

From here on in, my answers aren't very good.

I can't say who it is. Records of missing children as far back as 1981, at least those available online, aren't comprehensive.

But if the child isn't Adam Walsh, then the parents of some other child were never told that he (or, who knows, she) was found. That child, then, never got a homicide investigation under its real identity or even as a merely unidentified child. Might the child have been abandoned and unloved? There is one good clue that it had been cared for: it had a filling in a baby tooth that was eventually going to fall out.

Did police and the medical examiner realize the misidentification and do nothing? Could all that explain why all those documents are missing? Again, I can't say. Anybody who might know, or could even deny it, hasn't talked to me.

What do Adam's parents, the Walshes, think? On the realization so many years later of at least the serious possibility that their son Adam might not be dead, you might think they'd have shivers up their spines.

But I don't have a good answer to that, either. It may come to your surprise but the Walshes and I have never spoken.

Hearing that, you can also understand that the Walshes, as traumatized and now high-profile people, might have built a sort of self-protection wall against crackpot-sounding theories and information.

I first asked to speak to John Walsh in advance of the first story I wrote about Adam, published in 1997. He was then promoting *Tears of Rage*, his book about what was in the Hollywood Police public record case file, first opened the year before, and included his and his wife's first-person narratives. Walsh felt the newly-exposed evidence clearly led to Ottis Toole. My story's main interview subject was a Broward State Attorney's Office investigator who'd been working the case who also thought it was Toole. Although I was then years away from discovering Dahmer as a better suspect, I was dubious of Toole and had said so during friendly exchanges with the investigator.

Walsh didn't return my phone call asking for an interview but I expected I'd meet him at a scheduled bookstore appearance nearby in a few days. Then he canceled his appearance.

In Walsh's book was a section describing when an out-of-state reporter had approached John's office in 1995 for an interview with him about the status of the case,



fourteen years later, and how he had since coped with Adam's death. As Walsh wrote, he told his assistant, "Something about it just didn't feel right to me." He asked his assistant, "What do you think this guy *really* wants?"

Walsh didn't reply, the reporter continued to pursue him, and "I kept ignoring him," Walsh wrote. In what was a second letter to Walsh, the reporter wrote, "My newspaper is committing much in time and resources to this project... Won't you please help us in our effort to help you find Adam's killer?" In his first letter he'd written that he wanted to meet Walsh in person and was willing to come to the studio in Washington where he shot his show *America's Most Wanted*. And then he did that "unannounced," as Walsh wrote. There, Walsh wrote that his executive producer told the reporter "in no uncertain terms" that Walsh "was *not* going to be talking to him."

After 1997, in advance of each of the next six stories about the case that I worked on, I'd always asked my editor, co-reporter or the television news producer I was working with to reach out to Walsh for comment. He never spoke directly to any of them, either, not even from ABC News or *The Miami Herald*.

How about the man who contacted me saying he's Adam Walsh? Has he spoken to the Walshes?

No, him neither. Before he contacted me he'd tried to reach John Walsh through his show's tip line. He got nowhere. Maybe you'd expect that, you might think, but on the other hand, the show set up the line to take tips on solving crimes to pass onto police for investigation. Even if the operators might have rolled their eyes listening to him, shouldn't they have at least written something down?

He also tried Facebook to reach relatives of the Walshes. That also got him nowhere, and after a while he gave up on it. But when he contacted Hollywood Police they asked him to come to the detective bureau to talk. He did, a detective still on the case politely listened to him without showing disbelief, and then didn't follow up.

Did the police tell John Walsh that they had conducted an interview with this man who was claiming to be their son? I don't know. When I later made another public records request to police, asking for the detective's summary of the interview, I was told none had been written.

After the detective did his interview, I followed up and offered him the names of two people I'd had speak to the man who said he was Adam: Adam's last best friend, and Billy Capshaw, Dahmer's Army roommate. The detective didn't follow up with me, either.

Yet those two interviews had been interesting smell tests; could the man tell Adam's best friend anything convincing about their friendship? On the Internet or elsewhere there was nothing about this man's friendship with Adam. Could he describe the up-close-and-personal habits and horrors and ties of Dahmer that Billy knew so well that it was a battle not to constantly think of them, which also wasn't on the Internet or in books?

My instructions to the two men were, don't let him do like Ottis Toole. Don't tell him what you know, let him tell you what he knows.

Both spoke to the man at length over a number of conversations, and Adam's best friend met him in person twice. Billy was astounded that he'd encountered anyone else who'd shared nearly the same experience he'd had. He couldn't say whether or not he was Adam, but his story of torture by Dahmer was absolutely real, he said.

Adam's best friend had much more pleasant conversations, listening to him recall how they'd practiced baseball together and played on the same T-ball team that won only one game. "Adam" knew that his friend had volunteered to break in his baseball glove, was the team leader in the field and played third base, was three years old than him (and sort of a "ringer" on a T-ball team with children much younger), and in general, mentored him in sports and was like his big brother.

None of that confirmed he was Adam, but we agreed that now it was hard to think that he wasn't.

Wouldn't DNA quickly resolve whether he was? Hollywood Police could have taken a swab sample but didn't. He gave me a sample, but no comparison is possible without samples from the Walshes. Actually, through public records I learned that in 2003 police took a DNA sample from Mrs. Walsh and had it processed, and I got the lab report. But the lab result had contamination issues and therefore wasn't reliable. As it turns out, the process of forensic DNA matching is more problematic than most people realize.

So as of this writing, here's what I can say:

For sure: the official documents that were used or should have been used to identify the found child as Adam Walsh are missing.

Highly if not overwhelmingly likely: the found child isn't Adam Walsh.

More likely than not: the man who says he's Adam Walsh is indeed him.

I concede, all of this sounds pretty hard to believe.

The proof is in the details. Read them and see what you think.

*Arthur Jay Harris*

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

January 2015

*"No matter how many spin doctors were provided by no matter how many sides of how many arguments, from Watergate on, I started looking for the truth after hearing the official version of a truth."*

-- Ben Bradlee, Executive Editor, *The Washington Post*

## [22](#) [2009-10: Revisiting Events](#) [of the Week of August 10, 1981](#)

*"YOU WILL BE FOUND. YOU WILL BE FOUND. If you have to be backed into a corner, you'll be found."*

—Reve Walsh, Wednesday, August 12, 1981

Of all the Hollywood Mall witnesses, Willis Morgan had been the most insistent voice. In 1981, as soon as he'd realized the significance of what he'd seen, he'd gone to the police. Of course, the police had nothing in the case file saying so, but they hadn't saved many of their tips from that first week and beyond. Also, he said that had Toole ever been prosecuted for the murder, he would have offered to testify for him. In 1991 he'd kept after Jack Hoffman for a year, stopping only after Hoffman returned from his

Wisconsin interview with Dahmer and told Morgan that Dahmer had looked him in the eyes, told him he didn't do it, and Hoffman believed him.

During that year, Morgan had tried to enlist a reporter from the *Miami Herald*, where he still worked in the pressroom, and when that failed, reporters from Miami TV stations. The closest he came was a polite callback from one TV reporter telling him that she had called Hoffman who had told her that Morgan was irrelevant to the case.

I hadn't told any of the case witnesses I had found about each other because I hadn't wanted them to cross-pollinate, but I couldn't continue that after December 2006 when I put the story in the *Miami Daily Business Review*. I then introduced, at first by phone, all those who wanted to meet each other. It was an eye-opener for them, especially Willis and Bill Bowen, neither of whom knew that another witness had identified Dahmer at the mall. After ABC *Primetime* flew in Bowen to return to the scene, I hosted a dinner for he and Willis and my friends and intimates at the space that had been Sunshine Subs—it was now a Peruvian restaurant. After the *Primetime* show aired, I had a conference call so Billy Capshaw could meet everyone.

Willis also wanted to help with the investigation. After I'd showed him the July 7, 1981 police report, it was his idea to search the meter room behind Sunshine Subs. I was totally skeptical that anything could be found twenty-six years later but suggested it to ABC producer Geoff Martz, who wanted to do it. If it had been up to me, I confess, we never would have gone into that room.

Point for Willis.

When Hollywood announced its press conference closing the case, they gave the media only a few hours notice. Martz and others called to tell me, and I told Willis so he came too. When I discovered in the case the four new Hollywood Mall witnesses, Willis helped me locate them and spoke to them all with me.

He wanted to read the whole file, so we made a duplicate CD-ROM. Looking for things I might have missed, he studied it in the months to come, often overnight at his security guard job.

A couple times before, he had mentioned a police artist-drawn composite of the suspect that had appeared in the newspapers days after the head was found. He insisted that it matched whom he'd seen in the mall; he himself couldn't have had it drawn any better.

I knew what he was talking about, and each time he'd brought it up I'd dismissed it. Willis thought the witness who'd had it drawn was someone who had been in Hollywood Mall. It wasn't, I kept telling him. Finally I rechecked my file of newspaper stories. The incident had happened at a mall about fifty miles north of Hollywood, albeit also in a Sears, two weeks before Adam was taken. At first Hollywood police had thought there was a similarity because a child said a man had tried to abduct him. But when they checked it out the story was that the alleged abductor was really a store security guard who'd thought the child was shoplifting. Because someone was trailing him, the kid had gotten scared.

Nor did the drawing look to me much like Dahmer.

It was all just a mistake. Still, Willis didn't accept the facts I told him, which I attributed to cognitive dissonance.

But then he brought me what I did not know. Because of that, I went back and compiled a detailed story:

Exactly two weeks before Adam was taken, Monday July 13, similarly around noon, Jane and Matthew Houvouras, a mother and child shopping at Sears in the Twin City Mall in North Palm Beach—a little less than halfway between Hollywood and where the head was found—had helped a frightened boy who'd said a man was trying to snatch him. Both Houvourases had gotten a good look at the man running out of the store.

At the time no one had called police; the scared boy's mother, once located elsewhere in the store, seemed more upset at her child for wandering away than by the incident. Just after that, the Houvourases had gone on vacation; when they returned and heard about Adam's story they called their local police in Lake Park who referred them to Hollywood police. That was Monday, August 10, but when Jack Hoffman spoke to Jane it was still hours before the head would be discovered. He scheduled her and Matthew to come to Hollywood police headquarters on Thursday afternoon.

Wednesday, Hollywood Capt. Robert Mowers alerted Sears' regional security manager in Miami to the chance that Adam's killer, still at large, may have been stalking area Sears stores, a handwritten note in the case file showed.

Thursday morning police broke the story. This was the banner headline and lead paragraph in Thursday afternoon's *Miami News*:

*Palm Beach tip stirs hunt for killer  
Police check out report of Adam-like case*

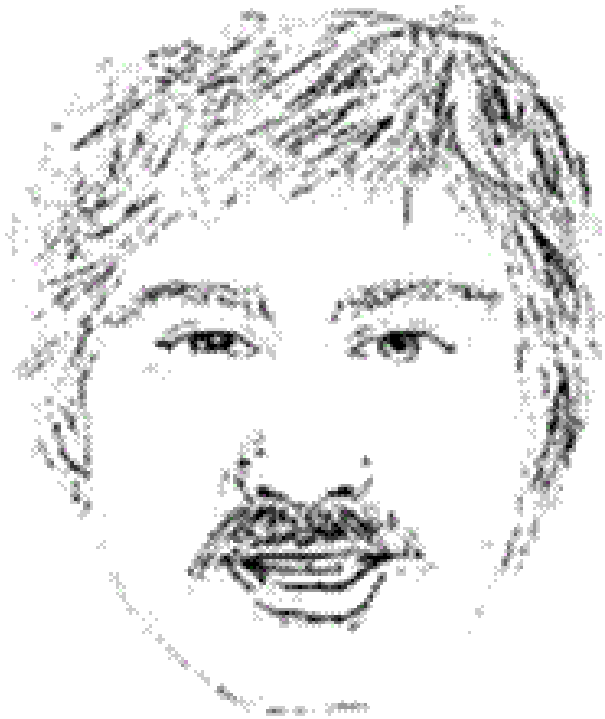
Police investigating the slaying of Adam Walsh are questioning a woman who may have seen the murderer try to kidnap another child two weeks earlier in a Sears department store in North Palm Beach.

Without naming her, Hoffman said Houvouras told him she saw a man grab a small boy playing a videogame. The boy broke free, caused a scene, and the man fled the store.

"Due to the similarity of the incidents, I'd put a lot of faith into the possibility that the two could be related," Hoffman said.

But in fact the Houvourases had not seen any attempted grabbing of the boy at the videogames.

When the Houvourases arrived at Hollywood Police midday Thursday, Hoffman drove them to Miami Police headquarters to work with their police artist. Once their composite drawing was done, Hollywood released it to the news media in time for the local six o'clock news.



**Jane and Matthew Houvouras’s composite drawing of the man they saw at Twin City Mall, North Palm Beach, on July 13, 1981. From microfilm image. Credit: City of Hollywood, Florida Police Department and Archives and Records Center**

Within an hour, Hollywood reported, they got at least 300 phone calls. By the next day it was more than a thousand. However, when they released the case file in 1996 it contained only a few of those tips.

Friday morning the story was the page one banner lead in the *Hollywood Sun-Tattler* and bannered at the top of the metro sections of the *Miami Herald* and *Fort Lauderdale News*. The *Sun-Tattler* wrote:

“A 10-year-old North Palm Beach boy may have come frighteningly close to the same fate as Adam Walsh, Hollywood police say.” Also not naming the Houvourases, the paper said their description “differs little” from the one given just hours earlier by Timothy Pottenburgh, who reported seeing a man apparently putting Adam in a blue van outside Sears in Hollywood Mall.

The Houvourases said the man was white, in his mid-twenties, five-foot-ten, two hundred pounds, with a medium complexion and dark brown or black hair over his ears and a mustache. Pottenburgh told Detective Ron Hickman that the man was white, in his mid-twenties, five-ten to six-foot, with dark curly hair and a mustache.

But Hoffman had retreated from his day-before optimism. “From the descriptions we have, there are similarities. But there is that possibility we are dealing with two different people. We’re dealing with a Caucasian male with similar characteristics. That’s what we are looking at.”

Asked by the *Miami News* why the lead was a month old, Hoffman answered incorrectly:

“Sometimes it takes something gruesome,” he said. “They came forward when they read about the discovery of Adam Walsh’s head.” The *Sun-Tattler* reported he added, “Why don’t a lot of people come forward when they see things?”

By the time Friday late morning Hoffman got to North Palm Beach with Sergeant Dennis Naylor, the *Miami News* had already called the Sears there and quoted store manager Walter Biffle who said he knew of no such incident. “As far as I know, there is absolutely no truth to that, 100 percent unfounded.”

After meeting Biffle, Hoffman and Naylor spoke to a shoe department employee who confirmed that the Houvourases had asked him for help to find a scared boy’s mother. Then they spoke to nineteen-year-old plainclothes store security guard Mark Langill who said he had been on duty the day of the incident and recalled a young boy who he suspected had shoplifted. Although Hoffman in his report didn’t say whether the suspected shoplifting had occurred on the same day as the Houvourases’ incident, he wrote that Langill followed the boy in sporting goods until he realized he was being watched and became frightened. In separate handwritten notes Hoffman wrote that Langill had hollered at the boy.

Hoffman showed Langill the composite. He wrote: “After viewing the composite Mr. Langill stated that the composite looked like him.”

Hoffman took a Polaroid photo of Langill and an hour and a half later showed it to the Houvourases at their home.

“After viewing the photograph both Jane and Matthew stated that that was the man who they thought was trying to abduct the boy in Sears. After verifying the nature of this incident this possible lead proved invalid.” Hoffman added they spoke to Ginger Keaton, mother of ten-year-old Terry Keaton, the frightened boy. “After speaking to her son she related the incident similar to the way Mark Langill had explained it to the police.”

However, Ron Hickman’s handwritten notes said that he took a (or the) phone call from Ginger Keaton and that Terry had disagreed with Langill’s version. He said he was in the toy department looking at fish when a man approached him. Terry said hi then felt that the man was going to grab him so he ran. The man followed him yelling “Hey, you!” In the clothing department he found the Houvourases. Terry described his pursuer as white, 24-25, five-eight, medium build, short brown hair parted on the side, no mustache, wearing a brown checked shirt and light tan pants. Unresolved was whether that matched Langill because Hoffman never wrote any description of him besides his age, nineteen, or asked about his clothing, or even noted whether he had a mustache that day. Nor apparently did Hoffman ask why he’d stopped chasing a suspected shoplifter when he ran and approached a customer. Because Hoffman determined that Langill was his pursuer, he never asked Terry to help create a composite drawing. Or interview him in person. Or question whether he had been shoplifting.

Saturday’s *Sun-Tattler*, lead story:

*Main Walsh lead only false hope*

Hollywood detectives thought they may have had a picture of Adam Walsh’s killer.

Instead, they had a very accurate drawing of a store security guard...

With the identification, investigators have lost what they had called their best lead in the Walsh killing.

The *Miami Herald*'s page-one banner story was the result of Timothy Pottenburgh's police hypnotism session Friday; his description "closely matched" the Houvouras' composite. "Ironically, the North Palm Beach lead fizzled Friday."

This is what Willis brought me: he had found phone numbers for Jane and Matthew Houvouras and gotten Matthew on the phone:

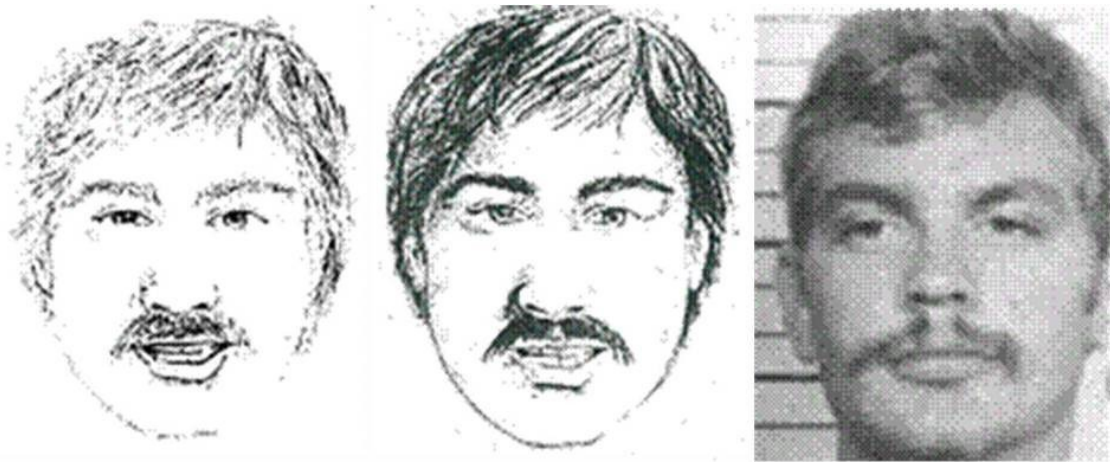
"No way that was a security guard," Matthew had told him. "Me and my mom, we never believed that story about the security guard." "This kid was mortified."

And then Willis admonished me for believing anything Hollywood police had ever said about this case.

Jane Houvouras confirmed for me Willis's talk with Matthew. When the detectives had shown them a photo of the security guard, "We didn't agree. They kept asking, Could it have been him? Finally, we said, yes, it could have been him. But neither of us thought it was him."

I looked again at the composite. The face looked friendly, and still didn't strike me as Dahmer.

But the picture in the *Sun-Tattler* looked a little different, maybe an artist's second version. The change was mainly in the eyes, the man in this drawing wasn't friendly, he was aggressive. He had sociopathic eyes, like so many people reported Dahmer had. When I posed it next to Dahmer's 1982 Milwaukee County mugshot, I finally saw the similarity. In the mugshot, Dahmer's eyes were blank, contemptuous, failing to make eye contact. The composite's eyes were looking for prey. The mustaches were close. So were the shape of the heads and the side-parted haircombs.



**Left, first image of the Houvouras composite. Middle, *Hollywood Sun-Tattler*'s printed image. Right, Dahmer 1982 mugshot.**



**Same images, cropped and enlarged**

(Later, I showed the images above to a longtime police artist at the Broward Sheriff's Office, John McMahon. He replied:

As always, it's never 100 percent dead on, however I would say that based on that composite and that photo of Jeffrey Dahmer, it's very close; close enough for a detective to take a very serious look at Jeffrey Dahmer as a suspect.

The eyes are good, slightly closed, the shape of the face ok. Very interesting.

McMahon asked whether Dahmer had a mustache at the time of the composite. Realizing that I wouldn't be able to answer this for certain, I checked all the statements given to me from those who knew Dahmer or had identified seeing him. At Sunshine Subs, Ken Hauptert, Sr., and Ken Hauptert, Jr., had said they'd seen Jeff without a mustache. But when I'd interviewed Phillip Lohr, a witness at Hollywood Mall, I'd printed him a copy of Dahmer's 1981 mugshot, in which Dahmer was clean-shaven. Lohr thought that was the man he'd seen, except that the man had a mustache, and then he proceeded to draw one onto the printed page. Willis Morgan had been agnostic on the question; although he was sure that the man he saw at the mall was Dahmer, he said he hadn't committed to memory whether he had a mustache. Billy Capshaw, who knew Dahmer the best, said that Jeff's mustache "was an on-and-off thing," but most of the time he did have a mustache.)

Before Willis had contacted Matthew, Jane hadn't thought of the incident for a long time. She told me what she remembered:

She was shopping in Sears' linens department. "A little boy grabbed me. Put his hands on me. He said someone's trying to take me! He was extremely upset, out of breath, kind of whimpering. I looked like a safe person to come to, a mother. I looked around, there was a man running down the aisle toward the exit."

Taking hold of both the child and Matthew, she asked an employee in the nearby shoe department to help locate the boy's mother. She was paged and four employees went to look for her elsewhere in the store. By the time they found her, "the little boy had broken out in hives. Doesn't that tell you, he was absolutely scared to death."



When Hoffman drove them to Miami on I-95 to work with the police artist, Jane remembered a helicopter flying over and Hoffman telling them to keep their heads down so they couldn't be photographed. After they were done, Matthew cried all the way home. "It was just awful. I don't even like to think about it."

The next day, Friday, Hoffman and Naylon came to her home and stayed about ten minutes.

"The police showed us a picture, they weren't going to leave without us saying yes, that could have been the guy. They were intent on it. We told the cops, if that was a security person, why did he run out of the mall? They were so sure it was the security guy."

He wasn't dressed as a security guard, even for plainclothes. He was "kind of disheveled-looking," wearing "regular old clothes."

Jane modified her description of how the man had bolted out of the store. Instead of running, he was "walking about as fast as he could."

I asked if she'd ever seen a picture of Ottis Toole. She had, in the newspaper and on *America's Most Wanted*.

"Not even close. I've always said that wasn't him." Thinking that the man she'd seen had also taken Adam, she wondered why John Walsh thought Toole had done it. "Maybe he knows more than I do."

The next evening I guided her on a Google image search of Toole. Again she said, "Not even close." Then Dahmer: she thought his hair looked too blonde but added, "Yes it could have been him." Her memory was that the man was more Hispanic-looking.

Then I guided her to the Dahmer photo picked out by Phillip Lohr, one of the four new witnesses at Hollywood Mall I found after police had closed the case in 2008 and made public its entire file.

"Ooh, looks different, doesn't he? He certainly looks more Hispanic. His hair is darker. Looks much more than the other ones."

Then I emailed her the composite picture she had helped make, the friendlier version. She had not looked at it since just after it was drawn.

"They sure look like one of the pictures of him, don't they?" She noted similarities in the eyes, the shape of the faces, and hair length. With the caveat that she only had a fleeting glimpse of the man, she said of the composite, "It sure does resemble some of these pictures."

"That was the look I saw. It could have been Mr. Dahmer. The hair was darker. The mustache was there. Eyebrows, very, very similar. Woo! I would have to say the possibility exists. It certainly does look like it could be the same person." She wouldn't go past that, "but boy, you certainly have piqued my curiosity. It certainly looks to me that the comparison is very, very close."

I asked if the man might have been wearing army clothes. She seemed to remember that. "Olive green kind of jacket—grungy green, dull green. Jacket, not short-sleeved. Yes, it absolutely could have been, very well might have been. A long sleeve like an army jacket," the kind with a patch of a surname ironed or sewn on the breast, heavier than a shirt.

By then, in December 2009, I had just begun working on the story as a project for the *Miami Herald*. Investigations Editor Ronnie Greene, who as a reporter in 1996 had led

the *Herald's* coverage of the opening of the Walsh files, assigned reporter David Smiley to work with me. David, edited by Ronnie, had written the *Herald's* piece doubting Hollywood's conclusion of Toole at its 2008 press conference.

Meanwhile, searching for the Keatons, Willis found Ginger Keaton, now Ginger Pantel, by phone in South Carolina. Before I spoke to her she talked to Smiley, then he and I interviewed her together.

We got the same information but some of David's initial quotes were better. She said that a number of years after the incident she and Terry were together watching television and he jumped up from the couch. "That's the guy that was trying to grab me in the mall, mom! Oh, my God, mom, I'll never forget that face. That's the guy, that's the guy!"

On screen was Jeffrey Dahmer's mugshot. Trying to recall, Pantel thought they were watching a news story about his murder in prison.

Terry was now living in rural Tennessee and we could only reach him by letter. When he got it he called back David; later we both spoke to him.

"I've told this story throughout my life, a bunch of times" including that he'd recognized Dahmer when he first saw his picture on TV, he said.

"I truly, one hundred percent believe that's the guy."

There were two incidences that day at Sears, he said. "He tried to get me twice." The Houvourases had seen the first. His mom Ginger had seen the second.

The first time he was in the sporting goods department looking at fishing rods. Holding a fishing lure, the man came within arm's distance. That made Terry nervous. When he wouldn't say anything Terry tried to break the ice.

"What kind of lure is that?" he asked. The man didn't answer. "That's what really freaked me out."

As a ten-year-old, Terry sensed he was in trouble. "He could have grabbed me. If he would have grabbed me, I was one hundred percent in bad shape. There were maybe ten people in that store. There was nobody there.

"I started running. He started running. He's running right at me, rolling up his sleeves. I went to the first people I saw." He remembered the lady and her kid—the only other kid he saw in the store that day.

"One hundred percent my instincts saved my life that day."

I asked if he thought that the man might have been a security guard.

"That guy was not security. He was after me. He was definitely trying to get me."

Ginger picked up the story. That day was her birthday, her mom had given her gift money and she was trying on clothes. At first, the incident hadn't overly concerned her. A half-hour later, when Terry finally calmed down, they were about to report it at an information desk—and the same man walked past them.

She wrote to Willis in an email: "Terry pointed to him and said to me, That's him, mom. I looked him in the eyes and [the man] stared back at me as to say, what are you going to do? I grabbed Terry and we got the hell out of there. I did not report it, the man's stare scared me and I just wanted to get out of there." She couldn't recall what he had been wearing but "he had weird, scary eyes." She absolutely didn't think he worked for Sears.

Terry remembered that the man "gave her this look." The man stared at him too.

“I didn’t sleep very well that night,” he said. In fact, he had to sleep in his parents’ bedroom. He thought maybe the man had followed him home and was going to try to take him from there.

He described the man as average height, about six-foot, normal build, in pretty good shape. He called him clean-cut with dirty-ish blonde hair a little long. His age was “fairly young—twenty-five, maybe. He wasn’t ugly at all—like an average guy.” He didn’t wear glasses. It had happened around lunchtime, in fact just afterwards they ate lunch out.

He said until he talked to Smiley he’d never heard that Dahmer had been in Florida.

Ginger said she couldn’t positively identify Dahmer as the man she’d seen. All she could remember was his stare.

I faxed her the *Sun-Tattler* composite. “The eyes are very, very similar,” she said. I asked if his stare was like right through her. Yes, she said. “He’s probably the only person who stared at me who I was totally afraid of. Put the fear of God into me. It stopped me from telling on him.”

Willis also went looking for Mark Langill, the security guard, and discovered he’d been murdered in 1985 in Pompano Beach. From his family he got two photographs of him, one taken in about 1980. Because of his similar mustache Willis thought he looked like the composite. I disagreed. His face was much thinner and his eyes weren’t piercing.

And if that was not enough, Willis brought me yet another important find:

In the file’s 2,000-page catch-all section we’d both noticed a half-page of handwritten log notes about two truck drivers for Publix Supermarkets who’d called police on Tuesday, August 11, hours after the news broke that the child’s head was positively identified:

“Friday 8-7-81 at 0030 hours Denis [Bubb] was driving north on the [Florida] Turnpike. At Mile Marker #131, observed a late model van parked on the roadside. Sliding side door was open and a W/M [white male] was standing down by the canal shining a flashlight into the water. Could not identify vehicle or W/M.” Notes for Clifton Ramey read “late model approx. 1978-79 van dark colored, W/M with flashlight standing by opened side door.”

Both men obviously had been dismissed because they weren’t elsewhere in the file. The notes did not say the van was blue. But the head had been found near Mile Marker 130, and the men been prompt about calling in what they’d seen.

Again, Willis had been more enthusiastic about this than I. Assuming they could be found, twenty-eight years later—we’d tried, and they couldn’t be, easily—a sighting of a dark-colored van by the side of the road within a mile of the site where three and a half days later the head was found—it was interesting, hardly conclusive.

Willis did find Denis Bubb in Palm Bay, Florida, near Melbourne, and drove about one hundred fifty miles to visit him unannounced. From him he found Ramey, who now lived in South Georgia. They were friends and both retired.

I interviewed them after Willis. That overnight in 1981 they were convoying, “pulling doubles,” that is, two trailers each. Ramey described the turnpike as empty of traffic. They were on their regular run from Publix’s North Dade warehouse northbound to Yeehaw Junction, an exit about twenty miles north of the incident, where they met drivers from the supermarket’s headquarters in Lakeland, close to Tampa, swapped their

empty trailers for full ones, then returned to Dade. They drove a quarter-mile apart, Ramey said, because the Florida Highway Patrol didn't like them tailgating.

"You're always looking on the side of the road," Ramey said. Stopped vehicles pull out slowly at first, "and since you never know what they're going to do, you need plenty of room to maneuver," especially when hauling double rigs.

There was another reason they noticed the van on the side: Driving for Publix, "we were taught, if somebody is on the side of the road, stop and give assistance." During Ramey's twenty-eight years with them, from 1975-2002, he'd changed a lot of flat tires and helped in other ways.

Leading, Bubb first saw the stopped van and called Ramey on Citizens' Band radio. Bubb said he saw "a blue or dark-colored van, somebody outside it with a flashlight shining in the gully. He was looking for something. He didn't look broke down, he had no jack up, no hood up that I noticed."

At a quarter-mile behind doing sixty miles per hour, Ramey would have passed fifteen seconds later. On the van's passenger side—the side facing away from the road—Ramey said he saw a man standing outside the open sliding door leaning in and "fumbling" with something. "I saw something in his hand"—like a two-gallon container, which he described as shiny, the size of a lard can or a well bucket, he thought.

"I thought he might have put water into his vehicle, but the hood wasn't up." Another possibility was that he'd stopped to urinate. In any event, neither driver thought he needed assistance so they passed.

Describing the van, Ramey said, "I'm positive it was blue"—probably dark blue, a plain work van, no writing on it, no side windows, and no seats in the back. He couldn't tell me the make or anything about the license plate. It wasn't new, although in the police notes he'd said he thought it was two or three years old. Neither he nor Bubb could describe the man they saw beyond his skin color, white.

Back then both men, living near each other in Hollywood and North Dade, had followed Adam's story and knew of the search for blue vans. Neither remembered the name of the officer they spoke to, but the notes are in Jack Hoffman's hand. Bubb had made the call and offered him Ramey's phone number, then called Ramey to tell him to expect a call. It came fifteen minutes later but lasted just five minutes, Ramey said. The detective said their sighting was unrelated and neither man had heard again from them or anyone else regarding the case—until Willis.

On a callback to Ramey I asked, if the man he saw was on the side of the van shielded from the road, how did he see him? I did realize that big rig truckers, up higher than thy, a car driver, have superior views.

Since Bubb had prompted him to look, I thought maybe he'd seen him as he was approaching the van. No, he said, he'd seen him as he was passing, first through the truck's rolled-up passenger window and the van's rolled-down driver's side window. Ramey said his International Harvester 2200 series had a full rear window immediately behind the cabin seat, like in a pickup truck. In a second glance over his shoulder, although just for a snapshot-like instant, he saw through the van's windshield and could see the man standing outside the sliding door.

"I remember seeing him from the waist up, leaning into the van, like he was fumbling or something. That's when I saw the bucket. He had the flashlight on it, it gave

me some light” and made for some glare. As well, the van was illuminated by its inside overhead light. Otherwise, outside it was “pitch-black.”

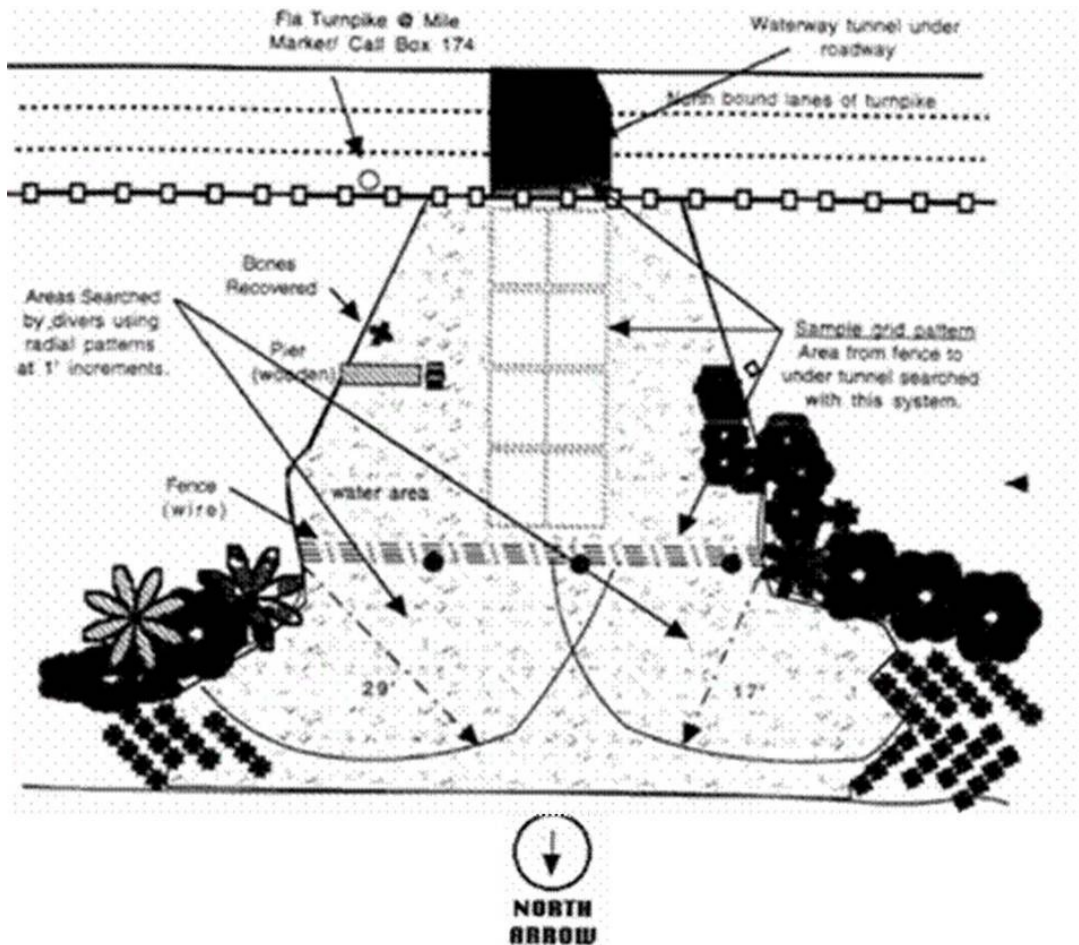
Bubb drove a Kenworth, which Ramey explained had a smaller back window and therefore not as good a view. Plus he wasn’t as high.

Here was why I called back: since he’d noted that the van had no back seats, was there a front passenger seat? He thought about it: no, there couldn’t have been. “If there had been a seat there, I wouldn’t have been able to see the way I did.” Sliding doors are behind front passenger doors. Since the man was outside leaning in the open sliding door, had there been a front passenger seat it would have obstructed his view. At best he might have seen only his head instead of seeing him from the waist up, fumbling with a bucket.

Five people had told me that the plain blue work van used at Sunshine Subs and the pizza shop had no passenger seat: Darlene Hill, Denise Sortini, Gino Cocco, Connie (Trapasso) Daramola, and Ella DiGrazia. Without asking, store employees and friends easily and often took it for their personal use. To make the van less desirable to party with, Larry (again, not his real name) had removed the seat.

After I told the container story to Darlene, she called me back, her daughter Denise had remembered that in the van there were always food service buckets. Passengers turned them over and sat on them.

Months later I made another callback to Ramey. In the file I’d found a computer-composed diagram of the canal off the turnpike where the head had been located; the Broward state attorney’s office had commissioned it in 1997. When I checked a Google map of the site, there was a grid of canals nearby but only one in the area that bisected the road, underneath. A small bridge covered it.



**Hollywood Police file. Note that although the Florida Turnpike runs northbound-southbound, in this stretch it actually runs geographically east-west.**

Previously, Ramey told me that had police been interested at the time, he could have pinpointed within fifty yards the spot where he'd seen the blue van. As well, he said, he might have been able to describe what the man had been wearing. I asked him now if he could remember the conduit.

He said he could, as there weren't many conduits on that part of the road. Compared to where he'd seen the blue van, where was the conduit?

Traveling northbound, he first saw the blue van and then the conduit, "I'm pretty positive of that," he said. He guessed that in between was half to three-quarters of a mile.

I asked Bubb too but he said he couldn't recall and deferred to Ramey's better memory.

Turnpike mile marker numbers rise, northbound. In the diagram, almost parallel to where the head was found was highway call box/mile marker 174—the revised number for what in 1981 had been 130. Indian River Sheriff's detective Donald Coleman wrote in his report that the head was about seventy-five yards short of mile marker 130. Therefore, Ramey and Bubb may have seen the blue van south of 130, not near 131, as they'd reported. It still wasn't exact but it was even closer to the site.

Ramey and Bubb had described a plain blue work van, no writing on it, stopped at late night by the northbound side of the Florida Turnpike apparently less than a mile from where the head had been found three and a half days later. They saw no indication of a vehicle problem. Bubb saw a white male shining a flashlight through the gulley next to a canal. A moment later Ramey saw a man leaning inside the van's sliding door using a flashlight and holding a bucket. From his perch, he could see him from the waist up because there was no passenger seat blocking his view, nor were there any seats in the back.

Could that be anything besides a positive sighting of the Sunshine Subs blue van at or next to the crime scene?

This was just after midnight August 7, ten and a half days after Adam Walsh was abducted from Hollywood Mall. There, on Monday July 27 at least four witnesses had reported seeing a blue van outside Sears. Bill Bowen said he saw a man who may have been Dahmer throw Adam into it. Timothy Pottenburgh described a man fitting Dahmer's general description and Adam with him, then Adam apparently disappearing inside the van. Four witnesses total were certain they saw Dahmer at Hollywood Mall that midday and another two were strongly leaning. According to his own statements, a July 7 police report of a dead body he said he discovered, plus witnesses who remembered him there, Dahmer at the time worked for Sunshine Subs, which by vehicle was about twenty minutes from Hollywood Mall. His boss said Dahmer sometimes came to work on weekday mornings drunk and disheveled, and he would send him away. Willis had described Dahmer at the mall as drunk and disheveled. And on July 13, another Monday, even at about the same hour, a similar-sounding abduction attempt of a ten-year-old boy at another South Florida mall Sears failed. That scared boy, now grown, identified Dahmer and at least one witness came close to identifying him.

All of this had been discovered within the Hollywood Police's Walsh file or descended from it.

In a 1992 prison interview, Jack Hoffman looked into the eyes of arguably the foulest sociopath in American criminal history. He knew that three years before Adam, in 1978, Dahmer had already picked up, brought home, killed and beheaded a young man. Ten years after Adam, in 1991, in his Milwaukee apartment, police had found eleven severed heads.

Dahmer said he didn't kill Adam. Hoffman believed it. His eyes convinced him. And for Hollywood police, that was good enough, end of story, forever.

In Thursday August 13th's *Miami Herald*, Lieutenant Richard Hynds was quoted, "Our most valid theory now seems to be the sighting of the blue van." To the *Fort Lauderdale News* he added that Hollywood police had stopped "hundreds of blue vans" since the sighting. "I'm afraid to drive my own blue van," he said.

Yet on August 11 Hoffman summarily dismissed a sighting of a blue van possibly right at the canal crime scene. Hollywood had even checked the Florida Highway Patrol's turnpike radio logs and saved copies from the overnight hours on Saturday August 8 because there was a report of a stopped vehicle at northbound 130. A later license plate check showed it was a two-door vehicle registered to a fifty-four-year-old in Sarasota, on Florida's west coast. But Hollywood didn't save the logs from the day before, when Bubb and Ramey reported they'd seen a blue van near the same spot.

I checked when the Pottenburgh lead had been dismissed: September 4—by Hoffman.

On Thursday and Friday August 13-14, while Hoffman was busy with the Houvouras lead, Ron Hickman had re-interviewed the Pottenburgh family and took Timothy to a hypnotist. On August 19 he followed up with them again.

In his report of September 4, Hoffman met with Timothy's mother Marilyn Pottenburgh and grandmother Carolyn Hudson while Timothy was at school. He wrote that according to Mrs. Hudson's timeline, when Timothy saw the blue van "the time would have been approximately 1:25 P.M. If Mrs. Hudson is positive of the time that being 1:25 P.M. it appears that the incident that Timothy Pottenburgh has witnessed is unrelated to the Adam Walsh abduction."

Hickman's August 19 notes read Mrs. Hudson told him it was approximately 1:15. But he also wrote that Marilyn Pottenburgh "puts time between 12:30 to 1 P.M."

The first store page for Adam was at 12:25. A statement of 12:30 was a little late but hardly reason enough to dismiss the sighting. However, Ramey's statement indicates that Hoffman had dismissed the blue van lead more than three weeks before his written conclusion about the Pottenburghs' timelines.

The key to the dismissals of Ramey and Bubb and the Houvourases might be discovered by revisiting the investigation of Jimmy Campbell.

Hollywood police had contracted Miami Beach P.D. detective Joe Matthews to polygraph John Walsh and Campbell on Friday August 7. Matthews wrote that Walsh passed the test with no indications of deception. But Campbell's test was inconclusive.

In *Tears of Rage*, John Walsh wrote that Campbell failed to pass on Friday night because detectives Hoffman and Jim Gibbons, in their interrogation three hours earlier, had been "raking him over the coals... The cops had been brutal—really leaning on him—and he was too exhausted and shaken up for an official interview."

Matthews retested Campbell on Monday evening August 10. Walsh wrote that Assistant Chief LeRoy Hessler interrupted it to tell Matthews, outside the room, that a child's head had been found near Vero Beach. Matthews completed the test then set up to read the charts in a conference room, where cops were gathering to await his conclusion. Hessler walked in.

"A positive I.D. has just been made: it's Adam Walsh," he told Matthews. "So let's get this son of a bitch."

"Matthews, fighting to maintain his concentration, ignored Hessler.

"Jesus, Joe, what do they say?"

Matthews announced his results: Campbell passed.

"Hessler exploded. 'I don't want to hear that shit!' he shouted. 'Joe, don't you give me that kind of crap!'"

When Hessler took Matthews aside, "he got the picture. This was now an extremely high-visibility case, and it was pretty clear who Hessler was convinced the prime suspect was."

Months later while shopping, Matthews ran into Hessler. "You really fucked it up, Matthews. You're the one who let the wrong guy go."

Hessler wasn't the only Hollywood officer who thought the case centered on Campbell.



In a January 1982 story for *Tropic*, the *Miami Herald's* Sunday magazine, Lieutenant Richard Hynds, supervisor of detectives, admitted, "We put him through the ringer. We did everything short of giving him a beating. We used some techniques that bordered on violating his civil rights. Well, they didn't border. They flat out violated his civil rights. We called him a loser, we called him a live-in dildo, we called him the family pet, we called him everything."

Nothing like that turned up later in any police report or transcript of interview with Campbell.

"We pushed him harder than we've ever pushed anybody," Hoffman was quoted.

Campbell didn't have a blue van or any reported access to one. If he was guilty, the blue van was a red herring, and therefore so were the statements of Bubb and Ramey—as well as Pottenburgh, whose composite drawing didn't match Campbell.

As for any attempted abduction in North Palm Beach, Hoffman initially had suggested that two abduction attempts at area Sears stores exactly two weeks apart could be a pattern. When Jane Houvouras called on Monday he set up an appointment for she and her son to meet the police artist in Miami on Thursday afternoon. Thursday morning Hoffman told the press "I'd put a lot of faith" in that the two incidents were related. But the Houvourases' composite didn't match Campbell either. After their meeting, when he released the composite to the press Hoffman noticeably toned down his optimism. And on Friday morning he reported that the Houvourases agreed that the man they'd seen was the security guard—although they insisted it wasn't.

The Sunday in 1991 after Dahmer's Milwaukee arrest, Bowen read in the *Birmingham News* that Hollywood police were investigating Dahmer as a suspect in the Walsh case. Two days later visiting in South Florida he had to insist to get an appointment to give a witness statement. He told Hoffman that on seeing Dahmer's picture "It hit me like a baseball bat" that that was who he'd seen throw Adam into a blue van.

"He really didn't care," Bowen said. "He was just flat." When they were done he said Hoffman told him, "Thanks for helping but we have our man." Obviously that wasn't Dahmer nor did it make sense that Hoffman meant Toole.

He must have meant Campbell.

In 1996 when I first met Mark Smith, he told me there were still some in Hollywood police who thought Campbell did it. In 1997 when I interviewed Hoffman I asked what he thought of Campbell as a suspect. He answered that he'd never eliminated him.

**23**

### [A Facebook Friend Request](#)

MY OTHER INTERESTING PURSUIT in 2009 began in November with a Facebook message. Someone wanted to friend me.

His name, he said, was Adam Walsh.

This was his message:

"I thought you might be interested to know that J. Dahmer did kidnap me. I survived but another flock of boys died while I was captured. I cannot afford the special DNA test

for transplant survivors, but this is a known fact for all of my childhood friends. My foster family is still in denial.”

What the hell should I do with this? I thought. On Facebook I sent him a private message. Give me your phone number. I’ll call you.

He sent back the following:

“Hello Arthur Jay,

“I have a great deal of respect for authors of published works such as yourself. Although I have not read your book concerning my abduction and presumed demise, I have to give you credence outright for laying most of the blame on the man behind my own abduction.”

He went on to mention “Jeff Dahmer” and his connection to a national and international network of “serial killers, rapists, and cannibals” operating in South Florida in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

“My entire life has been a struggle to survive the injuries I sustained and to hide from the hands of these men and others that they held hostage. Also I have kept the good deed of forgiveness by allowing these survivors to play a central role in raising me, in place of their son who was also almost killed. I remember the blue van even though I have never really had a chance to remember my early childhood until recently, and it’s gotten me a lot of unhelpful reactions from people who would rather remember me as that boy who died. When some people thought that I was Adam in the ’80’s they did a blood test with negative results. The truth is that I have had a jaw and scalp transplants, as well as tissue and nerves that skew the rudimentary DNA analysis. I am trying to petition the Hollywood police department to run a full dna test, however they are being unhelpful, almost as much as when I was abducted.”

“I hope we will have a chance to talk on the phone.”

It was signed, “Sincerely, Adam J. Walsh.”

He included his phone number and I called him. I think after I introduced myself, I said, “Okay, you got me,” as in, you’ve got my ear but if this is a hoax (or worse) I’m getting off quick. I asked him his driver’s license name since it couldn’t possibly be Adam Walsh. He was calling from a city in Florida, where he had grown up. Or at least since just before he’d turned seven.

He kept me on the phone for hours that day without convincing me that he was Adam Walsh—or that he wasn’t. Between that day and hours more on the phone in the days that followed, sending me on the emotional roller coaster ride that I’d wanted to avoid and frankly was debilitating to me, I asked him every question I could think of that might prove in my mind he was Adam. He gave me some answers that were good, some that I could prove were wrong, but mostly answers I could not prove one way or another.

Central to his story was the child’s head that was found was misidentified as Adam.

He emailed me photos of himself, mostly recent, plus one from 1983. On the Internet he’d found a computer-generated age progression simulation (done by a website called PhoJoe) of what Adam might look like at thirty-one, twenty-five years after his murder. Or abduction, at least. It did resemble shots of him that he’d sent me.

I sent all that, plus the famous “Missing” picture of Adam, to two photographers, Sandy Levy (who shot this book’s cover photo) and Bill Bowen, who shoots video. Aside

from being stunned at the idea, they both agreed there was a similarity. Bowen shared it with his friend in Birmingham, Phil Free, a still photographer who had a professional monitor. He concurred except that “the ear is wrong. The new Adam has no ear lobe, and his ear shape is substantially different from the kid Adam.” Nor did the new Adam have a dimple on the bottom of his chin, like Missing Adam. But New Adam (I wasn’t sure what to call him) had already said that his facial reconstruction surgeries had included work on his ears and jaw.

A surface problem with his story was that he spoke English with the slight accent of a Spanish-speaker. How could that be? He answered that after he was rescued a Latin-American family took him in and for the next year they spoke to him only in Spanish, which he had to learn from scratch. In fact later he had to relearn English. Although his foster parents (he later referred to them as “guardians”) obviously knew who he was, they forcefully disagreed with his choice to come out as Adam Walsh and wouldn’t talk to me. Or would anyone else who knew it, he said.

Why? After listening to his story (and on the assumption that I believed it), I gathered that after being physically and emotionally traumatized by his kidnapping, torture, and near-death, plus his new parents’ expectation that he’d never be able to return to his former identity, it was better for him to grow up separated from that memory, if possible. Although at the same time, all this was an elaborate trick and a brainwashing.

“I had a tremendous case of amnesia,” he said.

Why come forward now? Months earlier he’d discovered online that Hollywood police had closed the case. Thinking about it surfaced repressed memories. “In July I started saying publicly I was Adam Walsh,” he said. That included saying so on his Adam Walsh Facebook page, which Facebook later took down. Events years earlier had precursed this. In 1997 someone had told him that he was Adam Walsh but at the time he didn’t comprehend it. And in 2003 some acquaintances who were drug users had slipped him a hallucinogen without him knowing. “They probably extracted the experience from me, as a six-year-old. They were able to address me as Adam. I think everybody in every circle of friends I’ve had have known that I was Adam.”

Given that any adult would have trouble accurately recalling events when they were six-and-a-half, then add in the trauma—plus brainwashing by his parents who raised him, who clearly wanted him to forget who he had been—I was willing to overlook any number of things he told me that were weird, bizarre, or clearly wrong, hoping that other, truer, distinctive recollections would vindicate them.

Readers, you’ve stuck with me this far, so you know that this whole investigation is a quixotic journey, that the infamous Jeffrey Dahmer kidnapped innocent little Adam Walsh, that the Hollywood cops got nearly everything important wrong, and that John Walsh, too, has been mistaken about Ottis Toole. But have I finally walked off the cliff? When I first ran this past people in the story, plus personal friends, I got a lot of, in effect, blank stares. How could I even consider that I was talking to Adam Walsh? But if I’d summarily dismissed him, how could I be sure he wasn’t Adam? On his plus side, he was an intelligent, intellectual soft- and well-spoken young man aside from a serious tendency to ramble. If he was hoaxing me, at worst it was a large waste of my time—and a private expense of my credibility. He wanted his DNA compared against John and Reve’s. DNA would prove he was or wasn’t whom he said.

By now you also may have realized that I have not identified this man, who approached me as Adam Walsh. This is at his request, for now, and I agreed as well not to publish photos of him, even those I myself took. In referring to him, we agreed that I would call him A.W.—his term. I also agreed to obscure possible identifying information about him, and leave out a small amount of other personal information he told me which, although interesting, I deemed ultimately irrelevant to the question of whether he is or is not Adam Walsh. To explain, these deletions are part of a balance between my role as a journalist but also my desire not to cause injury to A.W. I agreed to this only because after three years of my own research, I have come to believe that he is, in fact, Adam Walsh, the boy who disappeared at six years old in 1981.

I sympathized with his concerns: that the parents who raised him—whose surname is his legal name, and with whom he is still close, are so against this. Also, at his request, I have never attempted to contact them. These are the only restrictions on reporting and writing to which I have agreed.

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Since he said he remembered the blue van, I asked how much more of the abduction he could tell me about.

“I was in the mall with my mom. Even though I was six years old, I was one of those wild kids—a little spoiled. I wanted to play videogames—my mom didn’t want me to play. I got her to the point where she wasn’t noticing she was saying yes.” When he got to the games, the older kids playing wouldn’t give him a turn. Finally, he walked out of the arcade area to look for his mom. Then Dahmer said, “Come here.”

“I thought he was going to take me to my mom.” He said Dahmer was a familiar face, but his explanations didn’t make sense to me, he said he’d seen him before with his parents, even though they didn’t know who he was.

I asked had Dahmer held his hand, he said he may have.

He followed him outside. Next to the blue van, Dahmer picked him up, one of his arms “under my legs, the other around my shoulders.” He threw him into the van sideways, as if he was roughly loading a box “like hard, to make it hit the side of the van.” He said a woman walking past saw what happened and said something like, Get a load of this guy.

Bowen had reported a similar action, and I quickly told it to him. He remembered the child had been lifted by one of his arms. He had protested, “I’m not going.’ He was twisting around, trying to get loose. He rared back and slung him up into the van, slung him in, past the driver’s seat.”

Could A.W. have gotten that from me? This book’s first edition was in July 2009, but I soon realized he hadn’t read it, as he said, because he was lacking knowledge of so many basic parts of my story. But he could have seen my website, placed online at about the same time. There I had used Bowen’s line that Dahmer had thrown Adam into the van “like a sack of potatoes.”

But the next thing wasn’t on my website or anywhere else on the web. Where was the blue van parked when Dahmer threw you in? “I think he had it on a sidewalk, like he was doing a delivery,” he said.

All four of the blue-van-at-Sears witnesses had said something similar. Timothy Pottenburgh said it was at the curb in front of the garden shop, on the store's west side. Phillip Lohr said it was blocking traffic in a lane twenty feet from the garden shop entrance door. Janice Santamassino said she'd almost rammed it because it was parked directly in front of the same door. Bowen was inconsistent regarding the side of Sears—in 2010 he told me it was 10-20 feet from the garden shop entrance and in 1991 he told police it was on the west side near that entrance (both times he said it was parked in the northbound lane closest to the store but incongruently facing south), but in 2002 he'd told me it was on the Hollywood Blvd. side (the south side). However, Bowen had been consistent in saying it was parked in the lane next to the curb—he called it the fire lane.

I asked A.W. for a description of the van's interior. He said there were no windows, and the floor was carpeted. He wasn't sitting up front. Dahmer was wearing a plaid shirt and jeans, crappy clothes.

"I was begging to be taken back to my mom. I remember screaming and yelling that my mom was back there. 'I'm going to take you back to your mom.' I wasn't aware of the danger I was in." He said Dahmer drove the van east to A1A, the beach highway, then south into Dade County, where the road is also named Collins Avenue. [Toole's story was Hollywood Blvd. west to the Turnpike, then north toward Jacksonville.] Their destination, after twenty minutes, was a house or apartment in Miami Beach, although he couldn't pinpoint where.

At the torture house the story got exponentially bizarre—and unlike the part at the mall, I had no chance of corroborating anything.

Within an hour of their arrival, A.W. said he saw Ottis Toole. And later, Ted Bundy. I quickly found that Bundy, who had abducted young women in Miami, had been in custody since 1978. Black mark. Toole and Dahmer, simpatico? Because Mary Hagan had said she'd seen Toole at Sears, Willis and I had joked, what were the odds that two famous killers coincidentally had gone to Hollywood Mall at the same time? Who got to Adam first? We'd never considered they could have been in league together. (Like Broward State Attorney investigator Phil Mundy, we simply dismissed William Mistler. Willis thought Hagan actually saw Dahmer but when she watched *America's Most Wanted* show video of Toole she overwrote her memory and put Toole's face and movements on Dahmer—just like what we believed happened to Bowen.) A.W. said he didn't see Toole at the mall, but couldn't say he wasn't there.

Inside the apartment, as he referred to it, A.W. said there were other captors too. They were holding about twelve children, ages 4-7, all but two of them boys, intended to be sold into "the flesh market," which he described as prostitution, slavery, and the organ trade. I had trouble believing that until two months later when I read stories in the wake of the 2010 Haitian earthquake that Haiti has an active trade in child prostitution and slavery. A.W. had said that one of his other captors had taken him to voodoo rituals (South Florida has a large Haitian community), and he'd described an altar in the apartment that included his "Missing" picture. I also saw a *Miami Herald* story quoting a local child advocate and former state prosecutor: "Miami is known as a destination city for human trafficking."

He was tormented continuously. He was usually chained to a wall, or tied up and kept in a closet, nearly always blindfolded and gagged. Sometimes he was intentionally shocked with electricity. He was raped, cut, and intentionally bled. His head was shaved,

and he was injected with drugs that puffed his skin. His force-fed diet was a milky mush. He rarely saw the other captives, but they communicated by tapping on walls. In ice buckets he saw children's severed heads. To pass the time he sang to himself, counted high numbers, and cried. His captors took pleasure in his terror.

"I was praying to God I would be rescued and would go back to my mom and dad."

What he thinks saved his life was the high-publicity search for him that his captors knew was occurring. Their eventual plan, he said, was to leave another child's head someplace where it would be found.

"I heard the news they had found the skull, on the radio. I was looking out the window, in Miami Beach, I could hear water outside. They said to me, See? It's over now."

He said he remained in the apartment for about another month, when it was raided and he and the other captives were rescued. From his description it was a paramilitary-style operation, but nothing of the sort was ever reported in the news. His captors either escaped, or weren't there when it happened.

"I saw none of this, I was unconscious." He said Dahmer "left me as though I was dead. He just hadn't done the last thing to me."

He said Dahmer had cut his face along his mouth "from ear to ear," and with a chain saw cut the word Sorry into his face and neck. When I questioned that, he said he remembered Dahmer holding a chain saw and the sound of it starting up, and then he blacked out. He said his guardian family took him to doctors outside of the country to reconstruct his face with special microsurgery. He still has small scars from the process. They look like pimples but are actually infections that have never gone away and are more visible in hot weather.

I put Billy Capshaw on the phone with him, three-way, to see if their experiences matched. [I introduced them, using A.W.'s real name. Like I have, Billy has agreed not to reveal it.] For instance, A.W. described Dahmer's eyes: "Droopy. He played with his eyelashes. Then all of the sudden, the clearness of his eyes. You wouldn't know he was looking at you, until he wanted you to know he was looking at you."

Billy thought that answer, plus others about Jeff's swagger and how he'd bark orders to the child did sound like he'd met Dahmer. "If Jeff gave you that dead look, there is no fucking way you could ever forget it," he said. But in the days and weeks after, Billy kept going back and forth on whether A.W. was really Adam Walsh, the idea was too enormous to grasp.

A.W. said that when he'd called *America's Most Wanted*, said who he was and asked to speak to John Walsh, the operator had hung up on him. When he called back, he said he was told, "You think you're the first person who's called and said they were Adam Walsh?" He'd written to Walsh twice with no response. He'd also called Hollywood police and spoken to detective Steve Sparkman for about twenty minutes, but that also had gone nowhere.

His goal, he said, was "to get back into the family. My mom taught me to say, as the last words I would speak to her were, I love you.

"I would love to get to say that to her again."

In *Tears of Rage*, writing in first-person, Reve recounted the moment she left Adam at the videogames: "I'm going to be right over there. In the lamp department, Adam." She said he responded, "Okay, Mommy, I know where that is."

A.W. was "one hundred percent certain" that his DNA would match the Walshes. "I'm positive that I'm Adam Walsh. I don't have a doubt that I'm Adam Walsh. My oldest friends have always wanted me to remember. One time they told me, 'You're Adam Walsh, don't you remember?' I was in complete denial."

I'd stayed in touch with Jan Johnson, the retired FDLE crime scene investigator whom ABC *Primetime* had hired. Previously she'd mentioned to me that a DNA lab owner she knew had John and Reve Walsh's DNA profiles and that FDLE may have them too. If she was right about FDLE, they might be public record. At Jan's instruction A.W. used a Q-tip to swab saliva from his cheek and gathered pubic hair samples (he said his head hair had been transplanted), then mailed them to me. One of my skeptical friends said DNA would prove he was a fraud, therefore the samples would never arrive and he would alibi that they were lost in the mail. They came the next day.

If in fact the Walshes had consented to having their DNA profiled, why would they have done that? Only two possible comparison samples were in evidence: blood on a machete Ottis Toole maybe at some time had used, and the bloody carpet cutout from Toole's Cadillac. From the former, a 1983 FDLE report said there was no sample blood remaining. As for the latter, in 1995 Mark Smith couldn't find it. There was blood on the meter room wall but a year after we found it Hollywood detective Lyle Bien told me that Hollywood police had never entered that room.

So there was no forensic evidence to compare with DNA. And had there been, better to use than the parents' DNA would have been a sample from the found child. Hair had been taken in 1981 but a 1997 Broward state attorney's memo said DNA matching had never been attempted on it and by then FDLE thought it had degraded beyond usefulness. But the head itself had been kept at the Broward medical examiner's office. They could have used a bone sample.

There was only one answer left:

The Walshes had their DNA tested against the found child. Which would mean there was uncertainty it was Adam.

But after that test, they knew yes or no.

Or so I thought.

In the early evening of August 10, 1981, in rural southwestern Indian River County, two employees of a nearby orange grove looking for a fishing spot found the head floating against a concrete embankment supporting a short bridge where the Florida Turnpike crosses over that canal conduit.

The morning after, John Monahan, a friend of the Walshes, and Hollywood police Lieutenant Richard Hynds, the supervisor of the investigation who was carrying records from Adam's Hollywood dentist Dr. Marshall Berger, drove to the Indian River County morgue in Vero Beach. Instead of in a police vehicle they were in Monahan's white Mercedes convertible, reportedly driven by Monahan's chauffeur. Neither Hoffman nor Hickman, the eventual lead detectives, were present, nor John or Reve, who were in New York preparing to appear on *Good Morning America* to promote the search. Hours earlier

ABC had offered to fly them home immediately but John had declined and instead at 8:15 they'd gone on air.

On that day, Florida District Nineteen (which includes Indian River County) Associate Medical Examiner Franklin Cox signed a two-page summary document entitled "Death Investigation and Preliminary Autopsy Report," which Hollywood police had released in 1996. He had done only an external examination, no cutting. He wrote:

"An apparent amalgam dental filling is noted on the buccal [cheek, or facial] side of the last lower left molar. This amalgam filling is confirmed by X-ray." Shown Adam's dental records, he wrote: "His records reveal an amalgam filling on the buccal side of the last lower left deciduous molar, corresponding to the finding in the decapitated head.

"In addition, the head is identified as Adam Walsh by a close family friend, John Monahan, in the presence of Lieutenant Hynds. The identification and dental records confirm that the decapitated head is Adam Walsh, a six year old missing child from Hollywood, Florida."

When I told A.W. about the positive identification by dental records, he gave me yet another bizarre answer: His captors had pulled his teeth. "I think they pulled most of my back teeth. I can't exactly remember."

Okay, let's say they cemented Adam's back teeth into a similar-age child's head they'd kept in an ice bucket, then left that head somewhere they thought it would be found, expecting that Adam's dental chart would be checked against it and because of the filling it would match.

I actually floated this past one of dentists in the office I personally use. If that had happened, he said, dental X-rays might show broken tooth roots. Would my untrained eyes be able to see it? Yes, he thought.

So dental X-rays would be the easiest way to prove that A.W. wasn't Adam. Then I could assuredly drop this lunacy.

Although Lieutenant Hynds had the dental records, Hollywood hadn't disclosed them in public records. Surely they were in the Broward Medical Examiner's file, which became a public record when Hollywood closed the case in 2008. The next day I'd faxed a records request to the Broward M.E., but now realized that I hadn't gotten any response or pursued it. So I called their records office.

I wanted to see the Adam Walsh file. The woman clerk answering was startled. "Uh, that's not public record. And besides, the file's lost."

"The file's lost?"

"Yeah, it's been lost for two years, since the chief investigator died." Edwina Johnson had kept it, the clerk said, she'd died suddenly in January 2008, and despite searching her office, it had never been found.

Sherri Baker, assistant to then-current Medical Examiner Dr. Joshua Perper, told me the same thing. She suggested I speak to the new chief investigator, I left her a message, and a week later I got this voice mail: The file isn't lost, it's in the office vault with other high-profile cases. That was to say, the Anna Nicole Smith file.

Days later at the medical examiner's office I got to see and copy what I was told was the entire file. There were several interesting things:



Just after his positive identification, Dr. Cox let Hollywood police remove the head from his office. In a Miami TV news helicopter, officers flew it to the Broward M.E., where it arrived just after two P.M. Dr. Ronald Wright, Chief Broward M.E. in 1981, performed an autopsy at four P.M. The cause of death was determined as asphyxiation and the manner of death homicide.

I looked around for an autopsy report. There wasn't one.

Later, since I already had it from a previous public records request, I reviewed the report of the autopsy of Flo Ella Miller, done by the Broward M.E. on July 30, 1981. She was a twenty-six-year-old woman last heard from on July 25 and last seen about five miles from Dahmer's apartment. On July 29, in the midst of the search for Adam, she was found in a remote drainage canal in northeast Hollywood. Police had never determined how she got there.

Miller's file had a computer-generated page covering establishing information in the same style as a page in the Walsh file. But in the Miller file that was its cover page. Following were four typed pages narrating internal and external examinations and conclusive findings, and two signatures by Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Keene J. Garvin: one at the report's end and another on a page restating cause and manner of death.

Both files had toxicology reports and "Body Diagram" sheets with hand-drawn markings. Unlike the Miller file, the Walsh file also had two pages titled "Microscopic Examination" which included a handwritten note: "21 slides" and Dr. Wright's initials. That, I learned, meant tissue samples had been taken from the remains and saved on slides.

In short, the Walsh file documented that Wright had done an autopsy but the narrative guts of his report were missing.

I asked Dr. Perper. He said he hadn't been aware anything was missing, adding that the case long predated his time in office. Later I checked the Hollywood police file: it had detectives' notes regarding some of Wright's autopsy findings, including that the brain matter had liquefied, but his narrative document wasn't there either.

Also not in the M.E.'s file:

- *Any information from Adam's dentist, including his dental charts and X-rays*
- *X-rays of the found child*
- *Any further confirmation of the identification of the remains as Adam Walsh, as Dr. Cox had declared, or anything regarding whether a forensic dentist had ever been consulted*
- *Any description of human tissue samples aside from the note that Wright had taken slides of them, and no blood typing*
- *Any note of discussions with John and Reve Walsh or signed acknowledgments that either had viewed the head and confirmed its identification*
- *Autopsy photos. However, in 2001 the state of Florida had passed a law prohibiting the public release of those without written consent from the family of the victim, and made it retroactive. Although I was prohibited from seeing them, they still should have been in the file. There was a note to the file dated July 1996 regarding thirty slides that Broward State Attorney's office investigator Phil Mundy had asked for, received, made duplicates of, and returned, although it didn't tell of their content.*

Present in the file were also some things I didn't expect:

- *Notes and letters beginning in May 2002 of requests by the Walshes' representatives asking the office to give them Adam's still-held remains for burial. (The 1981 funeral service had an empty casket.) One attorney's letter in 2005 asked that the request be kept "in strict confidence". An October 2007 memo for the file, signed by Edwina Johnson, Supervisor of Investigations, read that "The arrangements were made for the deceased to be transported to New York and buried by his parents." Accompanying them during transit was to be Joe Matthews, who the memo called "an associate" of the Walsh parents, and who in an earlier letter referred to himself as an investigator for America's Most Wanted.*

The same memo included: "Evidence is being kept with the file for any future reasons. The parents are aware of the evidence that is being kept in our facility. An authorization from the parents is enclosed in our case file." However, there was no such authorization in the file.

Dr. Perper confirmed to me the absence of the signed authorization but couldn't explain why that wasn't there, either. But unlike when the autopsy had been done in 1981, in 2007 Perper had been in charge of the office.

In August 2014, to make sure, I inquired again about the missing signed authorization to Dr. Perper's successor in the job, Dr. Craig Mallak. He as well confirmed its absence, as well as all the other absences in the file noted above, and that the remains were no longer at the Broward M.E.'s office. Anywhere in the office, was there any remaining evidence, such as teeth or tissue samples? No, he said, nor was there any explanation of why they weren't there.

Release of remains without an authorization signed by a legally authorized person violates the policy of the Broward Medical Examiner's Office, as posted on its website:

This Office requires a release authorization signed by the "legally authorized person" to make funeral arrangements (aka, "next-of-kin" or "closest living relative") as defined by Florida State Statutes (Fla. Stat. § 497.005-39).

So where were the remains? I asked the Florida state agencies responsible for recordkeeping of deaths, the Department of Health and Department of Vital Statistics, but they had no information. The notes in the case file said the funeral home handling arrangements was in Auburn, New York, near Buffalo, where John and Reve Walsh have family, but when I checked state agencies there I also could find nothing. At Vital Statistics in Cayuga County, N.Y., the clerk I spoke to said she knew the funeral home and volunteered to contact them. She called but they wouldn't say anything.

The case file notes also named the Fort Lauderdale funeral home that was to retrieve the body from the Broward M.E. Citing privacy reasons, the director of the home said she could tell me nothing. But she did say that the Broward M.E.'s office keeps a chain of custody log book that funeral home directors sign when bodies are released to them for final disposition.

Since the medical examiner had kept the skull for twenty-six years this case was rather the exception to regular procedure, nonetheless I asked Dr. Mallak to check the 2007 book for a signature acceptance of the Walsh remains. In the Walsh file the last note

about it, reporting that by then all transportation arrangements had been completed, was dated October 17, 2007, so Mallak checked that year's log book from October 1 through December 31. He said he did not find any log entry for the Walsh remains.

At the end of all this, short of asking the Walshes or Joe Matthews, which I didn't do, I was not able to discover what ultimately happened to the remains.

The website of *America's Most Wanted* mentioned the remains but, oddly, seemed to contradict what was in the file notes. Stating that its information was valid as of December 30, 2008—days after Hollywood Police administratively closed the case, which the site noted—a page titled “The Story of Adam Walsh” read: “Adam's skull rests, to this day, at the Medical Examiner's office in Broward County.”

Then in November 2014, John Walsh made the same point during a panel discussion in New York City to promote a new dramatic television series about a family whose child went missing. Reporting it, the entertainment industry weekly *The Hollywood Reporter* headlined its story, “John Walsh Reveals Wrenching New Detail of Son's Death 33 Years Later.”

“People don't know this, but [police] kept Adam's severed head in the morgue for 27 years, saying you can't bury your child because it's an open capital murder. We could never get Adam's remains while the case was botched.”

If the remains were removed from the Broward M.E. just after the last note about it in the file, then the Walsh family got them a year before the case was closed—which was also, coincidentally or not, two months after ABC *Primetime* reported my theory that Jeffrey Dahmer was involved. (Walsh declined the show's interview request; Joe Matthews appeared instead.) The botching Walsh referred to was, in his opinion, Hollywood's failure to make a case much earlier against Ottis Toole.

Matthews, co-author of a 2011 book about the case, *Bringing Adam Home*, claimed that he, not Hollywood Police, solved the murder—Toole did it, but his book mentioned nothing about removing the body or a funeral. I had admired the book's poignant title because it suggested to me that after visiting the shopping mall that day, in any circumstance other than the one that happened, Adam would have come home. In the book, the bringer of Adam, home, returned at last to his desperate and grateful parents, was Matthews, sort of as if he was the cop who had found him, merely lost and frightened but alive—that is, in a better world. Instead, in the temporal world, Matthews was the symbolic bringer of Adam, home.

But because Matthews didn't write about it, unknown to most of the book's readers was that the title had a literal meaning as well: that so many years later, Matthews apparently was the actual transporter of Adam's remains, home, to a Walsh family grave.

- *Slide photos of the skull, no soft tissue present, that is, no skin or gums, and no explanation whether the tissue had eroded or intentionally been cleaned. In the images were the Broward M.E.'s case number but no date, however, on the cardboard of some of the slides was a mechanically-impressed photographic processing date: November 1983. These may have been the slides that Phil Mundy got duplicates of. I made drawings of these observations:*

On the upper jaw (the maxilla) I counted eight teeth: both front teeth plus three contiguous on each side. There may have been more but it was a facial view so that's all I

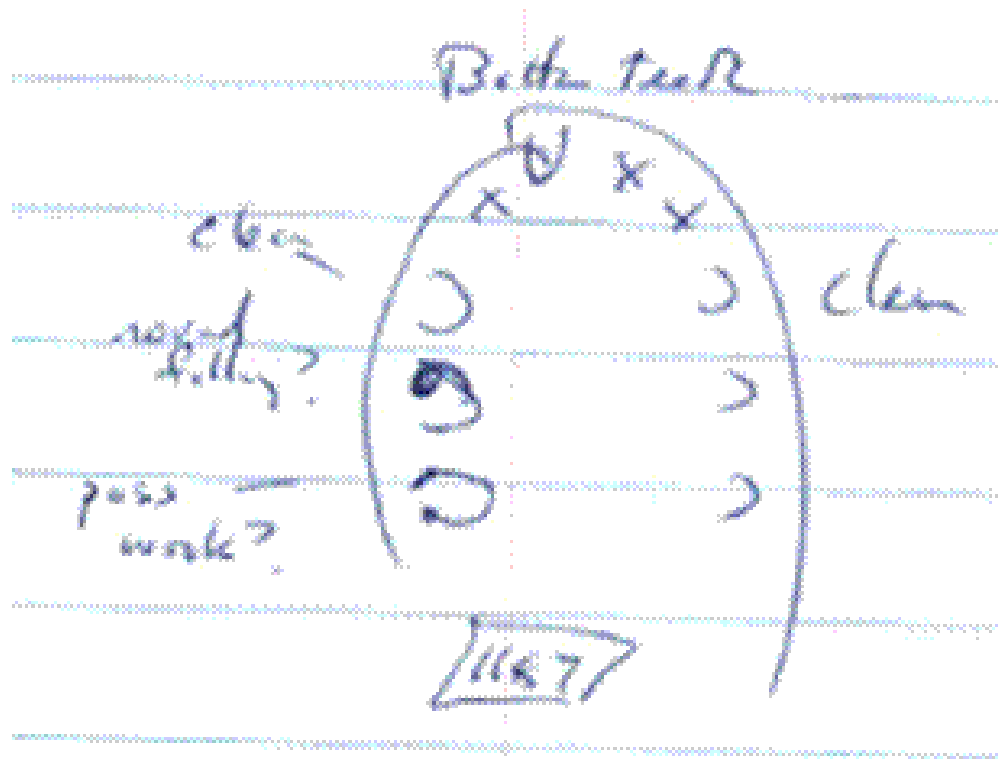
could see. Based on the positions of the six other teeth, the right front tooth looked to me about one-quarter expressed and the left front tooth looked in about two-thirds.

On the lower jaw (the mandible) were seven teeth—three molars together on each side and one tooth in the left front. Since the view was from the top, I could only see the biting surfaces. On the left side group there was what seemed to be a small filling, on a tooth's northwest side.

It took me a moment to realize this:

The filling wasn't in the last lower left molar, as Dr. Cox wrote. It was in the *next-to-last lower left molar*.

Also, Cox had only mentioned a filling on the buccal (facial) side. *I was looking at a filling on the top*—the occlusal, or chewing side.



**My drawing of the Broward Medical Examiner's slide of the occlusal view of the bottom teeth in the found child. I noted a filling in the chewing side of the next-to-last left tooth, a molar. 1187 is the M.E.'s case number (81-1187), marked on a card. Xs refer to spaces for missing teeth. The dental chart orientation of this drawing is Left side of the mouth - Right side of the mouth, which reflects the perspective of the person whose mouth it is. That is, the tooth with the filling is on the (lower jaw) left side, and the teeth I noted as missing are among the (lower jaw) front teeth. The reason for this obvious explanation is that in other images of the teeth, below, the orientation is reversed, so in each image I present I will designate the orientation.**

When Dr. Perper had come to join me, he confirmed that what looked like a filling in fact was. We re-counted the teeth in the mandible—seven. Cox had written ten.

Perper guessed that some of the front teeth had fallen out since 1981. To explain the discrepancy between the last and next-to-last molar, he offered this hypothesis: children

get their first adult molars around 6-7 (at the time he went missing, Adam was six years, eight months), but at the time of his death Adam's hadn't yet expressed, that is, they were still under the gum line. When the gums eroded the molars were exposed.

He quickly realized where I was going with this: "Are you saying this isn't his head?" He said he thought a DNA test had been done and he thought it had confirmed the identification. But when I asked him a moment later, he wasn't as certain of the result.

There was, in fact, evidence in the file of DNA testing:

- *A sealed Hollywood Police evidence bag with handwriting on it: "oral swabs of Reve Walsh" dated 7-28-03 and signed by Detective J. Kerns. (At a later inquiry to the Broward M.E. I discovered that Hollywood Police had removed it in December 2011. When I asked Hollywood about that in a public records request they responded that the Broward M.E. asked them to get it because of "a property destruction and inventory which was scheduled to occur in their office. The item was placed into Hollywood Police Property for safekeeping.")*
- *A document entitled "Chain of Custody: The Bode Technology Group Inc." detailed the delivery and receipt of "Mandible with 11 teeth—mandible broken in (3) pieces from Adam Walsh." (Cox wrote the mandible had ten teeth. Perper suggested the same explanation as above, erosion had revealed the molar unexpressed before death.) The Broward M.E. had hand-delivered it to a Bode representative on March 27, 2003, and Bode returned it by Fedex on November 3, 2003.*

To get up to speed, David Smiley, working with me at the *Herald*, had read the full police file. He pointed out that there were similar documents in Hollywood's 2008 file release, which I'd glossed over:

- *A Hollywood police property form dated 7-22-03 detailing "two swabs left cheek/ two swabs right cheek. Oral swabs of Reve Walsh."*
- *A voluntary consent form for a saliva sample to be submitted to a Hollywood police representative signed by Reve Walsh on 7-22-03 in the presence of Detective John Kerns*
- *A Fedex airbill of a package sent from and billed to Hollywood police to Bode Technical Group in Springfield, Va. on July 24, 2003*

Bode, I learned from their website and a story in the *Herald*, is a DNA lab with federal and state law enforcement contracts. One of its projects was to identify victims of the 1970s "Dirty War" in Argentina. They extracted DNA from bones in unmarked mass graves and compared them to samples from survivors of the missing.

Although it seemed obvious that a DNA comparison had been done between Reve Walsh and the found child, there were no reports saying that, nor results from it.

What was in the District Nineteen M.E. file?

That office had since moved from Vero Beach to Fort Pierce. I called to ask to see the file and was quickly given the M.E. himself, Dr. Roger Mittleman, who seemed surprised. He said Joe Matthews, working for the Walsh family, had just asked to copy it including its photos. After Mittleman got an okay from the Broward state attorney they'd sent Matthews the file directly and the photos via the Hollywood police.

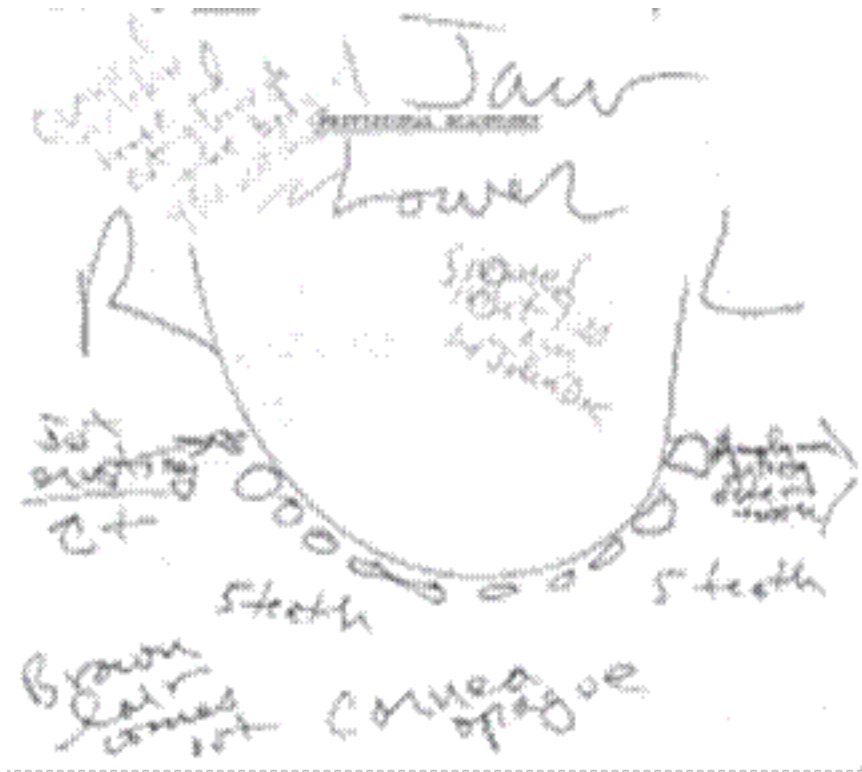
They'd need the same approval to send me the file (sans photos). Within a week I had it.

Here were the interesting things in the District Nineteen file:

- Phone messages showed that Joe Matthews had called less than two weeks before I did. (Why then? The case had been officially closed for a year.)
- It also had nothing from Adam's dental file

In Cox's handwritten work notes and rough drawings there was information left out of his formal preliminary autopsy report, notably:

- A drawing of all the teeth on the lower jaw that showed five teeth on each side but also a sixth tooth on the right side "just erupting" positioned furthest back
- The same drawing had a note next to the fifth tooth on the left side: "amalgam filling outer tooth"



**Dr. Cox's worksheet drawing of the teeth in the lower jaw. As noted by his large letters R and L, the dental chart orientation of the drawing is Right side of the mouth - Left side of the mouth.**

- A note under "Marshall Berger, DDS" and his Hollywood telephone numbers: "Buccal side lower left deciduous molar—amalgam filling"

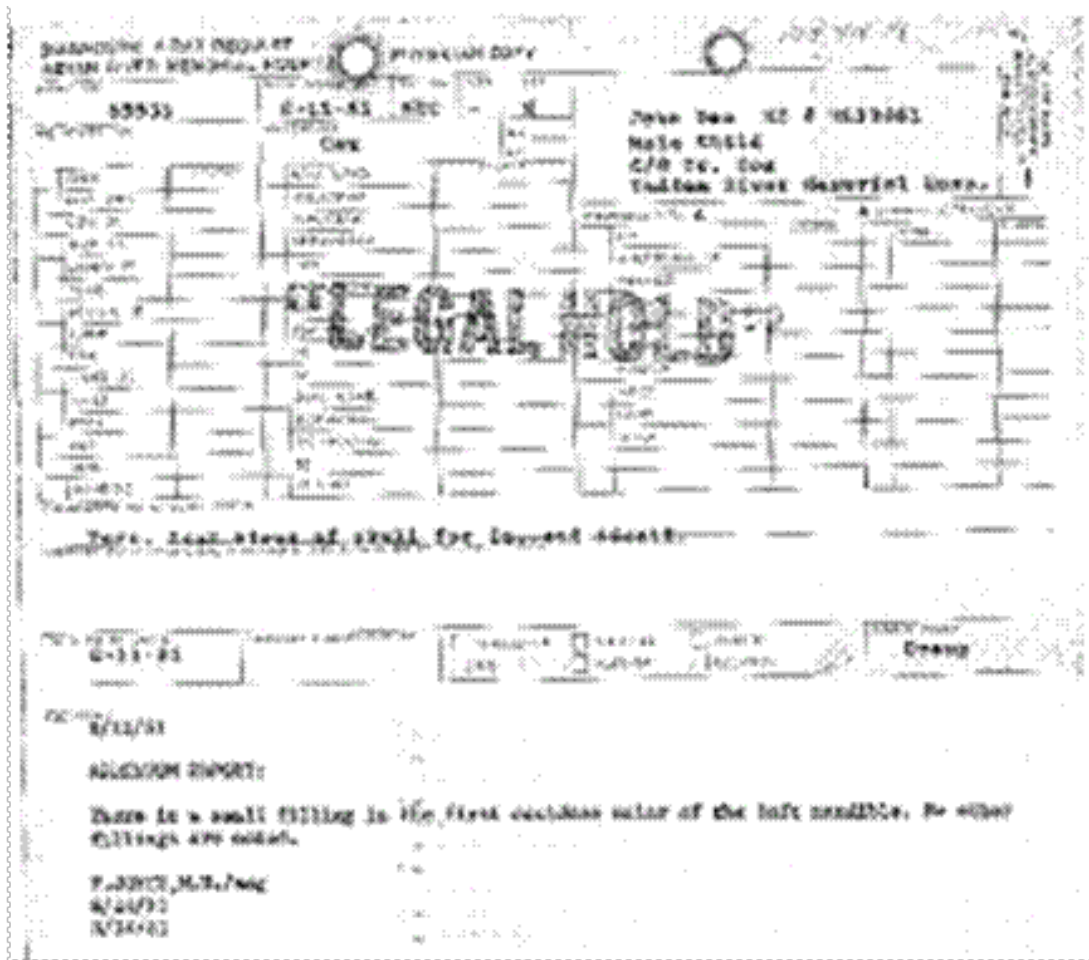
Marshall Berger, DDS  
987-2555  
966 1002

Buccal side lower  
left deciduous  
molar - amalgam filling

PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS

**Dr. Cox's worksheet note**

- Although there were no X-rays, there was a report of X-rays of the head taken at Indian River Memorial Hospital on August 11, 1981, signed by radiologist Peter Joyce. His only reference to the teeth was: "Deciduous teeth are also noted." However, in an addendum dated three days later, Dr. Joyce wrote: "There is a small filling in the first deciduous molar of the left mandible. No other fillings are noted."



### Radiological report on the found child

I checked whether the hospital had the X-rays and was told by its spokesperson no, they purge them after ten years.

I now had to learn how to identify teeth. Billy Capshaw, who had worked in Arkansas as an emergency paramedic, and I read Internet dental sites. There are twenty baby teeth—ten on each jaw, five on each side. From front to back they are the central incisor, lateral incisor, canine, first deciduous molar, and second deciduous molar. They're all in by about age three.

A child's first adult teeth, the sites agreed, are usually the first permanent molars (the "six-year molars.") When they erupt they become third molars—the sixth tooth in that quadrant. Next, but with overlap, between 6-8 the deciduous central incisors (front teeth) fall out and are replaced by permanent central incisors. That doesn't add to the prior number of teeth.

Here were the issues with Cox's formal written report:

- *Considering that to make his positive identification he heavily relied on a dental comparison, he wrote very little about the teeth in the found child*

He wrote: "The teeth are then examined. The upper right incisor is missing and an erupting tooth can be palpated in its place. Four upper teeth are present on the right side lateral to the missing right upper incisor. Five teeth are intact and present in the upper left



side. The teeth in the lower jaw are then examined and all ten teeth are present, five on each side. An apparent amalgam filling is noted on the buccal side of the last lower left molar. This amalgam filling is confirmed by x-ray.”

Note that Cox does not properly identify “the upper right incisor.” From his drawing it seems he’s referring to the upper right central incisor.

- *He didn’t note that there was more than one adult central incisor*

Cox indicated the top right adult central incisor was coming in. But in the slides I saw the top left looked like it was about two-thirds expressed, which was further along than the top right.

Also, in an undated photo I found on the Internet, Adam is missing his (baby) lower right central incisor. In that same photo he has both his top front baby teeth, indicating that he lost a lower tooth before he lost his upper teeth.



**Adam Walsh, unknown date. Note missing lower central incisor. Photo found on the Internet, no photo credit acknowledged**

- *Although he wrote that an incisor (central, apparently) had fallen out he noted no first permanent molars*

By describing five teeth on three sides and four teeth and an erupting incisor on the remaining side, Cox seems to indicate that the found child had no first permanent molars, which usually start coming in before incisors. However, on his worksheet he contradicts himself by noting on the lower right side a “just erupting” sixth tooth—likely a first permanent molar. Why didn’t he include that in his final report?

- *He is blind to a disagreement with the radiological report*

Cox wrote that the filling in the found child was in the “last lower left molar” and that Adam’s records showed a filling in his “last lower left deciduous molar.” On jaws with “all ten” teeth, as he wrote—meaning all ten baby teeth, it sounds like—that’s the same tooth—the second deciduous molar.

He wrote:

“Multiple portable x-rays are taken which will be interpreted by a radiologist. They confirm the presence of the amalgam filling in the lower left last molar.”

But in his own report, the radiologist, Dr. Joyce, said otherwise. He agreed that the x-ray confirmed an amalgam filling but not that it was in last molar. He identified the lower left quadrant tooth with the filling as “the first deciduous molar.” That’s the *first* molar.

Joyce is silent on how many molars he saw but if there were two then the filling in the first deciduous molar is in the next-to-last. In the slides I saw three—that would make the first deciduous molar *two* from the end. That was impossible because I saw the filling in the next-to-last molar—the second deciduous. Regardless, Joyce disagrees with Cox that the filling was in the last molar.

Joyce’s finding of first deciduous is clearly wrong. How to explain?

Cox wrote first, on August 11, 1981, that there were only two molars on that side. Within Cox’s framework, for Joyce to write three days later that the filling was in the first deciduous meant he viewed as it in the next-to-last molar—of two.

But the molar with the filling seems to be the second deciduous. In Joyce’s framework of seeing the filling in the next-to-last molar, he must have seen three expressed molars. Maybe he would have written second deciduous instead of first deciduous had he not been influenced by Cox’s report reading two molars. Of course the X-rays had been lost and weren’t available to check.

So in the end, the real disagreement between Cox and Joyce wasn’t to the name of the tooth the filling was in, it was regarding whether or not there was also a first permanent molar on the left side. Cox indicates no but I think Joyce indicates yes.

To summarize:

Because the Broward autopsy report was never released, until 2008 Cox’s sketchy final report was the only public source for the positive identification made from the dental comparison.

Regarding expressed adult central incisors, the report indicates that the found child had only one but it may have had at least three: both upper centrals and the lower central in the slot where Adam’s photo showed he’d lost his baby central.

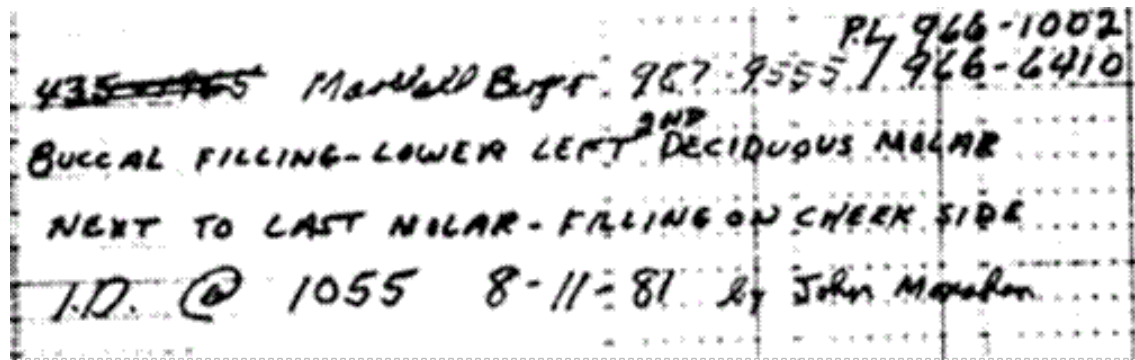
Also, it indicates that the found child had no lower first permanent molars despite evidence it had one erupting and may even have had both.

In total, at least five adult teeth may have been in, although Cox’s report points to only one. Inadvertently, Cox may have given the impression that the age of the found child is younger than it is.

- *Did a Hollywood detective also realize that the filling was in the next-to-last molar?*

In the Hollywood Police file I’d found a relevant page of handwritten notes. It included the names of Dr. Cox and the hospital where his morgue was located, the names

and phone numbers of the Indian River Sheriff's detectives, and the turnpike mile marker nearest where the head was found. I guessed Lieutenant Hynds wrote them, but whichever Hollywood officer it was seemed to have been present at least at the crime scene in Indian River County and possibly at Cox's examination, or else he'd gotten the following information from Adam's dentist Dr. Berger or saw his records:



Section of note page from Hollywood Police file, released in 1996, writer unknown

*Marshall Berger 987-9555*  
*Buccal filling—lower left 2nd deciduous molar*  
*Next to last molar—filling on cheek side*  
*I.D. @ 1055 8-11-81 by John Monahan*

This was the only explicit reference I found in the files that the tooth with the filling was the second deciduous molar, and as you can see in the notes, “2nd” was added to the line later. And aside from what we realize from Dr. Joyce’s radiologic report, it’s also the only reference that the filling is in the “next to last molar,” which implied the presence of another molar, the first permanent.

So who told this to the detective? Probably not Dr. Cox, who in two places said that the filling in the found child was in “the last lower left molar,” as he wrote in his preliminary autopsy report. The second place was captured in the Broward M.E.’s file, a handwritten page of notes about the found child to include a description of its teeth. They were dated “8/11/81 @ 9:15 A.M.” and agree with what Cox later wrote: “LL [lower left?] last molar on buccal side with amalgam filling.” When I later found Dr. Garvin, still practicing as a medical examiner but in South Carolina, he told me that those were his notes of when Cox first called Broward about the case, looking for help.

Further, in his preliminary report, Cox quoted from Adam’s dental record that his filling was in “the last lower left deciduous molar.”

Might the detective’s source of “2nd deciduous molar, next to last molar” be Dr. Berger, referring to Adam’s records, or just the detective viewing the records, since lost? That also seems unlikely; why wouldn’t Dr. Cox have reflected that information?

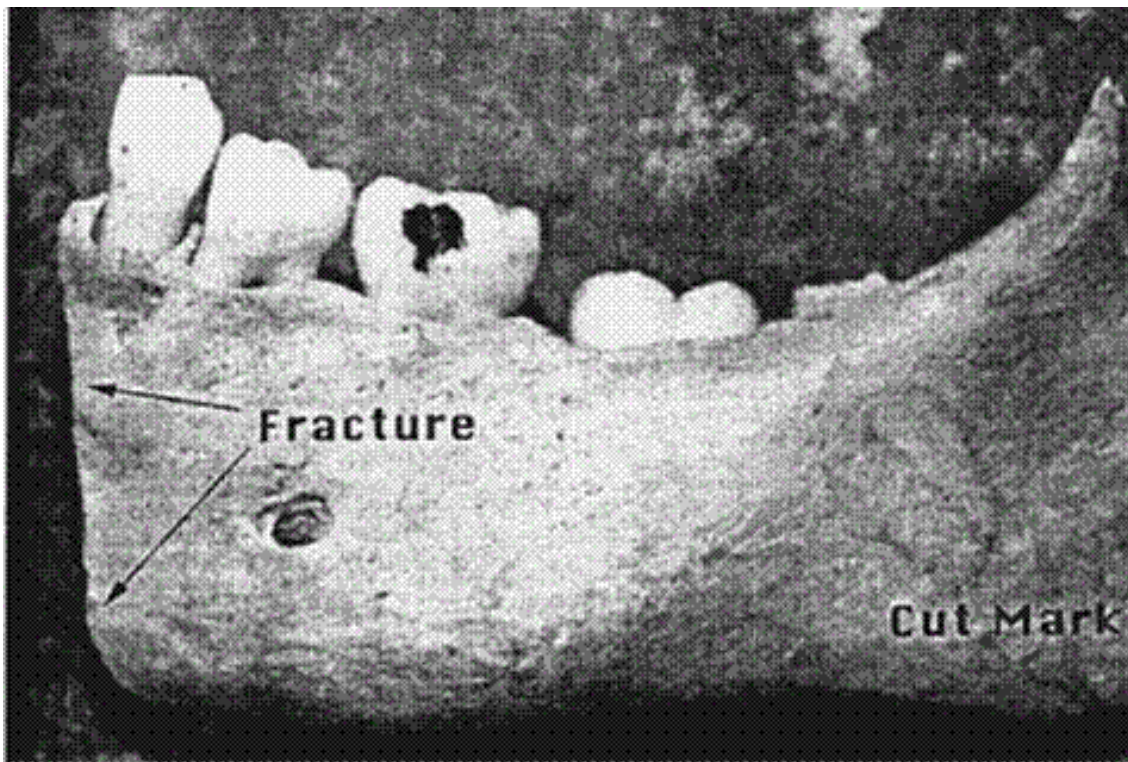
Or maybe was the detective saying that Adam’s filling was in his second deciduous molar and the found child’s was in its next to last molar? Possibly, but then Cox’s accounting of the teeth in the found child is incorrect.

- *In the slides I saw a filling on the occlusal (top) side of the lower left second deciduous molar. Cox and the Hollywood detective mention only a buccal (cheek) side filling.*

Cox wrote nothing about an occlusal or two-sided filling in either the found child or in Adam's records.

The Broward medical examiner's slides had only occlusal perspectives but there was a buccal view photo in the Hollywood Police file released in 2008. In 1997, Mark Smith had delivered the skull remains to the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory at University of Florida, in Gainesville, to see if they could positively match bone impressions to four blades they believed had been in Ottis Toole's possession. (They weren't able to do so.)

The photo showed four teeth from the lower left quadrant: closest to the center of the jaw was a tooth with a single root; next to it toward the back of the jaw was a tooth with two roots; next to that was a tooth with what looked to me like a dab of black paint or magic marker, which I presumed to be the tooth with the filling; and furthest back, separated by a small gap, was a tooth that didn't look fully grown in.



**Lower left jaw. The black mark covers (or is) the buccal filling in the second deciduous molar. (C.A. Pound Human Identification Lab, 1997, photo released by Hollywood Police, 2008)**

At my request, Dr. Michael Warren, the current director of the C.A. Pound lab, found its file. As a graduate student he had taken the photo. With his caveat that he wasn't a forensic dentist, he interpreted the order of the teeth as such (from left in the photo above): canine, first deciduous molar, second deciduous molar, first permanent molar. Regarding the second deciduous molar, he had X-rays showing that what I thought was a dark splotch was actually the filling itself.

He also had an occlusal view of the lower teeth that agreed with what Dr. Perper and I had seen and I had drawn: on the left side, on the middle of three molars, a filling on the

top. Examining the photos and X-rays together, Dr. Warren said it was the same filling, two-sided.

Corpus Delicti (Body of the Crime)

FLORIDA STATUTES 406.13 Examiner's report; maintenance of records:

Duplicate copies of records and the detailed findings of autopsy and laboratory investigations shall be maintained by the district medical examiner.

The key word is "maintained." It suggested that the Broward office was currently in violation.

Hollywood Police's 1996 release of its Walsh file had documents from the Broward M.E.'s autopsy report including what I'm calling its cover sheet plus a few other pages including a toxicology report and drawings, but was missing the narrative of the internal and external examinations. Maybe Hollywood had them but just hadn't released them, I thought. In a records request on *Miami Herald* stationery, David Smiley and I asked for the autopsy report as well as Adam's pediatric dental information and X-rays, and X-rays taken of the head at the Indian River hospital.

F.S. 406.13 also states:

When the cause of death has been established within reasonable medical certainty by the district medical examiner or her or his associate, she or he shall so report or make available to the state attorney, in writing, her or his determination as to the cause of said death.

To the Broward State Attorney we made the same request as we did to Hollywood. Seven weeks later, Hollywood told us they had no more autopsy report pages than they had released in 1996, and none of the other materials. The state attorney gave us back copies of pages I already had. Since the cover page had the M.E.'s finding of cause of death, the M.E. was in compliance regarding informing the state attorney.

But no official files anywhere had the missing autopsy report pages, Adam's dental records, or any X-rays.

The dental records absolutely should have been in the Hollywood Police and District Nineteen M.E. files. Hollywood Lieutenant Hynds had carried them to Vero Beach, and Dr. Cox had used them for his identification. I could conceive that someone had pilfered them from the Broward M.E. file but their absence from at least three files suggested something other than that. As for the remaining autopsy report pages, it was possible that Hollywood and the Broward State Attorney never got them and didn't think to ask for them.

Or maybe the autopsy report was never completed. Would that be contrary to state law or good practice?

The law was different in 1981; the State of Florida Medical Examiners Commission, authorized by F.S. 406.02, had not yet adopted its Practice Guidelines for Florida Medical Examiners. Then read F.S. 406.04 Rules:

The commission shall promulgate rules and regulations, pursuant to chapter 120, necessary to effectuate this chapter and to ensure minimum and uniform standards of excellence, performance of duties, and maintenance of records so as to provide useful and adequate information to the state in regard to causative factors of those deaths investigated.

In fact, in 1982, Chief Broward Medical Examiner Dr. Wright was an officer of the Medical Examiners Commission.

However, in current law, this is F.S. 406.11 Examinations, investigations, and autopsies:

(3)The Medical Examiners Commission may adopt rules incorporating by reference parameters or guidelines of practice or standards of conduct relating to examinations, investigations, or autopsies performed by medical examiners.

And the Practice Guidelines as currently published include this:

A medical examiner report should be completed and signed within 90 calendar days unless delayed by a report from an outside agency. A medical examiner report not signed within 90 days should be completed and signed within 30 days of receipt of all such reports from outside agencies.

Regarding “Structure of Medical Examiner Report,” the guidelines also say:

“The gross findings should be described in sufficient detail to support the diagnoses, opinions and conclusions.”

And...

“The report should be signed and dated by the pathologist.”

Dr. Cox, by the way, signed and dated his report.

- *In the absence of Wright’s full autopsy report and the dental records, how definitive were the documents present attesting to the positive identification?*

Calling it a preliminary autopsy, Cox did an external examination only and gave the remains to Wright with a letter authorizing him “to perform any necessary tests and examinations to determine the cause and manner of death.”

And as Cox told the *Fort Lauderdale News* on August 11, 1981, “I did not complete the examination. I’m going to let Dr. Wright’s staff finish it.” Two days later he told the *Miami News*: “My findings are only preliminary. It’s up to the Broward County medical examiner to make the final rulings.”

Florida Statutes 872.04 (1):

“Autopsy” means a postmortem dissection of a dead human body in order to determine the cause, seat, or nature of disease or injury and includes the

retention of tissues customarily removed during the course of autopsy for evidentiary, identification, diagnostic, scientific, or therapeutic purposes.

Cox performed no dissection and retained no tissue samples. Wright did. As proof that he opened the body, here is from Jack Hoffman's notes in the Hollywood Police file: "When Dr. Wright examined the inside of the skull he discovered the brain matter to be liquefied."

Further, Wright, not Cox, signed Adam's death certificate.

Wright's autopsy superseded Cox's partial. Did that then reduce Cox's opinion on the positive identification to something merely advisory?

- *Did Dr. Wright have information in personal files that wasn't in the official file?*

Smiley and I tried to reach him. I let David take the lead because when I'd phoned him three years before, Wright had been weird. I'd introduced myself as the reporter who'd interviewed him in 1997 about the Walsh case, a very friendly interview, and Wright responded as if he couldn't hear my voice, like I was making a crank call. He announced he would hang up on a count to three, and then he did. When I called back, I got voicemail and left a message. He never called back.

When we called and Smiley introduced himself as from the *Miami Herald*, working on the Walsh case, Wright said, "Hmmm." Then he hung up. Repeated attempts to reach him by phone, email, and visiting his Fort Lauderdale home failed to get us any further response.

Early on in his cold case investigation, in a memo dated August 18, 1994, Mark Smith noted that the Hollywood police file did not have the Medical Examiner's findings. "Although it may be somewhere in the file, it was not clear to me what their opinions were other than the cause of death and approximate day of death."

We tried to reach Smith and the case's original lead detectives, Jack Hoffman and Ron Hickman. All had since retired, Smith just six months earlier as Hollywood's assistant chief. Smith and Hoffman didn't take our calls or return messages, and Hickman spoke to us briefly twice, but backed out of an appointment we'd made with him and said he was too busy to reschedule. Chief Chadwick Wagner, who at the press conference had announced that the case was closed and Toole was the killer, wouldn't speak to us either.

We reached Phil Mundy, in retirement in Central Florida. Had he seen a signed autopsy report? He couldn't specifically recall it, but said he would have noticed if it wasn't there. During his detective career at Fort Lauderdale Police he'd investigated hundreds of homicides, he said, and never once had a problem with one missing. "Never, ever had that happened to me," he said.

We called Dr. Marshall Berger, Adam's dentist, since retired from his practice, to ask if he still had a copy of Adam's dental records. We never got that far with him. He said he was friends with John Walsh, and would speak to us only if he said okay.

That, I answered, wasn't going to happen. The publicist for *America's Most Wanted* hadn't even responded to David's requests for an interview with Walsh. We asked Berger if he would call Walsh, but he refused. We asked if he would listen to our questions without obliging him to answer. He wouldn't. "I'm hanging up on you," he said, and did.

Despite Dr. Cox's reliance on a dental comparison to make the positive identification, there was nothing in the District Nineteen M.E. file to indicate that he, either, had consulted a forensic dentist.

Dr. Mittleman was kind enough to refer me to the man who does their forensic dentistry, Dr. John Williams, of Vero Beach. He told me that District Nineteen first gave him a contract to do its forensic dentistry in 1982, but he had been available in 1981 and before. And no, he had never been consulted on the Walsh case.

"My M.E. [Dr. Mittleman] uses me almost always," Dr. Williams said. "Normally, if it's dental, I do the reports. Some M.E.'s do the dental themselves. Put an M.E. on the stand, ask questions, it might be confusing. That's my expertise."

He asked if Adam's pediatric dentist had given written or radiographic records to the M.E. Whatever he'd sent, I said, it was now absent from the files. "I know what we do. I don't know what they did. I would have kept records," he said. "You gotta have the charts, the X-rays."

It also bothered him that the Broward autopsy report narrative was missing. "What you have to have is great records," he said.

We called Franklin Cox. He was now eighty-five and retired but remembered the case as well as speaking to me years before. Off the top he told us was he wasn't a forensic pathologist, he was a general pathologist. The difference, I later learned, was that general pathologists usually evaluate specimens removed from living patients while forensic pathologists examine the deceased.

He said he wasn't anxious to do the autopsy and Dr. Wright had asked to do it. "I tried to get rid of that head as soon as possible. I put it in a bucket of ice and sent it down to Ronald Wright."

Yet he was the one who made the positive identification.

He recalled seeing Adam's dental chart and said he sent it to Wright. He couldn't explain why copies of it were in neither M.E. file.

Repeating what he'd written in his report, he said that the filling in the found child was in its last lower left molar but insisted it was the *third* molar. In the *Herald* newsroom, David and I looked at each other, we could hardly believe what we were hearing: another piece of contradictory evidence. Was Cox just confused? Or was he saying that his written report was wrong?

Even assuming there were three molars expressed at the time of death, the filling wasn't in the third. It was in the second, as shown in photos of the cleaned skull.

Aside, had Cox seen three expressed molars? No, implied his report. Although he hadn't named any of the lower teeth, he'd written that "all ten" were present, "five on each side." His drawing shows the same. For a child of Adam's age, "all ten" implies they were all baby teeth. It follows, then, there were two molars on each side—all deciduous.

If there was a third expressed molar at time of death, that is, a new first permanent molar, the child wouldn't have had "all ten" lower teeth. If the child did have a first permanent molar but still counted ten, then one of the non-molar teeth would have been missing: a central incisor, lateral incisor, or canine. But that isn't so, as this Hollywood Police crime scene photo of the found child shows:





**Lower teeth of the found child. Hollywood Police crime scene photo, released after a public records request in 2011. I cropped it to show only its lower teeth and some perspective of its face.**

Returning to the Hollywood detective's notes, he wrote that the filling was in the second deciduous molar and his next line says it was the next-to-last molar, which meant there was a third molar present, a first permanent. Cox's report says that the found child's filling was in its "last lower left molar," and what he said to us agreed with that. So right there that's a discrepancy: was the filling in the last tooth (Cox) or the next-to-last tooth (Hollywood detective)?

The positive identification seems to hinge on a match of this filling, yet there was something in all of this that I hadn't been getting.

Rethinking it, the heading of the detective's notes has Dr. Berger's name and phone numbers. As I already suggested as a possibility, was he writing not about the teeth in the found child but instead about Adam's teeth, relying on information from Dr. Berger or from seeing his dental chart?

Let's say the detective's notes do refer to Adam's teeth:

The discrepancy would then end over whether the found child's tooth with the filling was the last or next-to-last. Cox's description of the found child now holds: the filling is the last lower left molar.

Adam, then, had a filling in his next-to-last lower left molar—the second deciduous.

Reading Cox's report, the found child also had a filling in its second deciduous—except that was its last expressed tooth on the side.

Adam's second deciduous molar, however, was his next-to-last molar. He had also a third molar, a first permanent.

Cox agrees that Adam's filling was in his second deciduous molar. In his report, this is how he described Adam's teeth:

His records reveal an amalgam filling on the buccal side of the last lower left deciduous molar, corresponding to the finding in the decapitated head.

Stay with me. Cox wrote that the found child's filling was in its "last lower left molar," and he told us the same. But in describing Adam's filling he added an easily-overlooked distinction: it was in his "last lower left *deciduous* molar." (Emphasis added) So Cox may not be excluding that Adam's records showed that next to the molar with the filling he had a third molar, a first permanent.

Which leads us to the money question:

Is it possible that the found child and Adam both had fillings in their lower left second deciduous molars on the buccal side—but for the found child it was its last expressed molar on the side, while Adam did have an expressed third molar, his first permanent?

If that's so, their teeth don't actually match. The found child isn't Adam.

That the Hollywood detective's notes refer to Adam's teeth, not the found child's, seems to be the answer. We could prove or disprove it easily by seeing Adam's dental records. Three official investigative agencies handled them.

But they're missing, from all three.

We could talk to Dr. Berger.

But he wouldn't speak to us. And nowhere in any official file is there evidence of an interview with him.

We could talk to Dr. Wright.

But he wouldn't speak to us, either. And his autopsy report is missing.

The positive ID was made strictly by a comparison of teeth. We could check the forensic dental report.

But not only is it missing, there's no indication one was ever done.

That two children of similar age would have a filling in the same lower left deciduous molar and on the same side, and no other fillings, how unique is that?

Not that unique, it turned out.

First, children around the age of six generally don't have a lot of dental work. As for the most common baby teeth to get cavities, they are the first and second molars on either the top or bottom—and more often the bottom, according to a 1952 book called *A Survey of the Literature of Dental Caries* by the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council Committee on Dental Health.

But on the buccal side? Dr. Gregory Dickinson, a forensic dentist from Sarasota, Florida, who had recently retired from his practice of general dentistry, told me that of all the cavities he ever filled in children's lower molars, 95-98 percent were on the buccal side. Think of how children eat hard candy, he said. In their mouths they place it between their lower teeth and their cheek. That's the buccal side.

I had a few more questions for Cox. Regarding the filling, I told him that both Dr. Warren and I had seen it on the occlusal (top, or chewing) side of the tooth. He agreed, there was a filling on the occlusal side but admitted he didn't write that.

He knew that a forensic dentist had been available but didn't call him. I asked him how reliable visual identifications were by those who are familiar with the deceased. He said they often were problematic.

After going through the list I had at the time of all the questionable things about the identification, I asked if it was possible in his mind that the head might not have been Adam Walsh.

"I'm certain it was Adam Walsh," he said. "Who else could it have been? You didn't find many heads floating around."

Therein lay the rub, Smiley and I realized.

So what was with Cox telling us that the found child had a third molar, which contradicted his written report?

Following Cox's insistence that the found child was Adam, if Adam had a third expressed molar, the found child must have, too. But Cox didn't write that either child had a third expressed molar—that's from the detective's notes, which directly imply it. Would Adam's dental records, unavailable to us, prove that he had a third expressed molar, but Cox left it out of his report—possibly because so much else seemed to match—the buccal filling in the lower left molar and John Monahan's visual ID?

In that case, when Cox told us about the third molar, was it an admission of sorts, possibly unconscious, that he'd forced the positive ID, or maybe was a little too quick in making it? Even if he hadn't admitted the mistake to himself?

It was true that finding a child's head was an exceptional circumstance. And that for the previous two weeks there had been a frantic search for Adam Walsh that had exhausted police, the Walsh family and friends, and community members.

But did the two things have to correspond? There was a universe of other missing children who Hollywood police were not looking for as intently. In May 1982, when Florida Governor Bob Graham declared a statewide "Missing Children's Day," stories in the *Fort Lauderdale News* and *Hollywood Sun-Tattler* quoted estimates from the Adam Walsh Resource Center, then recently set up by John and Reve Walsh, that two million children go missing each year in the U.S. Of them, 1.85 million were runaways; 100,000 were taken by a parent in a dispute with the other parent; 50,000 were abducted by strangers and of those, 5,000 were killed. (Disputing those figures, the FBI in 1985 said the number of children abducted by strangers had held steady for years at between 50-100, of whom half were killed. In 2014, FBI director James Comey wrote that annually there were about two hundred "long-term" stranger abductions of children, and about two-thirds resulted in murder.) A Broward sheriff's deputy was also quoted that up to fifteen hundred missing children reports were filed monthly just in Broward County.

Nearly twelve hours before Cox made his positive ID, the police had already assumed the head was Adam, maybe employing the same logic as Cox had told us.

Here's the timeline:

Monday 6:45 P.M.: the two fishermen spotted the head in the canal and radioed their office, requesting they call Florida Highway Patrol.

7:20: the first FHP trooper arrived at the scene.

8:15: Indian River Sheriff's Detective Donald Coleman was dispatched to the scene and arrived at 8:52. His superior, Lieutenant Sid DuBose, arrived at 11:20. Coleman wrote in his report: "After viewing the remains, DuBose and this [reporting officer] agreed that it appeared to be that of Adam Walsh."

From Walsh's book, late Monday evening Hollywood Assistant Chief Hessler told Joe Matthews, "A positive I.D. has just been made: it's Adam Walsh."

Also late Monday, the *Fort Lauderdale News* reported, an FHP spokesman told them "The age and the size fits his description."

Tuesday 1:18 A.M.: Hollywood detectives Gibbons and Naylon and I.D. tech Ron Young arrived at the scene. Indian River officers took them to the Vero Beach morgue, where the head had been signed in to the entry log at 1:30. The *Sun-Tattler* reported that "within minutes" of their arrival, they "determined that the head 'no doubt' was that of Adam Walsh." In his summary report, Jack Hoffman wrote that on Hollywood's arrival, "a tentative identification of Adam Walsh was made through the use of photographs that this agency had on file."

2:00: At Naylon's request, Cox was called at home and awakened, and at 2:40 he began his examination. At 3 Young photographed the head.

Just before four: someone from Florida law enforcement called *Good Morning America* and told a producer that a head had been found and it most likely was Adam's. She gave him the Walshes' hotel phone number. His call to Walsh sounded like the one in the pre-dawn that the *Miami Herald* reported was made by Indian River Sheriff's Department spokesman Rick Baker, who told the *Herald* he'd been told by detectives they were "90 percent sure" it was Adam. Baker told the *Sun-Tattler*, "People were fairly sure after the preliminary autopsy last night."

What made everyone so certain? Walsh wasn't asked for the name of Adam's dentist until pre-dawn. The dental records and John Monahan wouldn't arrive at the morgue for hours. No one from Indian River or Hollywood police had ever met Adam, they'd only seen his pictures.

Here's the answer:

In a column, *Sun-Tattler* News Editor Ken Bowling wrote that when the city desk first heard early Tuesday that a child's head had been found, "We didn't know it was Adam. But, through the morning as the clues came in—one that the head found in the canal *had a tooth missing in the same place as Adam*—we knew that the search had ended." (Emphasis added)

But again, all children lose their top front teeth, so all it really meant was that the child was around Adam's age, six-and-a-half. That's what another FHP spokesman, Edward Goodey, told the *Miami News* for their early Tuesday edition: "the head of a white boy between 6 and 10 years old" had been found.

Recall Walsh's reaction: after his phone call to Hollywood police moments before his 8:15 A.M. airtime, he said on air: "At this point they feel there is a good possibility it is not Adam."

Regardless of what the police thought, Walsh was right that there was a good chance it wasn't his son. But his words could not resist the tide. It seemed a fait accompli that once Monahan and the dental records arrived the head would be positively identified as Adam. Cox got swept up in it too.

Monahan made his identification at 10:55 A.M., wrote the unnamed Hollywood detective who apparently had been in Vero Beach. Cox wrote that he got the dental records “at approximately 11 A.M.” Without consulting the available forensic dentist, Cox declared the identification. Charlie Brennan of the *Sun-Tattler* reported that John Walsh got the news at 11:35.

So it was a quick identification—and then it was passed off to the news media as a certainty. However, no documents were allowed into public view until 1996, and then only Cox’s final report. It would take another twelve years before full files would be made available.

- *Did John and Reve Walsh ever identify their son at the Broward morgue?*

If they did, it wasn’t documented in the files of the Broward M.E. or Hollywood Police. Dr. Garvin told me he knew that John Walsh and Dr. Wright had spoken but he couldn’t recall seeing Walsh at the M.E.’s office. In his book John was silent about it. In the countless times over the years he has spoken to the media about Adam’s death, at least in the many stories I reviewed I didn’t find any reference to it.

The only reference I did find was in the *Miami News* final edition of August 11, that Adam’s “mother and father, John and Reve Walsh, were to make their own identification after arriving back from New York.” That was in the paper’s first story that Adam was dead, and didn’t quote the Walshes or anyone else. The information likely came from someone in law enforcement.

Although John was listed as the reporter on Adam’s death certificate, that alone does not imply his physical identification.

Another thought: just after 4:30 A.M., a *GMA* producer offered John to fly him and Reve home immediately. John said no, he wanted to do the show, it was his only chance to get Adam’s picture on national television. In his book he wrote of what the police had told him: “They were couching it. Saying everything in a way not to panic me. They didn’t really think it was Adam’s remains. Another boy was missing, a boy a little older. And they thought it might be him.” (That boy was a Tampa eight-year-old named Chuckie Yeager who had been reported missing on July 31, but on August 6 his parents had been notified he’d been found safe, as reported the same day by the *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*.)

At six, host David Hartman repeated the offer; again John said no. After a 7:30 call from who another producer thought was a lieutenant in the Florida Highway Patrol, Walsh said, “It still may not be Adam.”

- *Aside from the dental identification, how reliable was Monahan’s I.D.?*

In the dramatic opening of his book, Walsh writes about it:

“The eyes, once clear, were not fully open. They were clouded, unseeing. The soft blondish hair, always straight, was now tangled and matted. The unblemished skin... was taut, like a thin sheathing of plastic that no longer contained anything.”

Monahan asked if Dr. Cox could part the child’s lips.

“Only then did he see again what he had seen and remembered, just days, a lifetime ago: there, in the delicate gap, was a small, emerging tooth.

“And then he knew...

“The child on that autopsy table was my six-year-old son, Adam.”

So merely by looking at its face, Monahan wasn't sure the child was Adam. Like Cox, he relied on seeing its teeth.

- *Which identification was primary, Monahan's visual I.D. or the dental record match?*

Dr. Cox three times indicated it was the dental records. In his report, after stating that the filling noted in Adam's dental records corresponded to the one in the found child, he wrote:

In addition, the head is identified as Adam Walsh by a close family friend, John Monahan, in the presence of Lieutenant Hynds. The identification and dental records confirm that the decapitated head is Adam Walsh, a six year old missing child from Hollywood, Florida.

In his letter to Dr. Wright dated August 11, requesting his assistance and authorizing him to determine the cause and manner of death, Cox wrote “the young male child (head), identified by dental records as Adam Walsh.”

As well, in its first-day story of the positive I.D., the *Fort Lauderdale News* reported that Cox “said he needed only the dental records to make a final determination.”

On its autopsy report cover page, the Broward M.E. mentioned only Cox's dental comparison: “He compared the dental records of the deceased [sic] with those of the head and made a positive I.D.”

And in an interview with WPLG-TV, Channel 10, Miami, that apparently aired the day after the ID was announced, Dr. Wright seemed to offer the last word. The reporter concluded her story by speaking on-camera:

The boy's dental records were the positive link for identification. One of Adam's teeth had once been filled in by a dentist and his front tooth was missing. All the signs matched the remains perfectly. Wright feels that even if the rest of the body is not recovered, the evidence is enough to convict the murderer of little Adam Walsh. Ileana Bravo, Newswatch 10, Hollywood.

However, Detective Mark Smith in his thirty-eight-page cold-case composite report for the Hollywood Police file entitled “The Abduction and Murder of Adam Walsh” seems to indicate that the primary I.D. of Adam was Monahan's:

“At Indian River County Hospital on the morning of August 11th, John Monahan, a close friend of the Walsh family, positively identified the severed head as that of Adam Walsh's, an identification corroborated the same day by use of dental records.”

Jack Hoffman seems to agree with Smith that Monahan's identification was primary. Although on a handwritten note sheet he wrote “Tentative I.D. made by Monahan”; “Head flown to Broward County Medical Examiner's Office”; “Dr. Berger (Adam's

dentist) dental charts brought to M.E.”; and “Positive I.D. by Dr. Wright 8-11-81”, in his written report under the same date he wrote:

“Lt. Hynds and John Monahan, a close personal friend of the Walsh family, drove to Indian River County hospital in an attempt to positively identify this severed head as that of Adam Walsh. Upon arrival of Lt. Hynds and John Monahan at Indian River County Hospital, a positive identification was made by John Monahan that the severed head was that of Adam Walsh.”

A bit further down he added:

“Dr. Wright of the Broward County Medical Examiner’s office conducted the post mortem exam of Adam Walsh’s head. Dr. Berger who was Adam’s dentist was requested by Dr. Wright to respond to the examiner’s office with Adam’s dental charts. Dr. Berger arrived at the medical examiner’s office, a positive identification was also made by use of the dental records. The human head was positively identified as Adam Walsh.”

However, the Broward M.E. file has no note of Berger’s arrival. And except for Cox’s report, there is no note about any identification using dental records—or the dental records themselves. As well, there is nothing about Dr. Wright making his own positive identification.

I asked two forensic dentists what they thought of Monahan’s visual identification of the found child.

Dr. Charles Mandell, who practices general dentistry in Hollywood and is an assistant professor at University of Miami’s school of medicine, dental division, showed me his Hollywood Police badge for forensics. A previous chief, Sam Martin, gave it to him before 1981, and over the years he’s done forensic dental consultations for Hollywood P.D. However, he told me, Martin, still chief in 1981, didn’t consult him in the Adam Walsh case, and he’d known nothing about issues with either the identification or any missing documents, to include the autopsy report.

First, Mandell couldn’t comprehend why Monahan was present to make the identification and not John Walsh. “I’d be on the plane. To me, that’s a no-brainer. He sent a friend of his to identify his own son. I know damn well if I were in that situation, I’d want to face that. As hard as it would be, I’d want to know it. I’d want to make sure.”

If by looking at the head Monahan couldn’t make the ID, he said, “and it took a tooth to do that, there’s something wrong.” Based on facial structure, “after two weeks you should be able to recognize the child.”

“That’s just a farce,” said Dr. Dickinson, of the visual ID. “I would give that no credence, whatsoever.”

- *How proper was the positive ID that Cox made?*

I told how Dr. Cox made his positive identification to another forensic dentist, Dr. Peter Loomis of the New Mexico state office of the Medical Investigator and the University of New Mexico. From that, he said, “I would never be able to make a positive ID.” He said he would have done a full dental survey of the teeth in the found child’s mouth, as well as looked closely at its root and pulp structure and dental restorations. “To me, it’s just inconclusive. There’s not enough evidence to make a call.”

The only way to prove a dental identification, said Dickinson, is to compare antemortem (pre-death) X-rays from a dentist to postmortem X-rays of the unidentified

person. "If the root form and the bone around the teeth are identical, that's as good proof as DNA or a fingerprint," he said.

But without antemortem X-rays, of which there is no record in the Walsh case files, to make an identification based on a match of a single filling is inadequate, he said. After I told him the evidence that was in the record, he said, "I, myself, would not get up on the stand and say this is absolutely Adam Walsh."

Dickinson called that evidence enough only for a "presumptive ID," and Dr. Garvin agreed. Relying on only the written dental records, without X-rays, "that's going to be useless," Garvin said.

"When a person has a lot of dental work, you can ID him just from that." But, he said, "this child is so young, he had only one filling."

Garvin thought that some pediatric dentists don't X-ray children because they don't like to radiate them. But Dr. Mandell disagreed. "Normally speaking, you take an X-ray on a six-year-old. You want to check for caries," he said. If Adam had dental X-rays and they were in the file, he would have looked at his filling and the filling in the found child to compare its size, shape, and location. Then you could tell "if it's really Adam."

Even if Adam had been a new patient to Dr. Berger's office and he hadn't yet taken X-rays, Mandell said it's common practice to ask a previous dentist for their X-rays.

Mandell said he takes X-rays of children beginning at age four, unless they're uncooperative. In those cases, he waits a year. "Most dentists at four years old will make an attempt to take X-rays," he said. He added that patients' dental records will say whether X-rays had been taken.

Besides doctors Mandell and Williams, there was one other forensic dentist working in South Florida in 1981: Dr. Richard Souviron, of Coral Gables, who since 1967 has been Chief Forensic Odontologist for what is now called the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner's Office. He has Diplomate status in the American Board of Forensic Odontology and has been the President of that organization. In 1979, during the prosecution of serial killer Ted Bundy, he'd testified that victim bite marks matched an impression of Bundy's teeth. That case made him perhaps the most famous forensic dentist in the country. He'd worked together on it with Dr. Wright, at the time the Deputy Chief M.E. of Dade County.

On Walsh, had Wright consulted Souviron? No, he told me, and he knew nothing about any issues in the case. "I'm surprised that Ron Wright didn't call me in," he said. "Why they didn't call for a board-certified dentist to make an ID on the child is beyond me."

- *Were detectives present at Dr. Wright's autopsy?*

It doesn't look like it.

It's standard police procedure for detectives from the investigating agency to be present at the autopsy of a presumed homicide victim, said Bob Foley, the retired Broward Sheriff's Office crime scene detective who's helped guide me through a number of moments in this story. It's also standard for the medical examiner to document all those present. Dr. Cox did that. In the report of his examination, he listed six detectives present at the Vero Beach morgue: four from Hollywood Police (crime scene detective Ron Young, Detective Jim Gibbons, Sergeant Dennis Naylor, and later, Lieutenant



Richard Hynds), and Indian River County Sheriff's officers Sid DuBose and Don Coleman.

But we have no autopsy report from Dr. Wright, nor is there any mention elsewhere in the Broward M.E. file of detectives or anyone else present.

Detectives themselves should have documented whether they were present. In their reports, both Jack Hoffman and Ron Young listed the four Hollywood detectives present at the Vero Beach morgue. Young added that at three A.M. he took photos of the head in the presence of Gibbons, Naylor, and Cox, and later he turned over the photos to Hoffman. He signed for and took possession of the head at 12:40 P.M., and at 2:15 P.M. he delivered it to the Broward M.E.'s office where Chief Investigator D.P. Hughes signed for it. At the top of his report, Young wrote that it covered his actions up to 2:30 P.M., so it's probably safe to assume he didn't stay until four P.M. when Wright began his autopsy, which included a dissection.

Hoffman's narrative didn't say that he or anyone else attended Wright's autopsy, nor is there any mention of it elsewhere in the Hollywood Police file. He did include a later discussion he had with Wright about the autopsy's findings.

Foley estimated that in his career he'd attended at least four hundred autopsies at the Broward M.E. He recalled that someone from there called him that afternoon to ask if he would attend the Walsh autopsy although it wasn't his agency's case, but he declined because he was busy.

At a homicide trial, the first element of proof is establishing the life and death of the victim. An autopsy report and identification documents like the dental records and x-rays are discoverable for the defense. You now had to wonder if it wasn't accidental that there was never a trial.

When Hollywood declared in 2008 that Toole was guilty, Chief Wagner admitted that his conclusion was based on the same evidence Hollywood had in 1983. They could have gone to trial in the next thirteen years before Toole died in 1996, he said. But by declaring him guilty in 2008, Hollywood both "solved" the case and avoided exposure at trial.

Smiley and I ran much of this past Broward County's elected Public Defender Howard Finkelstein, who'd spent his career monitoring and speaking out against shortcomings in police and prosecutorial work. Always one for a good quote, he told us that had Toole ever been prosecuted it would have been "a defense lawyer's wet dream." Citing "mistake after mistake" and "cover up after cover up," he said "I don't think there's ever been any defense lawyer who's ever had an arsenal like this at their disposal.

"Maybe the wrong head and maybe the wrong suspect. But other than that, everything else is in place."

•

When we asked Hollywood police for the autopsy report and Adam's dental information, we also asked for:

- *The results of tests we reasoned had been done to compare DNA extracted from the skull to that in Reve Walsh's saliva;*

- *The report of the investigation they'd done in 2003 that they'd said proved Sunshine Subs didn't have a blue van—after I gave them names and phone numbers of eight people who remembered it;*
- *Joe Matthews's "independent investigation" (quoting Hollywood Chief Wagner) report which concluded Toole had killed Adam and that Wagner had seemed to rely on to close the case. In 2008 Matthews had submitted it to Wagner, who asked Mark Smith to write about it. In a December 2, 2008 letter to Chief Assistant Broward State Attorney Chuck Morton asking him to review Smith's comments, Wagner said it was his intention to exceptionally clear the case, blaming Toole, and that "I believe your office supports this position." Morton replied a week later: mentioning the state attorney's own investigation over the years, "Based on the totality of the evidence we have gathered and reviewed, we agree with your conclusion that there is 'probable cause' to arrest Ottis Toole for Adam Walsh's death." Those decisions had reversed twenty-five years of policy at both Hollywood Police and the Broward State Attorney's office. Meanwhile, Matthews's investigation, supported by John Walsh, was the only thing new regarding Toole since at best the late Nineties. But Hollywood had released neither the Matthews nor Smith documents. We also asked the state attorney for them.*

Smith had seemed a reluctant participant at the press conference on December 16, although when asked he said he agreed with the chief's conclusion. Two months before I'd seen him at a law enforcement banquet and he'd told me he was still working on the case, which surprised me, and that he had a new lead that connected to neither Toole nor Dahmer. Looking back, did Smith know then that Wagner was ready to close the case on Toole and was he was signaling to me his disagreement?

When Hollywood gave us reports regarding the DNA test and the blue van, it was an admission that they'd left them out of their 2008 release, which was supposed to contain all of the remaining public record documents in the case file.

Leaving Hollywood Police with those documents, Smiley called me, disappointed. The DNA result concluded that the skull was "consistent with being a maternal relative (e.g. a son) of Reve Walsh. These results support the identification of these remains as Adam Walsh."

But on a closer reading, DNA experts told a different story.

Jack Remus, retired from FDLE's Pensacola crime lab and now a private forensic consultant who does contract work for Jan Johnson, said "consistent with" was well short of confirmation. When I faxed him the document he pointed out that the Bode lab had tested mitochondrial DNA. Everyone's nuclear DNA is unique, unless they are part of a multiple birth. But many people can have the identical mitochondrial DNA.

Mitochondrial DNA is matrilineal. Mothers pass it on exactly to their children, except that single-marker mutations occur on average every seven hundred years, or thirty-five generations. Therefore, the found child, as Bode wrote, could be Adam Walsh. But "consistent with being a maternal relative of Reve Walsh" meant he could also be a cousin. Or a cousin way, way off to the side, descended from the same matriarch who first had that mutation maybe around the year 1300.

Mitochondrial DNA is commonly used to determine genealogy. Labs charge about \$150 to test it, and then you can Internet search for distant kin. To make positive identifications, Remus said, crime labs use nuclear DNA.

If other strong evidence indicated the skull was Adam, Remus said, he would have been more comfortable with the result. “If this is in a vacuum, it just says Reve is a possible maternal ancestor.”

Why wasn’t a nuclear DNA test ever tried? he asked.

Since the report was addressed to Dr. George Duncan, the longtime head of the DNA section of the Broward Sheriff’s Office crime lab, I asked him. Duncan said the test was his idea—but not as a means to verify the identification of the head as Adam. Because the Walsh family had asked the Broward Medical Examiner for the remains so they could bury them, Duncan thought they should first get a DNA profile of the skull in case the rest of the child’s body was ever found.

Duncan quickly concurred that the mitochondrial DNA test did not prove that the remains were Reve Walsh’s child. All it could say for certain, he said, was a negative: it didn’t exclude the possibility that the remains were not her child.

For a positive ID, nuclear DNA would have been a much better choice, he agreed, but Bode had determined that since the remains were then more than twenty years post mortem they would be unlikely to yield nuclear DNA, so they didn’t try.

Remus didn’t like that explanation. He thought they could have tried nuclear DNA regardless; other labs commonly succeed in extracting it from old bone or tooth matter. Duncan’s lab at the Broward Sheriff’s Office could have done it.

By getting Reve Walsh to give a saliva sample, even if the DNA idea began as Duncan said, it became as well an attempt to verify the found child as Adam. This although at no time in the previous twenty-two years had anyone publicly questioned the original identification.

Did this happen incidentally, and the Walshes went along with it? Or maybe was there always a question among insiders that the identification was weak, and here was the first opportunity to run a DNA comparison? Maybe the Walshes had suggested doing the comparison.

Or maybe this wasn’t an honest attempt to learn if the found child was Adam. Maybe it was supposed to leave a trail that looked like an honest attempt.

Also notice the apparent absence of a DNA sample from John Walsh. For a nuclear DNA test match, the lab wouldn’t have required his sample but it would have been helpful. Its absence suggests that early on, the lab dismissed the idea of doing nuclear DNA and planned on doing only mitochondrial, for which just the mother’s sample was needed.

As for the report of the blue van investigation: There was little in it Sergeant Scott Pardon hadn’t told me in 2003. Ken Hauptert, Jr. had remembered Dahmer but not a blue van, and the pizza shop owner (who I have called Larry, not his real name) said he remembered neither. But they weren’t among the eight who’d told me they had remembered a blue van. Pardon had told me he’d have a detective call Darlene Hill and Ken Hauptert, Sr., two of the eight, but as I already knew, and the report proved, no one did.

The report concluded: “Although Jeffrey Dahmer was present in the Miami Beach area during the time of the abduction, this investigation has not established any link between the abduction/murder of Adam Walsh and Jeffrey Dahmer.”

Detective John Kerns had done the investigation. He had since retired, and when Smiley and I approached his house we found him outside. He answered our questions with a no comment, and when David kept on, he told us, “You can leave now.”

As for Adam’s dental records, the police said they’d already disclosed them in their 1996 release but didn’t say exactly where. In fact, they had not released them then or at any other time.

Regarding the Joe Matthews document, we got the same answer from both Hollywood and the Broward state attorney: they didn’t keep a copy for their files.

As for Mark Smith’s memorandum, they both said they couldn’t find it.

Smiley asked Barbara Peterson, head of the Florida office of the First Amendment Foundation, in Tallahassee, for a comment that we used in our *Herald* story:

“That’s stunning that they would make the decision to close a case based on documents they now claim are not public record. If they were allowed to view the records, they then become public records subject to disclosure and retention under public records laws.”

We called Matthews at his home and office and left messages, unanswered.

Chuck Morton denied us an interview but emailed us a statement defending his 2008 action supporting Hollywood’s closure of the case on Toole:

“The material and reports in Hollywood Police Department’s investigation of Toole contains substantial and documented investigative information that tracks Toole’s whereabouts and his opportunity to have committed the crime. This was neatly and skillfully pointed out in an investigative file created by retired Detective Joe Matthews and presented for my review.”

Morton’s reference to Toole’s whereabouts reflected what Wagner had said at the press conference after he spoke of agreeing with “the ultimate conclusion of [Matthews’s] independent investigation”: “...with the acknowledgment that our investigation placed Ottis Toole in Hollywood, Florida at or near the time of Adam’s abduction...”

That seemed like a reference to the statements of Heidi and Arlene Mayer. In 2007, on camera for ABC *Primetime*, Matthews had said he’d developed important evidence on Toole but wouldn’t say what it was. Off camera, he mentioned the Mayers.

In 1981, Heidi was twelve, the daughter of Arlene. In 1983, just after Toole’s photo first made the newspapers Arlene had called Hollywood police to say they recognized him as the man who’d followed them from a parking lot into Kmart on U.S. 441 near Hollywood Boulevard, thirty blocks from Hollywood Mall, between 6:30-7 P.M. on either the Friday or Saturday before Adam was taken. Arlene had told Jack Hoffman those were the only times of the week they went shopping back then. The man they identified as Toole had asked Heidi if she wanted to go for a ride in a shopping cart. Heidi screamed and the man fled. Arlene was in a different aisle and didn’t see it.

Friday evening July 24 was out; Hoffman had documented Toole in Newport News, Va. that morning, discharged from a hospital psychiatric ward. From there he’d bummed

a ride to the Salvation Army and got a check made out to Greyhound for the amount of a ticket home to Jacksonville.

It seemed Toole had boarded the bus Friday and arrived home Saturday; the question was exactly when. Hollywood is about four hundred miles south of Jacksonville, could Toole have made it there by seven P.M.? In 1983, when Hoffman had confronted him about it, Toole answered inconsistently, as usual:

**HOFFMAN:** “Do you remember when you boarded the bus if it was still light out or was it nighttime when you left Newport News?”

**TOOLE:** “I was kinda, kind late in the evening. I’m pretty sure it was late in the evening.”

Hoffman asked when he arrived at the terminal in Jacksonville. “Do you remember if it was morning, afternoon or evening when you arrived?”

Toole: “Damn I wish I could remember the time. I ain’t trying to beat it in my head.”

Hoffman had called Greyhound to get their 1981 bus schedules from Newport News to Jacksonville and shared that with Toole: from Newport News, the first route after dark Friday left at 10:50 P.M and arrived at 4:20 P.M. Saturday. The next earlier bus left at 6:30 P.M., still in daylight (in July), and arrived in Jacksonville at 10:25 A.M. Saturday.

**HOFFMAN:** “Did you have any money saved up back here when you arrived back in Jacksonville?”

**TOOLE:** “I was flat broke when I got back to Jacksonville.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Flat out broke?”

**TOOLE:** “I was flat broke when I got back to Jacksonville.”

Asked where he went first, he said, “I’m dead sure I went dead to Southeastern [the roofing company where he sometimes worked], but my wife she was staying with a woman named Nancy lived up Iona Street.” Given those two possibilities, Toole said, “It definitely had to be one or the other.”

Toole realized the logic that since he had no money when he arrived, he couldn’t have driven to South Florida and taken Adam on Monday morning.

“Shh, that’s why I’m tryin’ to give you all these statements, I’m not really sure that I really did kill Adam Walsh.” Moments later, he added, “So only thing, if I really didn’t kill Adam Walsh I would have to have been working the Monday on the 27th.”

At that point, Hoffman and Jacksonville Detective Buddy Terry leaned on Toole hard.

**HOFFMAN:** “You told detectives from Louisiana, you told detectives from Brevard County, and you told Buddy here that you killed Adam Walsh. Now I can document you on the 24rd and the 25th, all I have to do is verify two more days, the 26th and the 27th of July. You said you didn’t travel for quite some time.”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Is that the truth?”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Then how can you explain being in Hollywood on July 27th?”

Toole offered no answer.

Minutes later, Hoffman pressed, “Okay, and how did you come up with Adam Walsh’s murder? How did you confess to that and tell us some, some ah, facts of the murder that only the police and the medical examiner knew about?”

Toole: “Maybe like you said, I did, I did hear it on the television.”

A moment later, Terry chipped in: “Ottis, were you lying today? Are you sure you didn’t kill Adam Walsh? Now come on now, let’s don’t do this way. Look at me. Look at me. Ottis...”

**TOOLE:** “My mind ain’t gonna take much more of this shit.” (A transcript note says Toole was crying.)

**TERRY:** “Just tell me the truth, that’s all I want to know.”

**TOOLE:** “No, I didn’t kill Adam Walsh.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Are you sure or you’re not sure?”

**TOOLE:** “I’m sure I didn’t.”

Minutes later:

**TERRY:** “You know Ottis, look at me. And I ain’t fussin at you, okay. We’ve been pretty truthful with each other, hadn’t we?”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**TERRY:** “Have you ever lied to me? Huh?”

**TOOLE:** “I don’t really know if I have at all now.”

**TERRY:** “You’re digging yourself a hole, Ottis, and you’re not gonna get out of it. You know that. You ain’t gonna get out of it. You know what you’re doing. You want me to tell you what you’re doin’?”

**TOOLE:** “What?”

**TERRY:** “You’re trying to go to a mental hospital. Didn’t I tell you I would help you get some help?”

**TOOLE (crying):** “I don’t believe that shit.”

**TERRY:** “You don’t believe me? Huh?”

**TOOLE:** “I do.”

**TERRY:** “Huh, what? If you don’t believe it there’s no need me talking to you any more, is there.”

**TOOLE:** “My fucking life, I, I can’t stand it!!!”

After a discussion between Terry and Toole out of Hoffman’s earshot, twelve minutes later the interview tape restarted. The tone was completely different—and so was the story.

**HOFFMAN:** “Okay, now in your own words you tell me and Detective Terry what time you got on the bus, what time you think you arrived here in Jacksonville, and what you did from that day on.”

**TOOLE:** "I'd say it was eleven, eleven-thirty in the day time."

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay, you're getting this time from the schedule that I showed you that the bus company was able to furnish for you with."

**TOOLE:** "Yes."

**HOFFMAN:** "Alright, so now you're on the bus from Newport News and you arrive in Jacksonville sometime on July 25th, 1981, that being a Saturday. Correct?"

**TOOLE:** "Yeah that's correct. That's right."

**HOFFMAN:** "Now take it from that day, what you did from the time that you departed the bus until whatever."

Toole said as soon as he got off the bus he went to the roofing company, where his 1971 Cadillac was parked. "I had a set of keys to the gate," he said. "I go in and get my car."

Here Toole is unclear and his interviewers didn't have him clarify himself.

**TERRY:** "Did you have spare keys in the car?"

**TOOLE:** "Yeah, I had spare keys. I always had a spare key made for every car I had."

**HOFFMAN:** "Do you keep it with you when you travel?"

**TOOLE:** "At my mother's house. It was burned but it wasn't pushed down... I had some money buried in a tin can underneath the house. I had three hundred dollars, over three hundred dollars in the can. Cause I always had hidden money, different times when I didn't wanna tote money on me, underneath the house."

**HOFFMAN:** "Alright. What did you do then?"

**TOOLE:** "Well, I got the money, went down to the station, I filled the tank up." From there, he drove Interstate 95 south.

A bit later, Hoffman asked what time that was.

**TOOLE:** "Oh, shoot, that was still, that wasn't too, wasn't too far up in the day."

**HOFFMAN:** "Was it morning?"

**TOOLE:** "Yeah, it was pretty well in the morning."

Toole said he bought gas off the interstate in Daytona Beach, passed the Indian River, and switched roads to the Florida Turnpike.

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay. Where did you end up?"

**TOOLE:** "I ended up in Miami at Biscayne Bay. Cause I always go down there and turn tricks down there."

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay. How many hours do you think driving it would take you from Jacksonville to Biscayne Bay?"

**TOOLE:** "Oh about, I'd say about eight or nine hours, somewhere in there."

“Biscayne Bay” sounded like Bayfront Park or adjacent Bicentennial Park, on the east side of Biscayne Blvd. next to downtown Miami, notorious then as after-dark places for homosexual solicitation. Toole said he turned a number of tricks. Hoffman asked how long he stayed there.

**TOOLE:** “I stayed overnight and I left. I filled up the car the next morning and left.” From there he said he drove northbound.

**HOFFMAN:** “What would have been your first stop after you came back northbound?”

**TOOLE:** “Fort Lauderdale.”

**HOFFMAN:** “What did you do when you got to Fort Lauderdale?”

**TOOLE:** “Well I—I rode around a little bit and I went dead to the mall, I did.”

Hoffman asked what time it was when he arrived at the mall, meaning the Hollywood Mall.

Toole: “It was before, it was before noontime, it was.” The story continued with how he saw Adam, lured him into his car, killed him, chopped off his head and disposed of his body parts.

Which version of Toole to believe, the crying or the compliant?

To believe his second story, that he killed Adam, the first problem was that Toole never mentioned the incident at Kmart in Hollywood, which could only have been on Saturday by seven P.M. After Toole said he went straight from Jacksonville to downtown Miami, the detectives never directly asked him about it.

But even if Toole did stop on the way in Hollywood and didn’t mention it, could his timeline have allowed him to be there around seven?

It would have been tight. He had to have arrived in Jacksonville Saturday morning at 10:25, not 4:20 in the afternoon. (To add to the confusion, when Toole had answered “eleven, eleven-thirty in the day time,” it sounded like he was saying that’s when he arrived on Saturday, but actually Hoffman had asked two questions, what time did he board in Newport News and when did he get to Jacksonville. Hoffman never clarified him on that.)

Toole said it took him 8-9 hours to drive to Miami. 10:25 A.M. plus eight hours makes about 6:30 P.M. But first he’d spent time walking from the bus station to the roofing company. On Google Maps, I measured that distance as 4.3 miles, which would be an hour walk at a good pace. He also said he was at his mother’s house, where he’d dug up the can with money. I measured that distance, from the roofing company, as eight miles.

Although Toole said he was carrying the keys to the roofing company gate, he wasn’t clear whether he’d also been carrying the Cadillac keys. If he was, he could have driven the eight miles in 10-15 minutes. But he seemed to indicate that those keys were at his mother’s house. He wasn’t asked, but did he walk the eight miles to his mother’s house (two hours), dig up the Cadillac key and the money—and walk back to the roofing company to get the car? That would be at least four more hours walking (for a total of five), plus a few minutes for digging, in the July noonday Florida heat, no less. Then it



would be about 3:30-4, which contradicts Toole's answer that it was still morning when he got on the road to Miami.

Alternatively, even though he said he walked from the bus station to the roofing company, did he actually walk first to his mother's house—3.6 miles—to get the keys and then to the roofing company—another eight miles—to get the car? That would be about three hours walking, plus time to dig, which would make it about 1:30-2 in the afternoon.

However, the biggest problem with Toole's story was the missing day. He said he arrived in Jacksonville Saturday, drove to Miami same day, arrived in the evening, slept overnight in his car and then went to Fort Lauderdale and the mall before noon. But that would make it Sunday. Adam went missing on Monday. On the other hand, in his very first version, before he'd mentioned Miami, when Hoffman asked how long he'd been in the Fort Lauderdale area, he'd answered, "I say maybe a night and a day and then the next day." Hoffman never clarified if that meant two nights. But it could also have meant a day and a night and then the next day.

When Wagner said that "our investigation" had placed Toole in Hollywood around the time of Adam's abduction, he contradicted the opinions of the original detectives who had taken the Mayers' statements but had disregarded them as important witnesses. The Mayers had described Toole as "slender" or "thin build". A 1983 psychological evaluation said he weighed two hundred pounds. And although Matthews told Geoff Martz that the Mayers had identified Toole's car, the only description Hoffman and Hickman got in 1983 was Heidi's that it was medium-sized, unknown color or make.

As well, Matthews had told Martz that he disbelieved the Dahmer theory because "you can't rely on eyewitnesses."

Later, Willis took it upon himself to sue Chief Wagner, Broward State Attorney Michael Satz, and Matthews personally for not producing Matthews's report as a public record. In a conference call with Willis's Miami attorney Tom Julin (the lead plaintiffs' counsel in the public records suit against Hollywood Police that first opened the file in 1996), Matthews said he'd deleted his electronic copy and given his only print copy to his co-author, who'd taken it to Cuba.

In a response, the attorney for Hollywood Police wrote that Wagner considered Matthews's investigation—an unpublished book manuscript, he said—a "regurgitation" of Hollywood's facts. Wagner didn't want to read it but Matthews insisted, so Wagner gave it to Smith. It was so useless, Wagner said, that they disposed of it.

Closing the case, Wagner claimed, was his idea, exclusive of Matthews. In January 2008, just after he took office as interim police chief, he'd mailed John Walsh a letter saying he intended to do it because there was enough evidence against Toole.

Smiley and I asked for that letter. It was only a paragraph, Wagner introducing himself to Walsh and offering his services and prayers.

Wagner had said at the press conference that his determination of Toole's guilt was "consistent with the opinions of investigators past and present." Apparently they did not include the previous lead detectives. When we asked Ron Hickman what he thought of the Toole theory his opinion was crisp: "Bogus." In 1997 Hoffman had told me the same and Mark Smith had told me only that he couldn't rule out Toole. Also, I found quotes

Lieutenant J.B. Smith had said in 1984 to a national conference of detectives investigating Toole and Henry Lee Lucas:

“In the four or five months that we have been looking at Toole, we can’t confirm one thing he is saying about our case. My opinion, as is most everyone else from the city of Hollywood, is that he did not do this killing.

“With the information that we have, contrary to popular belief, we aren’t even going to present this case at this time. We do not feel that we could present it in good faith or even try to get a state attorney to accept this.

“I do want to warn you that if you are looking at Toole as a suspect, be darn sure that you do your homework.”

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The *Miami Herald* story nearly filled the top of a Sunday front page and did fill two entire pages inside the paper:

#### WHO REALLY KILLED ADAM WALSH?

*Maybe it was Ottis Toole, as police say.*

*But more signs point to Jeffrey Dahmer.*

And the sidebars:

The elusive report that stated the case against Ottis Toole  
*When they closed the Adam Walsh investigation, authorities  
by a John Walsh confidant. They didn't keep a copy.*

Another hitch: missing autopsy  
*The Walsh case was hampered by various problems, including  
a missing autopsy report and a glitch in identifying the remains.*

When David Smiley appeared the next afternoon on MSNBC, the anchor asked him for John Walsh’s opinion. Smiley answered that earlier that morning Walsh had appeared on the *Today* show but wasn’t asked about it.

Moments after Smiley went off air, the MSNBC producer forwarded him a statement from *America’s Most Wanted’s* publicist, Avery Mann, who when Smiley had asked him in advance of the story for Walsh’s comment, hadn’t responded:

“Mr. Walsh is not discussing anything related to his son’s case. The case has been closed and Ottis Toole was named as the only suspect.”

And after that, neither David nor I got another request to appear on national television.

Of all the news media and Internet sites that either rewrote or linked to the *Herald* story, only one source boldly stated what was obvious. That was the *Globe* tabloid. On its front page above the masthead was the headline:

New Bombshell Evidence

## JOHN WALSH KIDNAP SON ALIVE!

And then across two pages inside the paper:

### LITTLE ADAM ALIVE!

*Cops wrongly identified severed head as Most Wanted host  
John Walsh's son—and now have lost vital CSI clues*

No, they knew nothing of A.W., he wasn't in the *Herald* story, the *Globe's* source was "Experts who claim," and it added that the case was "Just like Jaycee Dugard," the California girl who'd gone missing at eleven years old but eighteen years later in 2009 was discovered alive in her abductor's custody.

Actually, after ALIVE, had the *Globe* used question marks, they were spot on, and their quotes were pretty good:

"Everything we think we know about Adam's kidnapping is now in question," said a retired FBI agent. "With missing files and evidence, we may never know what happened.

"By closing the books and blaming everything on a convenient suspect, authorities may be withholding one important factor—that the skull never belonged to little Adam in the first place. Adam Walsh might still be alive somewhere.

"We've seen modern cases of children abducted for years who end up coming back to their families. So it's possible that if Adam Walsh is still out there, he may find his way back home one day."

Which suggested another question mark: on even the smallest chance that Adam Walsh was in fact still alive—where were the Walshes? As Darlene Hill told me, had it been her child who'd been abducted and declared dead but there was new published information that the child was possibly misidentified—if she'd first read it in the middle of the night she wouldn't have hesitated to call me right then or gotten in her car or caught the first plane so she could drop on my doorstep and demand from me everything. And gotten the police involved.

But not John and Reve Walsh. His statement for the national news implied that this was a crackpot annoyance. If they had the police or anyone else working on it behind the scenes, no one contacted me.

As well, no one came forward to dispute that the autopsy report was lost, or any other part of the *Herald* story.

For the three months I worked on the story for the *Herald* I did not communicate with A.W. or let him know what I was doing. Only on the Saturday morning before it ran did I call him. By the time he called me back that evening it was already online.

I got a big *Wow!*

I brought him up to date. I had a report of Reve Walsh's DNA but it was mitochondrial, not nuclear. But I said there was something else in the Hollywood file I was trying to get that would allow for a comparison that could prove he was Adam. I didn't tell him what.

While re-reviewing the case file, I'd found a crime scene bureau checklist document that at the bottom read:

“Abduction occurred on July 27 81—search cont. until head of victim was located on 8-10-81. Scene at Vero Beach handled by ID Young. Victim’s bedroom processed for victim’s fingerprints on 8-4-81 by ID Hanlon and Young.”

Walsh in his book had also mentioned fingerprints. When Reve gave away Adam’s bike to a neighbor child, she’d had to clean it off first. “The police had dusted everything for prints, apparently with a firehose. There wasn’t anything that wasn’t completely covered with a sooty black powder.”

Fingerprints do not change during a lifetime, Jan Johnson told me. She was an expert in reading them, and if I could get copies of those latent prints and get A.W. to do a fingerprint card—police stations offer that service to people needing them to apply for jobs—she could tell if they matched.

Six weeks after I asked Hollywood, they produced a copy of the latents. I told A.W.: fingerprints. I’d deliberately put off meeting him for all this time. He agreed to meet the next afternoon at the closest police station to him that did public fingerprinting.

That was a good sign. In my mind, regarding him being Adam there were three possibilities: either he was conning me—which was out once I had his fingerprint card; he was conning himself, as in he was self-delusional; or he was Adam Walsh.

When he saw me, he offered a hug embrace.

He was okay.

As he’d been on the phone, he was easygoing. He had a soft face. I’d told him I was going to bring a camera and he joked that I should have brought a baseball cap and bat, as props.

Funny was another good sign.

All in all, I found him functional, not delusional. He related perfectly well. It was his story that was weird.

Could I tell from the six-year-old’s picture if he was Adam? At the end of four hours together, standing by his not-new truck, I thought I glimpsed a momentary gleam in his eye that matched the one in the little boy. I told him that. Was it just me?

I left feeling that the chance of him being Adam was that much more possible. That night I told Billy Capshaw I would be surprised, and very disappointed, if his fingerprints did not match Hollywood’s latents.

Here was the case for him: nobody had ever publicly doubted that the found child was Adam. He insisted it was someone else, and when I’d gotten the records I’d discovered all those problems with the positive ID. Then came the denials or non-responses for interviews by Ronald Wright, Chad Wagner, Mark Smith, Chuck Morton, Marshall Berger, John Walsh and Joe Matthews.

From his descriptions of Dahmer, Billy was satisfied that A.W. had actually encountered him. A.W. said Dahmer had an odd laugh and walked like he was going to pounce. Also, after Dahmer would savage him, he’d be apologetic and sweet or loving. Those were Billy’s experiences of him too. A.W. could not have gotten that by seeing Dahmer on TV either appear in court or do the few interviews he did.

“When we were talking, it was like we were reminiscing about someone we both knew,” Billy said. “The confidence, the cunning, the change in his personality in less than

a second. The way he turned from evil to nice. He had it right on the nose. There's no way he could have known that without knowing him."

Just talking to A.W. was "chilling" for Billy. "I know the way he was. And so does [A.W.]"

On their fifty-eight fingerprint cards, Hollywood had about a hundred latent lifts but most were poor or smudgy. On the back of each card was a description, date, and the signature of the officer taking it. They'd come from a window ledge, a Darth Vader toy chest, a bike, a tray, a pencil sharpener, a pencil caddy, a clock, and the cover of a Play-Doh container.

With a small magnifying glass I thought I saw five possible matches.

When Jan got them she thought two of my five were promising plus one other. There were "several similarities," she said. She scanned, enlarged, and cleaned up the best prints before making final comparisons.

And then the verdict:

"There's no ID," she said. Enlarged, it was "pretty obvious it wasn't him." Similarities aside, you compare relationships between areas, and she couldn't make a confirmation.

The latent prints hadn't previously been identified, so they weren't necessarily Adam's. Jan did think six of them were child-sized, implying that others may have been of adults. But even the best were less than thirty percent of a full print.

Months later, I had Bob Foley, another crime scene and fingerprint expert friend, try to make comparisons, with the same result. "Most of the prints are horrible," he said. It didn't mean A.W. didn't match them, he said, only that he wasn't able to confirm it.

A.W. was extremely disappointed. When I told him that he might not be whom he says, he said, "I'm not wrong. I'm Adam Walsh." At the same time the results didn't entirely surprise him, he said, because his torture had left his body in such terrible condition. "My hands were being mutilated, Art. They were just destroying my body, for fun. And profit." When he was found, he said, he had little skin left—just exposed tendons, infected muscular tissue and bones. The doctors had done skin transplants that could have included fingerprints from a corpse, possibly one of the children Dahmer and Toole had killed.

"A great deal of medical attention was made to keep me alive and keep me looking halfway normal," he said. He compared it to making a mural out of six million matchsticks.

He thought that could explain why sections of the latents seemed to match but in totality they didn't. He said other children were rescued at the same time and that they had similar surgeries and transplants as he—and as well were placed with other families and given new identities.

This was, of course, another moment when I was ready to walk away from him. I had already stayed with his story far longer than any other journalist I could think of would have.

Likely this was more a reflection on me but I didn't.

A.W. repeated something he'd told me before, that John and Reve had seen him *after* his torture, after Adam Walsh was declared dead. A.W. said he was traumatized, in

terrible pain, bandaged up, and could only see them through a single eye that was open. He couldn't speak. Every part of his body was mutilated—his hands, feet, face, everywhere but below his left shoulder, in back of his heart. To deal with the pain he'd shut out everything. He said it was at a hospital in Miami (but later said it might have been in Europe). Both John and Reve were crying, and he remembered his father coming over and kissing him, saying goodbye.

A.W. reasoned that when they saw him they didn't think he would survive.

I asked him if that might have been an invented memory. He insisted it was not.

Here was the toughest question to answer: If A.W. was remembering right and the Walshes did see their son after he was declared dead, why would they walk away and later let him be placed with a new family with a new identity?

If that happened, I suggested to Billy, that way the child could be brainwashed of his past—not in a negative context, but so he could forget the torture he had suffered, or at least wouldn't have to constantly recall and dwell on it. Living under a different identity he could separate himself from what had happened to Adam. A.W. had said he'd been put in an exclusively Spanish-speaking home and after a year had to relearn English. After a while, with a new life, a new name and no reinforcement of the past, he just forgot.

Plus, had he remained as Adam Walsh after the positive ID he'd have returned from the dead, figuratively of course, which would have brought him even more enduring attention. In the best interests of the child, you could understand why the Walshes might have made that decision, quite a heroic one.

On the ledger's not-so-heroic side, the medical examiner(s) would have been exposed for an incorrect identification. It would not soon have been forgotten.

Still, to consider these ideas made me think I was off the deep end myself—as I'd joked to A.W., one of us is wacky and I'm not sure whom. Billy said, "He sounds like he's crazy, but he also sounds like he could be telling the truth."

In his first phone call with me, A.W. had told me about how on a hallucinogen he'd been given without his awareness, his acquaintances had "extracted" his kidnapping and torture experience from him and were able to address him as Adam. Billy, who after Dahmer terrorized him had undergone two decades of psychological treatment, and therefore knew much of the literature, understood that when trauma or abuse is suffered in childhood, a child's mind can sublimate or disassociate from it—that is, forget it or not be psychologically affected by it, but it can later manifest—that is, be recalled in some manner, often in late adolescence or early adulthood.

With only a dim sense of being Adam Walsh, about four months before he contacted me, while surfing the Internet he found the age progression image of what Adam might look like at thirty-one. His memories then began to recur.

I told Billy, even if A.W.'s story was craziest thing we'd ever heard, it was the only coherent solution that encompassed everything we so far knew. The only key we had that fit in the keyhole.

ALTHOUGH DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION was the most important information denied to me because Wright's autopsy report was absent, the next most important was findings regarding the cause of death. However, I was able to glean some of that from investigative files and newspaper reports. That led me to three questions:

- *How long had the found child been dead?*
- *How long was it in the water?*
- *How long was it at the surface?*

Jack Hoffman wrote in his report:

“Dr. Wright after examining the severed head indicated that there were five (5) distinct blows to the back of the neck and lower portion (rear) of the skull. These blows were inflicted by a very sharp bladed instrument at least 5 1/4 inches in length. Dr. Wright further indicated that the severing of the head appeared to be post mortem. When Dr. Wright examined the inside of the skull he discovered the brain matter to be liquefied. This finding would be consistent with the time of death being at least ten days or more prior to the finding of the head. The outer epidermis did show signs of slippage and the right side of the face revealed trauma. The severed portion of the head had signs of putrefication setting in. After examining the head Dr. Wright indicated that there were no other injuries inflicted to the head.”

Adding a few more details, some contradictory to the above, was an unsigned Hollywood police document divided in two columns that had tried to match things Toole said about how he'd killed Adam with Wright's findings. These were in Wright's column:

The victim was decapitated laying face down.

The victim's head was chopped off close to the skull.

The victim received blows to the face around the eyes and had a fracture to the nose.

Dr. Wright's findings are that the instrument used was probably a machete type tool.

Dr. Wright advised that the perpetrator had to use two hands on the machete for the necessary force.

Dr. Wright's findings are that the perpetrator had to be right handed and was probably decapitating the victim from the victim's right side.

The Toole theory had the head in the water for fourteen days. On the occasions he'd admitted the murder, he said he'd driven home to Jacksonville on the same day he took Adam. On the way he'd decapitated him and a few miles further north threw his head in the canal. My working Dahmer theory had the head in the water for three and a half days, based on the two Publix truckers who saw the blue van on the side of the turnpike within a mile of where the head later would be found.

Here are the press reports:

Wednesday August 12th's *Sun-Tattler* bannered: “Adam may have been dead since he disappeared”. It quoted Dr. Wright: “It's too early to tell for certain... but it appears that the child may have been dead that long.”

On the same afternoon the *Miami News* quoted a Hollywood police spokesman: “The medical examiner's estimate is that the boy had been dead about 10 days.” They also quoted the chief investigator for the Broward Medical Examiner's office, D.P. Hughes, who said “it was already clear that the head had been in the water ‘for days.’”

Also the same day, the *Fort Lauderdale News* quoted Lieutenant Hynds that police thought the child had not been killed where the head was found: “There had to be a massive amount of blood lost when the head was severed and we didn’t find any (blood) near the canal.” They quoted Wright saying that the head was in an “advanced state” of decomposition and that it had “areas of discoloration” although he wasn’t sure if they were bruises caused by a beating or something else.

Thursday August 13, the *Miami Herald* reported Wright said the child was likely killed within five days after he disappeared: “From decomposition changes, he died and was probably put in the water about the same time—probably longer than 10 days ago.” The *Sun-Tattler* reported that Wright called the head “terribly decomposed.” In the *Fort Lauderdale News*, Hynds said that the Broward Medical Examiner had since come to believe that Adam was dead for “at least 10 days and possibly as long as 14 days.” And the *Miami News* reported that although Wright thought it was a homicide, “it appeared that an animal, possibly an alligator, had chewed on the head,” he said.

After that the press reported no further revelations from the medical examiner. On August 28 the *Miami Herald* reported they were “stymied.” Said Hughes, “We’re at a dead end. We’ve stopped. There’s a limit to what you can do.” One problem, he said, was that water samples from the canal had shown abnormally high levels of anaerobe bacteria. That “speed[ed] decomposition, making it impossible to determine an exact time of death.”

On August 31 the *Sun-Tattler* quoted Wright that heavy rains—normal in the summer for subtropical South Florida—had diluted bacteriological clues in the canal as well as raised its water level since the head had been discovered. He was “reasonably grim” about his prospects of getting conclusive scientific proof of a time of death.

The same story consulted Dade County’s Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Charles Wetli, who was not involved in the investigation: “As far as the time of death and all that kind of thing, it’s going to be very impossible to tell anything like that. You can give an idea within a very broad range, like it was in the past week or two. But with the head being in the water, you’ve got the problem of turtles and crabs. All this is going to make it extremely difficult to determine anything within any range of accuracy.”

On January 24, 1982, *Tropic* magazine in the Sunday *Miami Herald* reported “an autopsy of the head revealed this much: there were no narcotics in Adam’s bloodstream at the time of death. He was dead before his head was severed with a heavy-bladed instrument. The killer hacked more than once.”

Apparently *Tropic* never saw the autopsy report narrative, either.

Broward State Attorney’s Office Investigator Phil Mundy, who believed the Toole theory, found other consultants to weigh in, using autopsy photos and Cox’s report but not, apparently, any report that Wright had done.

The first, in 1996, was Dr. Joe Davis, then retired, previously the noted chief medical examiner of Dade County. Wright had been Davis’s deputy chief from 1975-80. Davis both agreed with and disputed some of Wright’s earlier findings:

In a memo Mundy wrote of their discussion, Davis agreed that the death occurred before decapitation, that the severing instrument was a machete or some other blade, and that the child was struck from behind and was likely in a prone position. But he disagreed that it must have taken two hands and that there was any facial trauma.



But most significantly, Mundy wrote that Davis said “Head could have been in the water for two weeks, but that would be surprising. There are many variables.”

In 1998 Mundy consulted another expert, University of Florida forensic entomologist Dr. Jason Byrd, who wrote a report in which he expressed opinions on how long the head had been at the surface and how long it had taken to surface. The “conspicuous lack of insect activity” on the head indicated it had surfaced at most twenty-four hours before its discovery. That was consistent with what Jack Hoffman had gotten from Robert Hughes, one of the two men who’d found the head. He said that on the evening before, driving his motorboat, he’d passed by the same area and had not seen the head. He suggested that his propeller had stirred it to the surface.

Mundy wrote that Dr. William Rodriguez, the medical examiner for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, agreed with Dr. Byrd and added that the absence of damage by carrion crows suggested the time at the surface was if anything less than twenty-four hours.

I found a few other opinions on that on the Internet:

An entomology study guide said that in temperate regions, blowflies “will usually arrive within fifteen minutes of death” and lay their eggs, which take about a day to hatch. S. Erin Presnell, a South Carolina medical school professor, and Stephen J. Cina, the deputy chief medical examiner of Broward County, wrote that “Blowflies usually lay eggs in temperatures higher than 50 degrees F in daylight hours within hours of death when they have access to bodies,” and that the eggs resemble Parmesan cheese.

In 1997 Dr. Wright had told me he’d once seen eggs on a body as early as a half-hour after death—and that there were no eggs on Adam Walsh (the found child).

Did the “conspicuous lack of insect activity” mean that the head had only been at the surface between a few minutes and a few hours before it was found?

A retired Florida medical examiner who didn’t want to be named but was helping me with background information suggested another possibility: The first handler of the head inadvertently may have rolled it over in the water and the eggs or maggots washed off. “There’s nothing holding the eggs to the surface,” he said.

Now to how long the head spent under the water. Dr. Byrd:

“I found the soft tissues in this case to be rather well preserved in comparison to my other experiences with decomposing human remains. Typically human remains exposed to the environment for a maximum duration of 14 days (as suspected in this case) have undergone extensive decomposition.”

However, he added, submersion in water slows decomposition by half. (That was also the opinion of well-known University of Florida forensic anthropologist Dr. William R. Maples.) “Therefore there are periodic reports of human remains being rather well preserved after prolonged submersion intervals.”

Cox’s report had indicated total skin slippage, and from viewing the photos Byrd agreed. From his experience he applied a rule of thumb: in bodies found in Florida in July and August, slippage begins at post mortem day 3-4 and is complete by day 6-7. Since slippage was total, and “as a general rule” submersion in water slows decomposition by half, he could conclude, in his opinion, that the head had been submerged 6-14 days with 12-14 days “a distinct possibility”.

Byrd's conclusion resolved the issue for Mundy. He wrote: "The results of this study into the condition of the remains discovered on August 10, 1981 at mile marker 130 appear to satisfy the concerns expressed on this subject."

Here was another opinion I got in 1997 (and already reported): Jack Hoffman said "Nobody believes that head was in the water for two weeks. I've handled lots of decomposed bodies. It's unbelievable what water, heat, and animals do to a body."

As I'd also noted earlier, in 1997 I saw Hollywood Police's photos of the found child that became public record in 1996 but they kept at the police department in an album. I was surprised because it hadn't looked especially decomposed. On the face were patches of skin that looked bleached-white, but the head hadn't looked bloated. John Walsh, in his book describing when Monahan saw it, called the head's skin "taut, like a thin sheathing of plastic". (At the time I saw it I hadn't considered that it might not be Adam, nor had I thought, absolutely, you could tell it was Adam.)

I found this quote from Hoffman, in 1984 to a police convention investigating the confessions of Toole and Henry Lee Lucas: "When we looked at the head it was in very good condition."

Let me compare this to Flo Ella Miller, her body discovered in a drainage canal. She'd last been heard from four days earlier. Her autopsy report says the police officer who found her thought she was black. But she was white. At the Broward medical examiner's office I saw a crime scene picture of her. The mistake was understandable. In four days or less that's how much her body had decomposed—in the same summer heat and in similar water as the found child.

Billy Capshaw said his brother hunts deer by following them to where they drink. When he kills them he skins them on site and disposes of their heads in a creek. Sometimes they float, sometimes they sink, "it depends," his brother told him, uncertain on what it depended on. On occasions he'd returned a week later and discovered the head on the surface, much bloated.

If the found child identified as Adam had been underwater for most or all of two weeks, why wouldn't it too have bloated? The issue seemed to be, would submersion for a lengthy time in a fresh water canal in the summer preserve or destroy and bloat a head?

Was it possible that the head had never been under the canal surface? That it only floated, it had never sunk? Or in another alternative, to follow the Dahmer theory that the Publix drivers saw a blue van near the site three and a half days before the head's discovery, that it had submerged then and surfaced just before the guys fishing saw it?

Although not specifically referring to this case, on his website Dr. Byrd writes: "The complete absence of insects would suggest clues as to the sequence of postmortem events as the body was probably either frozen, sealed in a tightly closed container, or buried very deeply."

Wright had told me there were no maggots on the found child. But, as a possibility other than (or in addition to) submersion, might the head have been kept chilled for some time between death and placing in the canal?

Dr. Michael Baden, former medical examiner for New York City, writes in his 1989 book *Unnatural Death*: "When a body is kept cold, it can look as if it's been dead for just a day."

And now, A.W.'s story: his captors had kept on ice a head of similar age to him. To end the search they'd left it somewhere they thought it would be found—and mistaken for Adam Walsh.

But Wright had told Hollywood police that the head's brain had liquefied, which meant, he thought, it had been dead at least ten days before its discovery.

I looked for other opinions and found one source, a 2003 book called *The Scientific Study of Mummies* by Arthur C. Aufderheide: "Every experienced medical examiner has seen repeated examples of near or actual brain liquefaction in corpses exposed to summer temperatures for even as little time as a week."

In the case of Flo Ella Miller, Dr. Garvin, who performed her autopsy, had described her brain as "the consistency of porridge." That was the same as liquefaction, said my former medical examiner advisor. Garvin wrote she could have been dead as few as two days, the upper limit obviously four.

As well, Garvin wrote that her body was in "an advanced state of decomposition" with skin slippage and bloating, and her ears and lips had postmortem "destruction" which he attributed to "aquatic life." He gave no opinion on how long her body had been at the scene, and like Cox in his Adam Walsh report, mentioned nothing at all about insects and maggots—neither their presence nor conspicuous absence.

I had more questions about brain liquefaction: since the found child had been severed at the neck, would that change the rate, especially if it had been in the water? And if the head had been on ice but was dead for more than fourteen days—possible under A.W.'s scenario—although the head may have looked relatively good on discovery, would the brain have still liquefied?

As a paramedic Billy had been trained as a coroner, to notice things in death that are not normal. He thought that an exposed opening would accelerate the entry and growth of bacteria, and therefore the brain would liquefy faster.

He thought a kitchen freezer at a high setting could have kept a head cold enough to significantly slow liquefaction. Although I disliked his analogy of food science, that explained it best: sub-freezing temperatures slow decomposition but you still need to toss out meat or fish left in the freezer too long. Although while cold it holds together indefinitely, when defrosted it reveals its loss of original texture and often color. That's because the protein bonds in the meat have degraded as a result of bacteria and freezer burn. The brain has less protein bonds than muscle tissue and will degrade faster.

To continue his food analogy, he said that to cook a chicken in a pot of water is to coax the meat and fat off the bones. (You use boiled water or steam, at least to start, to kill bacteria.) It's the same process that bloated his brother's deer head after a week in the creek. In the summer it would have looked even more decomposed. The process is called osmosis, and its reverse happens in salt water, which removes liquid. Salting preserves codfish for room temperature storage, and as well you salt eggplant slices before cooking to absorb its moisture.

So in the end, we can't be sure how long the found child had been dead or be certain that the head had submerged, and can only say it had been at the surface before it was discovered for a few minutes to about a day.

Here's another piece of the story that A.W. seems to answer better than anyone else: how could it be explained that the head was found at all?

A.W. said his captors had intentionally placed the head somewhere it would be discovered so it could be mistaken for Adam Walsh's head.

Regardless of intention, it does seem to have been mistaken for Adam Walsh.

From the perspective of Hollywood, 125 miles south, where it was found seemed hopelessly obscure. But the "Narrative Summary" document in the Broward M.E. file said that it was "a favorite local fishing spot." And there was a short wooden pier over the water. Recreational fishermen and orange grove employees Robert Hughes and Vernon Bailey, who found the head, had brought their boat there, and Hughes told detectives he had been at the same spot the evening before.

Detective Donald Coleman, the first Indian River Sheriff's officer on the scene, wrote in his report that when he arrived he saw the head floating in the canal about twenty-five yards from the edge of the northbound side of the road. He wrote that when the fishermen first saw it floating they were standing on the canal bank about a hundred feet away then rowed to see it closer. *Tropic* wrote in 1982 that the fishermen had seen it "floating against the concrete bank beneath the short turnpike bridge." In 1997 Coleman told Phil Mundy he saw it "as it lay against the concrete conduit."

"I'm not by nature a religious man, but we were supposed to find this head," Broward M.E. chief investigator D.P. Hughes told *Tropic*. "Bodies are dumped all the time in Florida and are never found. For some reason we found this."

The front page of the Wednesday July 29 *Sun-Tattler* quotes Hollywood police spokesman Fred Barbeta: "I think it's time we hit the waterways hard. If [Adam is] in the water, this is when he'd come up." By then they'd already begun searching the canal close to the Hollywood Mall and volunteers were searching canals nearer the Everglades. And at three that afternoon an off-duty officer found Flo Ella Miller in the Dania ditch, about five miles from the mall. Dr. Garvin estimated her time of death as within a day either way of three P.M. Sunday July 26—that is, within the time range that Adam had been abducted.

Perhaps Miller wouldn't have been found as quickly had the community not been searching for Adam. But her discovery was mentioned only briefly in the *Sun-Tattler* and nowhere else. Garvin ruled her death accidental and caused by "multiple drug intoxication." Her toxicology showed alcohol and drugs in her system, although her sister, the last to speak to her, later told me she could handle a lot. Still, an accidental overdose begged the question of why she was dead in a remote drainage ditch. Did she go there alone or with someone who left her? Or did someone dump her body there?

It was Hollywood P.D.'s case. They never investigated her death as any sort of crime.

Twelve days later, a human head was found in another canal. Nowhere in Hollywood's files are these two deaths associated. Whomever put the head identified as Adam Walsh into the Indian River County canal—and may have wanted it discovered—might have known from news reports that police searching for Adam Walsh were searching canals.

## All I Want for Christmas Is...

HOW MANY TOP FRONT TEETH is Adam missing in his smiling “Missing” photo?  
To look at the picture, both. Right?



**Adam Walsh’s last known photograph. Courtesy Hollywood Historical Society.  
Credit: Gerlinde Photography/Michael Hopkins**

Or just one?

My confusion began with the description on Adam’s “Missing” poster. Along with his height, weight, age, eye color, hair color, and the clothes he had been wearing on the day he disappeared, it read:

**Hair: Straight Sandy Blond**

**Other: Missing one top  
tooth with second  
tooth coming in**

**PLEASE help us find Adam Walsh. Last seen at  
Toy Department, Monday, July 27, 1981, around**

From the “Missing” Poster

Did that mean Adam was missing one top tooth with its replacement coming in? Then he wasn't actually missing any teeth. More logically, had he lost both top baby teeth but one was coming in?

I searched Google to find the highest pixel count of the image it had. On my Imaging program I enlarged it to look at the gap on the left side of Adam's mouth where there was what might have been the beginning of a tooth.

Zooming in, there wasn't enough detail. I couldn't be sure if it was a tooth or not but I didn't think so. It was pink, in contrast to the two pearly-whites next to it. I guessed it was the gum line or his tongue.

John Walsh has repeatedly said that Adam had just one tooth missing. On *Good Morning America* on August 11, at which time the show displayed Adam's "Missing" picture, he said Adam was "missing a front tooth."

At that I was even more confused.

In his book, Walsh wrote that he had composed all the copy for the "Missing" poster: "My career was in the hotel-marketing business. I knew how to write ad copy for sales brochures... So I started writing the copy myself. Simple and clear."

It wasn't.

Of the "Missing" picture, he wrote: "If you saw it, you couldn't help but notice that—right on top—he had a little missing tooth."

*Arghh!* You can't have something that you don't have—you can, however, not have something.

The website for *America's Most Wanted* echoes Walsh—and his illogical grammar. In its story about the case, below the "Missing" photo a cutline reads: "it shows his new missing tooth." Maybe better to say would have been his newly-missing tooth.



**Photo and caption posted at amw.com, site since removed**

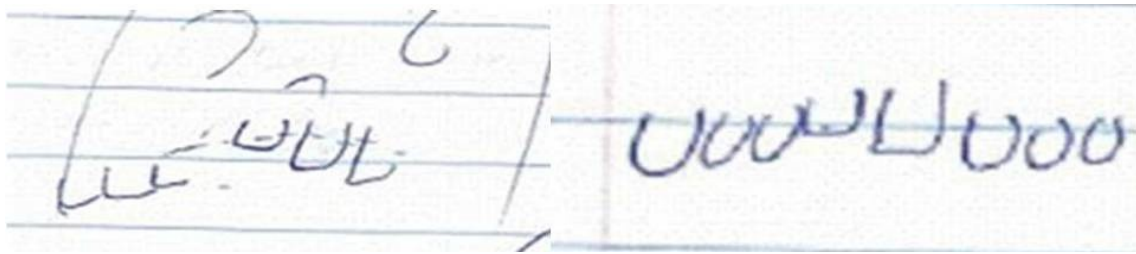
Also in Walsh's book, he describes that when John Monahan viewed the remains for identification, he saw "a small, emerging tooth."

Cox wrote that the found child had only one tooth missing—an "upper right incisor" where "an erupting tooth can be palpated in its place." In the top jaw he makes no specific mention of any other tooth, only that nine remaining are present, four on the right, five on the left.

That matches Dr. Garvin's notes of when Cox first called the Broward M.E. and described the top jaw: "upper R incisor missing."

Here's the problem: none of the above plainly matches any other observation of the top teeth.

From the Broward M.E. slides of the cleaned skull that I saw and made drawings of, with the caveat that I had to guess where the gum line had been, the right top front tooth looked in about a quarter of the way and the left front tooth about two-thirds.



**My drawings of a slide in the Broward Medical Examiner's office of the found child, a lateral view of the upper jaw of the skull, no soft tissue present. Note: in these views, the dental chart orientation is Right side of the mouth - Left side of the mouth.**

**Left drawing: The dotted line represents my guess of where the gum line had been. I estimated one top front tooth was one-quarter expressed, the other two-thirds expressed. The three teeth on the right side and last on the left were likely fully expressed baby teeth.**

**Right drawing: Another attempt at drawing the top teeth. The three teeth on both the left and right seemed fully expressed, and the two middle teeth, the central incisors, were partially expressed, as noted.**

In its 1997 report to Hollywood Police, the C.A. Pound lab had included an underside view, looking up, of the upper jaw that clearly (and stunningly) showed both front teeth. However, again, without the gums present it couldn't accurately show how far expressed those teeth were, at death. For one thing, both front teeth looked fully in but weren't. Nor could you tell their height relative to each other.





**The found child's upper jaw. Note expressed central incisors. The orientation is Left side, Right side. (C.A. Pound Human Identification Lab, 1997. Photo released by Hollywood Police, 2008)**

I asked Dr. Warren, who had taken the picture for the lab, if he had a lateral view of the top jaw, and he found one. Describing it, he said the left tooth was in “almost all the way” and the right tooth was “getting there.” That was consistent with my take on the Broward M.E. slides.

The day before the head was found, August 9, Orlando Police had asked Hollywood for a description of Adam so they could pursue a lead. Although it didn't pan out, Hollywood responded in a teletype exchange, to include:

AK. ORLA6. .

REF ADAM WALSH:

W/M 111474 3 1/2 FEET 45 POUNDS

SANDY BLONDE HAIR THIN BUILD HAZEL EYES  
LSM WEARING RED & WHITE STRIPED SHIRT GREEN SHORTS

MISSING RIGHT FRONT TOOTH AND LEFT FRONT TOOTH PARTIALLY  
GROWN IN FREKLES AND CLEFT ON CHIN

OPER 1326

**From the Hollywood Police case file in public record, the last-seen-alive description of Adam as dispatched by teletype from their agency to Orlando Police: “Missing right front tooth and left front tooth partially grown in.”**

That seemed a much clearer description than the one on the “Missing” poster. It indicated that Adam had lost both top front baby teeth but one adult tooth had since erupted.

But against that, I could not justify Cox's description of the found child—an upper right incisor missing with a replacement tooth “erupting,” four right-side teeth lateral to it, and five upper left side teeth “present and intact,” with no specifics further than that.

Here are other problems:

Cox is silent on how Monahan made his positive identification or even whether he'd mentioned any teeth.

Walsh doesn't say which tooth Monahan described as “a small, emerging tooth.” Nor is that published anywhere else.

Nowhere in any official file does Monahan speak for himself, either in a statement, police interview, or summary notes. Nor in either medical examiner's file is a signature from Monahan identifying the found child as Adam Walsh.

Monahan died in 2004. On the morning after the head was identified, the *Miami Herald* wrote, “A family friend, John Monahan, identified the severed head by the gap in the boy's upper teeth and by the stub of a new tooth.” In 1982, when *Tropic* asked him

about his identification at the morgue, he confirmed what Walsh would write in his 1997 book that his first look at the remains was insufficient to make a positive ID.

*Tropic* wrote:

Monahan had to be sure.

“Adam was in our house just a couple of days before, and I had noticed his little teeth coming in. He had smiled at me. So I asked them to open his lips a little bit so I could see the teeth.”

There was no doubt. It was Adam Walsh.

In a profile story about John Walsh in 2002, *The New York Times Magazine* made the same point about Adam’s remains: “... his severed head was the only part of him ever recovered, the features so distorted that the family friend who first identified it was forced to do so by the pattern of missing baby teeth and the one new tooth that was emerging.”

But which new tooth was it? The top right central incisor, which Cox wrote was “erupting”—or the top left central incisor, which Cox didn’t specifically mention beyond that it was “present and intact,” along with eight others in the top jaw, but Dr. Warren looking at his photo said was in “almost all the way”?

Six to seven is a typical age for children to have missing and emerging front teeth. All Monahan may have confirmed was that the child he saw was around that age.

During the two weeks Adam was missing, the local newspapers often published his “Missing” photo but seemed not to closely look at it—at least not when describing how many of his teeth were absent.

Tuesday July 28, the morning after he was taken, the *Sun-Tattler* wrote he was “missing one front tooth.” On Wednesday July 29, the *Herald* wrote that his smile revealed a “gap in his bottom row of teeth,” which was close to the *Sun-Tattler*’s revised description that day of “missing a lower front tooth.” It sounded like they were looking at an older photo of Adam I found on the Internet, which shows his top two baby front teeth present but that he was missing a lower central incisor. Although also on Wednesday the *Fort Lauderdale News* said Adam was “missing two front teeth,” on August 2 their description changed to “missing one upper tooth, with the new tooth just coming in.” A UPI story on Thursday July 30, which I found in the *Record-Journal* of Meridian, Ct., had “The youngster is missing a front tooth.”

Six months later, *Tropic* said what the *Herald*’s daily coverage never did, that the poster bore “the now-familiar photograph of Adam in his baseball cap, smiling a smile that showed his missing two front teeth.”

I Google-searched “Adam Walsh” and teeth and found four recent opinions, all that multiple teeth were missing:

The *St. Petersburg Times*, writing in 2007 about Jessica Lunsford’s smile: “Some images just stick. Especially of children who get stolen and hurt. JonBenet. Adam Walsh and his missing front teeth and the baseball bat.”

The *Houston Chronicle* wrote this in an editorial the day after police closed the case on Toole: “Many of us have seen the photograph from time to time in our newspapers: A

smiling boy with front teeth missing, posing, cocked bat in hand, in his baseball uniform.”

*The Washington Post*, the same day: “Sometimes we would catch a glimpse of his face and it would take a second to place him. The red baseball cap, the missing teeth, the sweaty hair... *It’s Adam.*”

I also found a blogger named “Imperfect Clarity” writing in 2010 who recalled as a child seeing a 1984 story in *Guideposts*, a faith and inspiration magazine: “What I do remember is Adam’s portrait on the front of the magazine. He wore a baseball hat and a bat was slung over one shoulder, the gaps in his smile revealing that he had lost a few of his front teeth all at once.”

Perhaps the difference in Adam’s teeth in his “Missing” picture and in the pictures of his remains can be explained by a gap in time.

In his book Walsh describes how he chose the picture used for the “Missing” poster: “Then we designed the layout of the poster and went through a whole stack of pictures of Adam. Jeff [O’Regan, a family friend] picked out one that showed him in his T-ball uniform with his bat and red baseball cap because he thought it was the one that most looked like him...”

“So we chose the picture of him in his red baseball cap. Because it had been taken only the week before, and in it he was smiling. If you saw it, you couldn’t help but notice that—right on top—he had a little missing tooth.”

So Walsh says the “Missing” photo was only a week old. I wanted to check that for myself.

The *Hollywood Sun-Tattler* ended publication in 1991 but donated its files and bound books of every edition it ever printed to the Hollywood Historical Society. I had looked through their files before and recalled that they had a color copy of the “Missing” picture—although the *Sun-Tattler’s* presses never published full color.

Revisiting the Historical Society, I found their color print, a five-by-seven. On the back was a photo credit for Gerlinde Photography, of Hollywood. For all the times everyone had run the picture, I could only find a published credit for it just once, and that was in the *Sun-Tattler*.

Almost thirty years later, they were still in business. I found Michael Hopkins, son (and now partner) of Gerlinde Hopkins, who was also still working there. Michael said he thought he had taken the shot. He was sixteen at the time, and that day, between he and his mother, they’d split all the team photos. In fact the studio still owned the copyright, he said, although John Walsh had used the picture on his book cover and credited the “Adam Walsh Children’s Fund.”

Both Michael and Gerlinde recalled the photo shoot. Michael said that in the late afternoon that day, after a game, the sky had suddenly turned dark and rainy so they moved the shoot to underneath a pavilion. Because the background was dark, I’d always thought it had been shot in a studio. Only on the scanned image I now had from the *Sun-Tattler* and showed to the Hopkinses was it apparent there were trees, a fence, and a dark sky behind Adam.

I asked Michael, how long might it have been between photography and delivery of the image to the parents. Back then, a minimum of three weeks, he said. He couldn’t be

precise on the date of the photo because they'd disposed of their appointment books from that long ago. Nor did they keep negatives for more than a few years.

Both Michael and Gerlinde thought the picture had been taken in May, but they admitted that was just a guess based on when the spring Little League baseball season was.

I searched to find out the calendar dates for the Little League season. Online the *Miami Herald* went back to 1982. A Hollywood little league, in the Eighties called Hollywood Hills Baseball, ran its season from February to mid-June—remember, February is a warm weather month in South Florida.

But at least in 2000 there had also been a “summer tournament season” of “all-star” teams for children as young as five. In the *Herald's* first-day story that Adam was missing, it described him as “an all-star right fielder for his Little League team.” That had always seemed gratuitous to me—right field is where coaches stick kids with the least skills. So maybe instead of Adam being a six-year-old all-star, maybe it meant that he was in an “all-star” league—that played in the summer. Which meant the picture could have been taken in June or July.

I found the longtime organizer of Hollywood Hills Baseball. Although he remembered the abduction of Adam Walsh, he didn't remember that he'd played in his little league. He thought maybe he'd been in the league in Dania, the next town north. But when I found the man who'd run that league, he also said Adam hadn't been in it.

I solved the problem when I remembered a *Miami News* story published the day Adam was declared found. It quoted Wayne Croft, a Broward Sheriff's office detective, who'd helped organize Adam's league for the Hollywood Optimists. He'd recalled Adam wearing his baseball cap and “trying to swing a bat almost as big as he was.” The team was called the Campbell Rentals and had fourteen kids.

“He was small for his age, quiet and very well-behaved. He was just learning to swing.”

I found Croft in Denver, retired from police work. He told me he had organized all the sports programs for Hollywood Optimists, with support from the sheriff's office. He thought the T-ball season had just ended before the abduction. As for when the picture was taken, he thought it had been about a month before, sometime around the end of June or beginning of July. He said he thought he still had a copy of the team photo. “I'm a pack rat,” he said.

Croft remembered that after the last game of the season they would give trophies—to all the kids, of course—as well as their team and individual pictures, previously taken by a studio photographer.

Based on the three weeks of production and delivery time that Michael Hopkins had mentioned, John Walsh had to be wrong that the photo was taken just a week before the abduction. But maybe they'd just gotten the photo about a week before. Add Walsh's one week plus the studio's three weeks and you have the photo taken about a month before. Which is what Croft was saying.

Croft remembered a little more about Adam—he was “timid” and clung to his mother Reve all the time. She was always at the games, he said. “I was surprised that she would leave him out of her sight” at Sears the day of the abduction, he said. He added that he never saw John Walsh at any of the games, or had ever met him.

As a former sheriff's detective, he had some thoughts about Hollywood's investigation. Former Assistant Hollywood Police Chief LeRoy Hessler is his brother-in-law, he said. Early on, Hollywood, including Hessler, had "predetermined" that Jimmy Campbell was their only viable suspect, but by the time they realized they were wrong "it was too late." Hessler told him he no longer thinks Campbell did it but back then, "I damn sure thought it was Campbell."

Also, in his years as a detective he'd been present when murder victims had been discovered in the Everglades, some floating. I told him that the photo I'd seen of the found child—I said Adam—hadn't looked that bad. Wouldn't a head left outside, even under water, after fourteen days in the Florida summer heat look awful?

Yes, "it would be an ugly sight to see," he said. Insects and maggots arrive immediately and would be all over it. In a swampy inland area like where it was found, the temperature reaches 100 degrees with 100 percent humidity. Even if it was underwater for most of that time it might have had sea lice that wouldn't wash off, and besides, it would have been very bloated. "If that head didn't look terrible, my first hunch is that it was in the water only a short time."

The *Sun-Tattler's* image was far superior to anything I found on the Internet. To the question of whether the pink spot in his mouth was a tooth, his tongue, or the gum line, it was clearly the gum line. There was no emerging tooth in that space—or the space next to it.



**Closeup of Adam Walsh's "Missing" picture. The gum line shows that neither of his top front teeth had erupted. Orientation: Right side, left side. Credit: Gerlinde Photography/Michael Hopkins**

So to answer the question at the top of the chapter, Adam in his "Missing" picture was, indeed, missing both top front teeth.

Now reread what Walsh wrote in his book about the picture:

“If you saw it, you couldn’t help but notice that—right on top—he had a little missing tooth.”

And what *America’s Most Wanted* posted: “This is the last known photo of Adam. Taken about a week before his murder, it shows his new missing tooth.”

And despite the disagreement over whether the head had been in the water fourteen days before it was discovered, because the brain matter had liquefied there could be no dispute that it had been dead for at least a good amount of that time. And teeth, I learned, do not grow in a dead body.

I showed my personal general dentists in Fort Lauderdale, doctors Joe Gorfien and Henry Jacobsohn, who also see children as patients, the *Sun-Tattler* “Missing” photo, the C.A. Pound photo of the skull’s upper jaw, and my drawings of the skull from the slides. They agreed that the pink space on Adam’s picture was the gum line.

Then Henry noticed something I hadn’t: the Pound photo showed both upper lateral incisors missing.

There were ten teeth, as Cox had written, but they weren’t all baby teeth. On both sides there were three molars (to include the first permanents), a canine, and the central incisor. Between the centrals and the canines were small spaces.

Adam, in his “Missing” picture, had both upper lateral incisors and canines and was missing his central incisors. His molars weren’t visible.

So in this comparison, both the found child and Adam in his “Missing” picture had two top teeth gone. But they weren’t the same teeth.

Here was the question: if the found child was Adam, in the month between when his baseball picture was taken and he was abducted (plus the two weeks but likely less until he was killed), could he have grown in most of one central incisor, possibly erupted the other—and as well, have lost both lateral incisors?

In Henry’s laminated, oversized spiral-bound book entitled *A Visual Guide to Dental Care*, published “in cooperation with the American Dental Hygienists’ Association,” permanent central incisors usually appear in children 6-8 years old. Lateral incisors usually appear at 7-9 years old.

On the Internet I found parents asking each other, how come my child’s baby front teeth fell out at four? How come my child is eight and hasn’t lost any baby teeth yet?

The usual answer was, every child’s dental development is unique. Still, generally speaking, the age range in the dental charts holds.

My nephew, also named Adam and born two years before Adam Walsh, has a daughter Becca who was days from her eighth birthday when I visited them in Maryland. In the previous year she’d lost both her top front baby teeth and fully grown in one permanent. When I saw her, the second was almost fully in. I asked him, as a doting, iPad photo-taking dad, how long the process had taken.

He showed me her pictures, which he could date by where they were taken. I saw when her front baby teeth were still present, then out, then the progress of her permanent teeth. The conclusion was, once each baby tooth fell out it was 2-3 months before the permanent tooth erupted and another 6-8 months for it to fully grow in.

Henry and Joe thought Becca’s timeline was typical but they wanted me to ask pediatric dentists, whose patients were exclusively children.

Adam Walsh was six years, eight months old when he was abducted. Rather than ask opinions of how old the maxilla of the found child was, I wanted to know how long might it have taken for the spaces of the four top front teeth in Adam's "Missing" picture to look like the four in the skull of the found child in the C.A. Pound photo and my drawings of the Broward M.E. slide photos.

Pediatric dentists, I reasoned, wouldn't be very busy before the school day ended. Choosing those hours, unannounced, I met with two in my neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale. The first asked me not to use his name, which I understood. The pediatric dentist Henry and Joe had suggested I speak to had already declined by telephone, not wanting to have his name attached to such an inquiry.

So when I entered this pediatric dentist's office, after introducing myself I didn't say whom this story was about. I used cardboard to cover all of Adam's eight-by-ten photo enlargement except for his mouth. I told the dentist I would reveal the rest of the picture after finishing my questions.

I had to say that the child in the picture was dead because my comparison picture was a forensic photo of a skull. I also had to say that I was questioning whether the skull was the same child as the boy in the picture.

So I posed the question: if the skull and the boy were the same child, comparing the growth of his teeth, how much time might he have been alive after the first picture was taken?

Six months, he said. That would be typical.

He looked closely at the pictures. He agreed that in the skull the upper lateral incisors were gone and the first permanent molars were in. In the baseball picture he thought the lower lateral incisors might be baby teeth. Usually, he said, the order that baby teeth fall out is: lower centrals; upper centrals; lower laterals; upper laterals.

So he was saying he didn't think that Adam's lower laterals had yet fallen out but in the skull picture the upper laterals were gone.

He thought that in the baseball photo the left central incisor was close to erupting because the gum looked rectangular. But he agreed that neither of the top centrals had actually erupted. I made a mental note, that was consistent with the reported eruption of the left central within a month after the photo.

I told him then that the child whose skull it was had been found about six weeks after the baseball picture was taken. But that included two weeks that the child in the baseball picture had been missing, and the child had likely been dead for much or all of that time.

Could those changes have taken place within about four weeks?

"I think it would be more than four weeks," he said. "Typically I would be surprised to see both (upper) laterals out in 4-6 weeks." If they'd been knocked out, like in an accident, that would be different, but if they'd both fallen out on their own, "over a four week period, I wouldn't expect that." And given the small spaces in between the canines and adult central incisors, it didn't appear that the laterals had been knocked out.

"It's unusual for laterals to be lost within four weeks," he said. "It should be 6-8 months after the permanent centrals come in."

Before I showed him the full picture from behind the cardboard, he'd already realized who it was.

Looking at Adam's full face, he also noticed he had a cross-bite. That is, the teeth in his upper jaw didn't perfectly meet his lower teeth. That happens, he said, in about 5-10 percent of children. Crowding causes it but at that age dentists generally don't address it because after the canines fall out it usually self-corrects. The maxilla in the found child did not have a cross-bite, he thought, after measuring spaces between the cuspids to the midline.

(Later, A.W. told me he'd had a cross-bite until about age ten.)

He also estimated that the usual growth for a top central incisor was 2-3 millimeters per month. I measured my own front teeth, which were about twelve millimeters. That meant they would have taken between 4-6 months to fully come in.

A second pediatric dentist did not stop me from using her name. She was Dr. Yedda Gomes-Ruane, also a lecturer at Nova Southeastern University dental school, in Fort Lauderdale. When I showed her Adam's baseball picture and the skull picture of the maxilla, she automatically assumed the baseball picture had been taken recently before his abduction.

"That's not the same child," she blurted.

She didn't know the story very well but guessed, correctly, based on the child's mouth, that Adam was six-and-a-half in the photo, and agreed that neither of his central incisors had erupted. When I told her that the picture had been taken about a month before he was abducted, she said that if it was possibly the same child, the time that should have passed in between the two pictures needed to be about 6-8 months, even up to a year.

She pointed to the skull maxilla. "This is an older person."

AS I'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED, ALL COMPLETED REPORTS OF AUTOPSIES performed by medical examiners in the state of Florida are public records unless there is a pending active homicide investigation. In this case, a court ruled in February 1996 that the case was no longer active, and forced Hollywood police to reveal their records up to then. After that, however, on their own authority Hollywood and the Broward state attorney had determined that they were again actively investigating the case so their investigative materials since February 1996 were protected. However, in December 2008 both agencies agreed that the case was closed and allowed public viewing of their entire files.

To review, in December 2009 I made a public records request to see the Broward Medical Examiner's file. When I viewed it in their offices, I told Dr. Perper that Wright's autopsy report was not present. He answered that he hadn't known that, and that the case had predated his tenure in office.

Over the next months I discovered that the report was in no other official file either. Just to make sure I hadn't made an oversight, I wrote a letter to Dr. Perper specifically asking for the report. He called back to tell me that his file did not contain that record. I answered that because he was denying my request to see a public record, I wanted that denial in writing. Now getting upset, Perper told me he didn't have to do that. I said the



public records chapter of Florida Statutes entitled me to a written denial if I requested it, and emailed him a copy of the statute.

I also knew from that chapter of Florida Statutes that as records custodian, the chief medical examiner is required to demand records missing from his files if he can locate them. I suggested that Dr. Wright possibly had kept a personal copy of the autopsy report. Would Dr. Perper ask him, and if he said he did, obtain a copy so he could place it in the official file? Then I would be able to view it.

A few weeks later I got a signed letter from Dr. Perper in the postal mail:

“You requested to receive an autopsy report allegedly done by Dr. Wright in the above case... Please be advised that this request cannot be satisfied because according to an e-mail I received from Dr. Wright, no such report was ever done by him or any other pathologist in his office.”

The email from Wright in response to Perper read:

<b>From:</b>	Dr. Ronald Wright [rkwrightmd@gmail.com]
<b>Sent:</b>	Friday, August 20, 2010 9:42 AM
<b>To:</b>	Baker, Sherri
<b>Subject:</b>	Re: Adam Walsh Autopsy Report

I never, and to my knowledge no one in the office, prepared a report on the head of Adam Walsh.

The case was handled by the ME Office in which the body was found. As I recall, they did a report, but I do not believe I ever saw it.

**Dr. Ronald Wright's email reply to Sherri Baker, assistant to Broward Medical Examiner Dr. Joshua Perper: I never, and to my knowledge no one in the office, prepared a report on the head of Adam Walsh. The case was handled by the ME Office in which the body was found. As I recall, they did a report, but I do not believe I ever saw it.**

Wha? The case was handled by the M.E. office in which the body was found?

First, two medical examiners' offices handled this body and have case files for it. But didn't Wright do the autopsy?

DISTRICT 17 BROWARD COUNTY FLORIDA  
5301 W 31 AVE FT. LAUDERDALE, FL 33136  
81-1187

Adam Walsh 6 Yr. Anglo Male 0 ft 1 in 8 lbs  
DOB- 14 NOV 197

HOME 2801 McKinley St HOLLYWOOD, BROWARD, FL

DEATH Fl. Turnpk., IND. RIVER, FL  
TIME OF DEATH FOUND 6:45 PM 10 AUG 1981 MON

INCIDENT 300 Hollywood M1 HOLLYWOOD, BROWARD, FL  
LAST SEEN ALIVE 11:00 AM 27 JUL 1981 MON (LSA-F) 14 Da 7 Hr

OTHER INVESTIGATING AGENCY HOLLYWOOD P (81-56073 )  
SCENE INVEST. D.P. HUGHES

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

269.23.4 EJ

The decapitated head of the deceased was found by two fishermen in a canal located 75 yds. south of the 130 mile marker on the Florida Turnpike. The canal is located on both sides of the turnpike and near the point at which the head was found there is a turnpike bridge where the canal passes under the road. This is a favorite local fishing spot.

The head was found on the East side of the road, near a small bridge. FHP was first notified and they in turn notified the Indian River Sheriff's Office who took the head to Associate Medical Examiner Dr. Cox. He compared the dental records of the deceased with those of the head and made a positive I.D. Upon the suggestion of this office, Dr. Cox asked Dr. Wright to also examine the head and it was flown back to the Broward Medical Examiners Office by Helicopter accompanied by personnel from the Hollywood Police Department.

D.P. Hughes, Chief Investigator for the BME made a scene visit for the purpose of conducting experiments to try to better establish the time of death.

At this time further investigation continues into trying to answer these questions.

was

CAUSE OF DEATH: ASPHYXIATION  
MANNER OF DEATH: Homicide  
AUTOPSY 4:00 PM 11 AUG 1981 TUE BY DR. R.K. WRIGHT MD

**Cover sheet for autopsy report of Adam Walsh. Narrative Summary explains where the head was found and that Dr. Cox had used dental records to make a positive ID. Document originally released by Hollywood Police, 1996**

So he did. Next: when Wright received the head to perform the autopsy, as prosecutor (the person who performs the autopsy) was he responsible for the autopsy report? Did Wright's actions make the case Broward's and relinquish Cox's further responsibility?

There was a letter in the file dated August 11, 1981 from Cox to Wright:

"I would appreciate your assistance in the autopsy examination on the remains of a young male child (head), identified by dental records, as Adam Walsh... You are authorized by me as Associate Medical Examiner of District 19 to perform any necessary tests and examinations to determine the cause and manner of death."

As well, Cox wrote in what he called his "Death Investigation and Preliminary Autopsy Examination":

"Shortly after noon on August 11, 1981, I spoke with Dr. Ron Wright, Broward County Medical Examiner, who agreed to accept and complete the examination on the decapitated head of Adam Walsh."

Also, when the *Miami News* two days later asked Cox about cause of death, he hadn't wanted to speculate. "My findings are only preliminary. It's up to the Broward County medical examiner to make the final rulings."

Then there was Cox's quote to me: "I tried to get rid of that head as soon as possible. I put it in a bucket of ice and sent it down to Ronald Wright."

I also note that District Nineteen's file contains none of Broward's autopsy findings or further investigation. Had the case remained District Nineteen's, I expect that Broward would have reported to them most everything it had done.

I had previously written to the state Office of Vital Statistics and obtained a copy of Adam Walsh's death certificate. Death certificates in Florida are public records except for the section referring to cause of death; only the family can get a copy including that. In the section that reads, "On the basis of examination and/or investigation, in my opinion death occurred at the date and place and due to the cause(s) stated," Wright signed his name.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH FLORIDA				STATE FILE NO. 81-059846	
LOCAL FILE NO. DECEDENT—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST 1. Adam John Walsh			SEX 2. male		DATE OF DEATH (Mo., Day, Yr.) 3. Disappeared: July 27, 1981
RACE—(e.g., White, Black, Am. Indian, etc.) (Specify)		AGE—last birthday (Mo., Day, Yr.) 4. white 5a. 6	UNDER 1 YEAR MONTHS 3 DAYS	UNDER 1 DAY HOURS 1 MIN.	DATE OF BIRTH (Mo., Day, Yr.) Nov. 14 1974
CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF DEATH 7a. Unknown		HOSPITAL OR OTHER INSTITUTION—(Name, St. No. or other, post office and number)		COUNTY OF DEATH 7b. Unknown	
STATE OF BIRTH (If not in U.S.A., name country) 8. Florida		CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY 9. U.S.A.		MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (Specify)	
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		USUAL OCCUPATION (Last held at work during week of working life, none if retired) 12. Child		KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY 13. EG	
RESIDENCE—STATE 14a. Florida		COUNTY 14b. Broward		CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION 14c. Hollywood	
FATHER—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST 15. John E. Walsh		MOTHER—MAIDEN NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST 16. Reve Drew		STREET AND NUMBER 14d. 2801 McKinley St.	
INFORMANT—NAME (Page or Parent) 17a. John Walsh		MAILING ADDRESS 17b. 2801 McKinley Street		CITY OR TOWN STATE ZIP Hollywood Florida	
BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL, OTHER (Specify) 18a. Cremation		CEMETERY OR CREMATORY—NAME 18b. A B C O Crematory		LOCATION CITY OR TOWN STATE 18c. Fort Lauderdale Florida	
FUNERAL DIRECTOR (Name) 19a. <i>Funerary</i>		FUNERAL HOME 19b. JOHNSON/FOSTER 1650 Harrison St. Hollywood Fla		ADDRESS	
DATE SIGNED (Mo., Day, Yr.) 20a. 20b.		HOUR OF DEATH 20c.		SIGNATURE AND TITLE 21a. <i>Ronald K. Wright</i> 21b. Aug. 20, 1981	
NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN IF OTHER THAN CERTIFIER (Page or parent) 20d.		NAME AND ADDRESS OF CERTIFYING PHYSICIAN, MEDICAL EXAMINER (Page or parent) 22. Ronald K. Wright, M.D. MEDICAL EXAMINER 5301 S.W. 31 Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33312		DATE RECEIVED BY REGISTRAR (Mo., Day, Yr.) 23a. <i>William A. Foster, Sub-Reg.</i> 23b. Aug. 20, 1981	

**Certificate of Death of Adam John Walsh as released in 2010 by the State of Florida Office of Vital Statistics. Dr. Wright's signature is on the right. Although the document states the body was cremated, it was not.**

However, in the Broward M.E. and Hollywood Police public record files were two other copies of the death certificate and both did list the immediate cause of death: homicide. The police copy also answered the question whether an autopsy had been performed: Yes.

In the chain of custody as the receiver of the head from Dr. Cox, as the prosecutor, and as the signed certifier of the death certificate, Wright accepted all administrative responsibility for the case, said my former medical examiner consultant who didn't want to be named.

Perper also wrote me that he'd had two telephone conversations with D.P. Hughes, in 1981 the chief of operations of the Broward medical examiner's office, who told him, "Dr. Wright had examined the head and attached tissue, made incisions and opened the head. D.P. never saw a related report by Dr. Wright in the file."

So in the highest-profile homicide investigation in Broward County's history, now it was on the record: the Broward medical examiner did an autopsy but never completed or at least submitted an autopsy report.

Or at least not one that was currently in official files.

I told that to Dr. Garvin, who at the time of the Walsh autopsy was the Broward M.E.'s deputy chief, although, he told me, he left his position almost immediately after.

"There isn't?" he said.

I read him Dr. Wright's email. "What?" said Garvin. "That's interesting. That's wild. That's all news to me." Later in the conversation he added, "Maybe vaguely I did hear that."

In 2014, Andrea Tomassi, a former Hollywood Police crime scene technician who was helping me understand the workings of the agency, told me that a colleague said he'd seen the full Broward M.E. Walsh autopsy report.

He was King C. Brown, who from 1986 to 2000 had also worked as a crime scene technician for Hollywood P.D., and had since become the supervisor of the crime scene unit for West Palm Beach Police.

For every murder case, Hollywood's crime scene unit keeps a "Signal Five" loose-leaf binder, referring to the police radio call for homicides, Tomassi said. I'd seen the Walsh case binder twice, after public records requests, the first time in 1997, but it didn't have the full Broward autopsy report. However, Brown had, in fact, seen it there at least a couple times, Tomassi said.

At a meeting of the regional forensics professionals association, which Brown headed, Tomassi introduced me. If I was to report what he said, I wanted to be sure that he was certain he saw the full report.

Brown told me he'd seen the Walsh crime scene file "at least a half a dozen times" and had helped prepare it for its public records release, which was in 1996. As a crime scene tech he'd read many of the Signal Five files, but this one was "fascinating because of who it was, one of the most famous cases in modern times."

I showed him Cox's report, the cover page of the Broward M.E. report, told him it also had drawing pages and a toxicological report, and as well showed him Flo Ella Miller's full autopsy report, written by Dr. Garvin, as an example of the style of a full narrative from the same era, actually within two weeks of the Walsh autopsy.

Brown told me he remembered seeing Cox's report and the full Broward M.E. Walsh report, not just the cover page. He didn't recall seeing Adam's dental records and said that wouldn't have been required to be in the file.

Both Brown and Bob Foley, who know each other, told me that at the agencies where they've worked, if not universally, each crime scene unit file is required to have an

autopsy report and autopsy photos. Dr. Wright, both said, shot his photos as slides so he could project them in court, at trial. Brown could not recall seeing slides in the Walsh Signal Five file but did remember prints—crime scene pictures including of the remains, apparently the same that I saw when I got access to the file.

I asked him a number of times whether he was sure that he saw the full Broward M.E. report. He said he was. Each time he viewed the file there was no change in it. He had no explanation for when or how it may have disappeared after he'd last seen it.

When I told another crime scene technician who had worked for Hollywood Police, from before the Walsh case through 1988, that Brown had seen the Walsh file, she was surprised. Marjorie Hanlon said that while she was working there it was confidential and Brown would not have been able to see it.

She couldn't recall seeing a narrative report of the autopsy. It was possible, she thought, that one had never been written—in fact she could think of a dozen homicide cases at Hollywood Police through the Eighties that didn't have them. Although protocol at the Broward M.E. was to write autopsy report narratives, as far as Ron Wright was concerned, she said, protocol was for his staff including Garvin, not for him.

She also said that Wright would not always shoot autopsy photographs.

How then were prosecutors able to establish the identities of victims in court, I asked.

Visual IDs, she said. But this case, I insisted, wasn't so clear. The remains were found abandoned, and they relied on Adam's dental records, which were now missing from the three official agencies that handled them.

"Somebody purged your files," she said.

Foley took issue that Hollywood would have homicide cases without autopsy narratives. At the Broward Sheriff's Office, "Every case that I was ever connected to had an autopsy report," he said. In advance of trial, he said, a copy of the report would have to be given to the defense attorney.

Foley also said that at autopsies he attended that Wright did, he and Wright each took their own photographs.

Regarding this case, "I'm totally surprised they didn't do the teeth. Wright is really good for doing charting on the teeth" and noting cavities, fillings, and plate repairs, he said.

In 1981, Wright told a newspaper that the Broward M.E. had had problems completing all its autopsy reports—but that was before he got there in November 1980, after the previous chief had resigned under pressure.

"When he came to Broward, Wright says there was a backlog of hundreds of unwritten autopsy reports," wrote the *Fort Lauderdale News/Sun-Sentinel* in a March 1981 Sunday profile. "The number is now down to about 100."

The story didn't say whether any of them were homicide cases.

"I wasn't too enthusiastic about coming here," Wright told *The Miami Herald* in January 1981. "I knew what a mess it was... So many things need to be changed." The previous chief "did little more than perform autopsies, Dr. Wright complained."

Going forward, he planned to consult on cases with other professionals, including "anthropologists, psychiatrists and ballistics experts"—as well as "dentists," said the *News/Sun-Sentinel*. "During his short tenure in Broward, Wright has worked seven days a

week trying to turn a disorganized operation in the ‘best medical examiner’s office in the world.’”

I’d also requested Perper to contact Adam’s dentist, Dr. Berger, to get a copy of the child’s dental records if he still had them. Perper replied that pre-death dental records, by statute, are not public record and therefore he would not ask for them from Dr. Berger.

Those records, of course, had been used to identify the found child as Adam and unquestionably would have been used by prosecutors preparing for a trial against any defendant they accused of killing him, and then in the discovery process to the defense I expect they would have become a public record.

But in effect, Perper was conceding on the record that his file did not have those dental records.

Four years later I resolved the issue. Speaking again to Dr. Mittleman, I asked if his office would reach out to Dr. Berger. He responded by email that they’d already done so after we’d spoken in 2010:

...my Administrative Manager, Ms. Lydia Cason, did contact Dr. Berger who advised her that he has been out of practice for years and those records were destroyed.

•

After two weeks of searching for Adam, exhaustion and discouragement had set in. A week later, the *Sun-Tattler* published a letter from the wife of Hollywood detective sergeant Dennis Naylon who wrote that her husband had just worked fifty-five hours of overtime—a ninety-five-hour week. Even John Walsh, as he wrote in his book, thought by the second week it was better to have a definitive bad ending than no ending at all:

“Dead or alive, I needed to know... So instead of being desperate just to get him back, I became desperate to find out what had happened to him. Hopefully, alive. But if dead, then I needed to know. Because I was starting to have the sinking feeling that he might be dead.”

So when the Indian River sheriff reported finding a child’s head of similar age, it wasn’t surprising they thought it was Adam. Then the Hollywood officers who came to the scene said they were pretty sure it was him.

The found child had a filling in a lower left molar. When Adam’s dental records arrived, they showed a similar filling. Then Monahan standing next to the chief of Hollywood detectives said it was Adam.

Imagine the pressure on Cox to declare the positive ID.

Still, Cox should have punted—either to his forensic dentist or to Wright.

Phil Mundy told me that in his many years as a homicide detective he’d “never, ever” investigated a murder that didn’t have an autopsy report in its file. Except that he didn’t notice this one didn’t. He could point to Cox’s external-only examination report but it doesn’t count because a Florida state statute defines an autopsy as a dissection, which is what Wright did. I spoke to three other retired homicide detectives who also said they had never investigated a murder that didn’t have an autopsy report in its file. The only exception to that would be in the rare instance that no remains had been recovered.

Who else should have known there was no autopsy report?

All the Hollywood lead detectives on this case: Jack Hoffman, Ron Hickman, Mark Smith, Lyle Bien and Steven Sparkman. (When Smith first started on the case in 1994, he wrote that he couldn't find it, but expected it was somewhere.) And shouldn't their detective bureau supervisors have known? At the Broward State Attorney's office, besides Mundy (and his supervisors) there was Joe Matthews, who sometimes worked alongside Mundy and at other times worked the case privately for John Walsh. Matthews was a former homicide sergeant for Miami Beach Police.

All of them investigated this case despite its improbability (or outright impossibility) of winning at trial against any suspect. In court, without Wright's autopsy report or Adam's dental records, the prosecution would have risked that the defense would challenge the identity of the murder victim. Or that Adam Walsh was even dead. We know the dental records existed and should have been in three files—but were gone from each at least by the time I checked. What can we conclude other than they had been since removed?

For twenty-seven years the case remained officially unsolved, finally concluding with Hollywood's fiat announcement, endorsed by the Broward state attorney, that it was solved—without a trial or presentation of evidence, just an unveiling of the case files. And not even much explanation from Hollywood's chief of police of what the game-changing evidence was.

If Wright (and maybe others) realized that the found child was not Adam and Cox's identification was faulty, by not reversing it (which certainly would have deeply embarrassed Cox if not damaged the credibility of all medical examiners) and never submitting an autopsy report, then this was the collateral damage:

- *Decades of police effort and money was afterwards misdirected if not wasted on a wild goose chase in wrong directions*
- *The public was misled. If the Walshes weren't informed, they were misled.*
- *The family of another child was denied a homicide investigation*

Since the head was discovered in Indian River County, why wasn't the Indian River County Sheriff's department the lead investigator? They gave it a case number, but the only document in its file, a sheriff's spokesman confirmed to me, is a three-page report written on plain paper, not even an official police form. Dated August 13, 1981, it concluded: "The investigation by this agency is continuing and will continue until the person or persons responsible for this heinous crime are apprehended and brought to justice."

Although the *Sun-Tattler* reported on August 11 that a Hollywood police spokesman said they would investigate the case "in conjunction" with the Indian River Sheriff, the sheriff's office provided some assistance but otherwise essentially washed its hands of the case. As did Cox.

- *The search for Adam Walsh, alive, was prematurely ended*

By far, that would have been the worst thing. If he was still alive, the child who had been Adam Walsh could no longer assume his own identity. If he was still alive and people knew it, that would mean he was kept from his natural parents for the rest of his youth and beyond.

From Franklin Cox declaring a positive identification that at best was inconclusive and others allowing it to stand; to three agencies losing Adam's dental records and Ron Wright either never submitting an autopsy report or the agencies that had it, lost it, but Hollywood Police continuing to investigate the case despite the unlikelihood under those circumstances of being able to prove the identification at trial; to Phil Mundy shopping for expert estimations of time that the found child had spent in the water, to match Toole's timeline; to Hollywood Police pretty much looking away whenever Dahmer's name arose, and after the first month of the case, references to blue vans, too; and to they and the Broward State Attorney closing the case on Toole, without a trial, twenty-five years after dismissing him as a suspect because they couldn't prove anything he'd confessed to, and without finding any new evidence connecting him;

Can we conclude anything other than that this case is rotten to the core?

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In 2014, I filed a formal complaint to the State of Florida Medical Examiners Commission, an agency of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, claiming that the districts seventeen and nineteen medical examiner's offices were in violation of Florida statute 406.13 and the MEC's Practice Guidelines for Florida Medical Examiners regarding records maintenance requirements for their Adam Walsh case files.

In the complaint I acknowledged that the current chief medical examiners of both districts were not at fault for the absences, and did not ask the MEC to find against them. An investigator questioned those current chief M.E.'s to see if all the documents I alleged were missing were in fact absent. In its finding, the MEC wrote:



**State of Florida**  
**Medical Examiners Commission**

P.O. Box 1489 | Tallahassee, FL 32302-1489 | (850) 410-8600

Dear Mr. Harris:

This letter is in response to your concerns about the lack of documentation regarding the death investigation of Adam Walsh by the District 17 and District 19 Medical Examiner's Offices.

We are unable to determine if such records were ever created by the previous administrations in Districts 17 or 19 and, therefore, it would not be reasonable to charge either Craig Mallak, M.D., or Roger Mittleman, M.D. with failure to maintain records of Adam Walsh's death investigation. Since we cannot determine if such records were created, the documentation to which you refer may not have existed at the time that either of them was appointed as chief medical examiner in their respective district.

As I was unable to determine just when records disappeared or whether they were ever created, nor was the state of Florida.

I asked others, how unusual is it for an autopsy report not to be written after a medical examiner performed an autopsy?

Forensic dentist Dr. Loomis, of the New Mexico state office of the Medical Investigator, said, "Not in my experience."



Doug Culbertson, the FDLE investigator of my MEC complaint, told me, “I’ve never had a case when there was no autopsy report.”

I asked Dr. Garvin, could prosecutors bring a homicide case without an autopsy report, when an autopsy had been done?

“You couldn’t. It’s a black eye” for the M.E., he said.

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And then there was A.W. How crazy was it that he’d contacted me out of the blue and said he was Adam Walsh, and when I checked the positive identification of the found child there were problems? In the fourteen years I had been following this story, I’d never read of or heard anything suspect about Adam’s positive ID. The only people who could have known that were insiders to the case.

Here are things A.W. told me that I’ve been able to substantiate in part:

- *He said the found child wasn’t Adam Walsh because he was Adam Walsh*

In fact, the identification of the found child seems not to match Adam.

- *A.W.’s captors had intended the head to be found*

Although it was discovered 125 miles north of Hollywood in what sounded like an obscure area off the turnpike, actually it was at a fishing spot that had some traffic. If whoever disposed of it had really not wanted it found, they easily could have found a better place.

- *A.W. said that at Hollywood Mall he went to Dahmer because he recognized him as having previously dealt with his parents, possibly in a work-type situation*

In October 1996, after Toole died, the media interviewed Henry Lee Lucas about the Walsh case. In a memo to the Broward State Attorney’s Office file, Phil Mundy noted that Lucas told WSVN-TV Miami “Adam Walsh knew Toole because Toole had done work for John Walsh.” Mundy quickly added in rebuttal, “Mr. Walsh did not know Ottis Toole.”

One other intriguing detail, meaningful or not: the day or so after Smiley’s and my *Miami Herald* story ran, Dahmer witness Janice Santamassino was asked to do, by telephone, a local radio show in Cincinnati. On it, she told me, a caller said that in 1981 she had lived in Hollywood in the same neighborhood as the Walshes. The weekend before Adam disappeared, she remembered seeing a blue van outside the Walshes’ house and she’d told the police about it. Willis said he’d seen that reference in the file although I never did.

- *A.W. described Dahmer’s unique movements*

Billy Capshaw said he couldn’t give an opinion on whether A.W. was Adam but he was convinced that he’d met Dahmer.

My attempt at a fingerprint match failed. But the definitive way of matching A.W. to Adam would be, as A.W. suggested early on, comparing his DNA to the Walsh family.

John Walsh also wrote in his book:

“I knew that there were people out there who had gone through what was happening to us, and who had never learned what finally happened to their children. I hoped that, no matter what, we wouldn’t be cursed like that. Because even the thought of it was enough to make me go out of my mind.”

This many years later, if the Walshes don't know, to bring the news that Adam is not confirmed dead does not strike me as a curse. It strikes me as hopeful. And I bring the possibility of someone who may be Adam. If he is not, then I simply have done my best.

And we shouldn't forget about the family of the child who is certainly dead. They have been cursed like Walsh says.

•

On the day after Adam vanished, John and Reve went on local television in Miami to ask people to be on the lookout for Adam or to ask that whoever had him return him. They also addressed Adam directly, if he was lost and viewing their appearance:

“Adam, we're looking for you and we miss you. We love you.

“Look for landmarks, Adam. Look for landmarks, and you'll be able to find your way home.”

**28**

## Frankie Goes to Hollywood

### FRANKIE SAYS: RELAX

When I realized that the found child didn't match Adam Walsh's "Missing" photo, I thought that would be as far in the story as I would get, short of trying to get the Walshes to submit their DNA to compare to A.W.'s. Then again, a number of other times in this investigation I'd thought I'd gotten to the end, I couldn't possibly get any further.

Three days after interviewing the first pediatric dentist, this next thing happened:

Darlene Hill had long told me about Frank Sortini, her first husband and the father of both Darlene's girls. But she'd also said that after Frank remarried he had a son, Frankie, who had grown up in Hollywood and played on Adam Walsh's little league team. Frank had once shown her a picture from his wallet of Frankie in the same uniform as Adam.

The first couple of times she told me, it seemed too coincidental that Darlene, who had opened the door to the Dahmer in Miami story, could also lead me to a connection to Adam. As she also reminded me later, maybe just to rub it in, her brother-in-law had been an officer in the U.S. Army in Baumholder, Germany, while Dahmer was there. I hadn't taken the initiative to speak to him and then he'd gotten ill and died. I hadn't pursued Frank Sortini either, mostly because his son having known Adam was interesting but unimportant to me.

Until A.W.

I Google-searched Frank Jr. and found an email address he'd posted at an online high school class reunion site, although his graduation year made him two years older than Adam. That didn't sound like they'd been on the same team but maybe they knew each other. Before sending him mail I asked Darlene if it was okay with her. Sure, she said.

He was in the Tampa area. I wrote him a brief note explaining my connection to Darlene and that she'd told me about him. When he wrote back he couldn't pinpoint who Darlene was, but she was right, in fact he had been on Adam's T-ball team:

Wow, reading your email brought back some great memories... I was actually too old to play T-ball but was “drafted” by a couple of the coaches as I watched from the stands as they tried to field a team. They actually told me not to mention my age to anyone as I remember LOL. I believe Adam was one of the youngest kids on the team. I think Adam’s uncle (John’s brother maybe) or a close relative was the coach. The name of the team was Campbell Sailing Sleuth Rentals. Or at least that is how I remember it some 30 years later.

I can remember John coming out to watch the team practice and was there for some of the games. I really remember Adam’s mom Reve being an exceptionally nice person to everyone on the team. We were a God-awful team. We made the Bad News Bears look like the Yankees. We only had one victory all year. The coaches took us to McDonald’s on 28th & Hollywood Blvd. to celebrate.

I remember being the closest to Adam on the team. I know we would always hang around each other and since I was older he kind of looked up to me. I can remember Reve making a comment one time on how much she appreciated me taking a liking to him since he was shy sometimes. It’s amazing how little things like that stick with you after all these years.

The last time I saw Adam was a week or two before he was kidnapped. He lived right across the street from our ball field which was also Oakridge Elementary. He lived on a canal and I went over to fish for mullet with him. You know I can’t remember one other person on that team. I grew up in Hollywood but draw a blank when I try and fill in the positions. Ironically I think if Adam was alive we would be friends to this day. He was a special kid. Even being a kid myself I knew that. He came from what seemed like the perfect family. Mom & dad were loving and as supportive as possible. A lot of the kids like myself came from single family households so it was rare my mom could ever get to the games much less practice.

On the Internet was video of home movies the Walshes had taken of Adam playing in the T-ball league, and Frank had seen it:

When I see the video of him in his baseball uniform warming up before one of our games it brings chills to me. I’m sure you’ve seen the one I’m talking about. It is kind of grainy like the famous Bigfoot video shot some 40-50 years ago. Thinking I was on the same field when this was being shot somehow makes it so real what happened. Seeing his mannerisms or famous front toothless smile brings back a flood of memories.

I’m sure there is more that I can talk about but need to really think hard to remember. I think I suppressed some of my memories. Occasionally I will remember something about Adam and think wow I completely forgot about that. I would definitely love to hear some of the stuff that you found out. I really appreciate you finding me.

By email I filled him in on his connection to Darlene—the mother of his two half-sisters (and as Darlene later said, when she first met Frankie, he looked just like her

daughter Denise.) He wrote back that he'd been following the Dahmer-Adam story and had even seen the ABC *Primetime* broadcast, though he hadn't recognized Darlene on camera during it. I also told him a little about Jimmy Campbell, who'd coached the team.

He wrote back:

I used to ride my bike to the Hollywood Mall and specifically the Sears store 2-3 times a week. I don't think I would have been a target of [Dahmer] though but still can't help but feel extremely fortunate for me and extremely sad for Adam and the Walshes.

Coach Campbell, that was his name. Thanks for filling in one of the many missing blanks. I have been in Adam's house at least twice and probably more like four or five times. I can't recall the inside. The few times I did go over Adam and I went out back to fish from the canal. To the best of my knowledge I was still playing T-Ball when everything happened. I seem to remember someone on the team asking if we were still going to play that season.

I told A.W. about Frank and read him his emails. His first comment was about fishing: "Fishing has been a big part of my life." When he became [A.W.], his new parents "had to incorporate that into my life." He'd told them everything that had happened to him—"and they wanted me to forget."

Frank had signed his email and I read A.W. his name, Frank Sortini. "I think I remember Frankie," he said. Then he said the name of a band from the early Eighties, post-1981: Frankie Goes to Hollywood.

Darlene had used the name Frankie, remembering him as a child. I had not said that to A.W.

A.W. also added about Frank, "He was my best friend before I was abducted." He also mentioned, "I was learning how to break in a glove."

The next day I spoke to Frank for two hours, explaining how I got to him, how Darlene fit in and how I'd found her, and the Dahmer connection. I asked if he knew when the baseball team photo was taken and if at the time of the abduction, was the team still playing? He wasn't sure about the photo but thought that since he'd gotten a trophy, the abduction most likely had happened just after the season had ended—as Wayne Croft had said.

Later, Frank found the trophy in his attic, saved as juvenilia. The engraving read:

HLWD. OPT. 1981  
T-BALL  
ALL STAR

"Hlwd. Opt." meant Hollywood Optimists, he said. Since it didn't have Frank's name engraved on it, it seemed to him that the same trophy had been given to all the kids who'd played, or at least the kids on all the teams that didn't win. And "All Star" might have referred to the all-star tournament league, which Wayne Croft had said played during summer months.

We also wondered if the Walshes had kept the same trophy with the same engraving, the one given to Adam.



**Frank Sortini's 1981 T-ball trophy. Bottom photo is a close up. Photos courtesy Frank Sortini**

Since apparently there'd been about a month between the shooting of the baseball picture and the abduction, and Frank thought he'd last seen Adam a week or two before he disappeared, I asked if he remembered whether Adam had begun to grow in either of his top front teeth. They were still missing the last time he saw him, he recalled.

"He was always smiling. I thought, I wouldn't smile that much, if I were him" with those two missing front teeth.

A.W. had described himself, as Adam, as spoiled. "Definitely, absolutely," Frank confirmed. "His parents were very overprotective."

And Adam had played right field—"where the ball rarely went," he said.

On Adam's baseball picture, Frank pointed out something I had only realized when I got the scan from the *Sun-Tattler* photo: he was wearing an orange wristband. On Frank's Facebook page he had recently posted old pictures of himself, and he guided me to one where he about eight years old, wearing a football jersey and a similar orange sweatband under his watch. As a kid he'd considered that a fashion statement. The wristband was part of the baseball uniform, he said, and he remembered that the team colors were teal and orange—same as the Miami Dolphins—ironic to Frank because he hated the Dolphins then, as now.

I'd always viewed Adam's ball cap and the writing on the front of his shirt as red, and John Walsh in his book had called it red, but Frank thought it was more orange. On the sleeves are two shades of blue football-style stripes, neither teal. After we talked, on a hunch Frank went to the online site for the Golden Strand Hotel, now a resort condominium, where Campbell had his sailboat rental concession. The blues in its logo matched the stripes on Adam's shirt: sky-blue and navy blue. Its contrasting color was gold—not surprising, given the hotel's name. We thought, maybe orange was the compromise color for the uniform, given that gold might not have worked or been available.

Frank had thought there was another word in the team's name, and it bothered him enough to examine the Walshes' home video, on the Internet. On Adam's shirt in the baseball photo we could make out "Campbell" and "Rentals" on separate lines. But in the video there was a line in between them, which we couldn't read, that in the photo Adam's left arm had blocked. Frank had remembered it as "Sleuth" but later thought the shirt read "Campbell Sailing/Strand Rentals" with a sketch outline of a sailboat.

As we talked I could tell he felt comfortable, so after I explained the Dahmer part of the story I said I was going to freak him out. I told him I'd discovered that the teeth in the found child didn't match the baseball picture, therefore proof was absent that Adam Walsh was dead. Then I said there was something else, even bigger.

He was game. "Bring it on," he said.

For the past year, I told him, I have been speaking to someone who says he's Adam Walsh.

He was stunned—but still with me. I asked if he'd do a three-way phone call with A.W., and he agreed. [Like for Billy, I told Frank A.W.'s real name, and he has also agreed not to reveal it.] By then it was late in the afternoon, so he asked to do it the next day. I wondered if he might recognize A.W.'s voice or inflection as Adam, or between

the two of them they might recall doing things together. I told him I thought A.W. possibly had a lot of invented memory—and certainly had absences or blocks within it. I wasn't bothered by any wrong or inconclusive memories, those would be vindicated by whatever memories A.W. could tell which Frank could confirm, stirred up by meeting someone A.W. never could have expected I would find for him. Frank also realized that the exercise was about A.W. recalling and Frank confirming, if possible—he knew not to do the bulk of the volunteering and have A.W. say he remembered it.

I sent A.W. the Facebook picture of Frank as a kid. I wasn't sure if he recognized him, but then he said, "He was the first person who encouraged me to talk a lot. I had traveled places and he hadn't. There were lots of things I knew about the world and he didn't—and I was younger and that blew his mind."

He said that when he was a hostage, he thought about Frankie. "I would make little fantasies. One was going after Dahmer with the whole team and baseball bats. Frank would have been at the head of the team."

A.W. said baseball was new to him at the time. He said everyone on the team was bigger than he was: "At the beginning of the season I was like the team mascot." He remembered the coach—he still couldn't recall the relationship Jimmy Campbell had to him and his family—"being really frustrated when we would lose." He said the team had won just one game—I had already read him Frank's email that said that—but after the lone victory "I was ragged, the most tired I had ever been."

I told all this to Darlene. She said that Frankie as a child had told her about a friend he had who was mentally handicapped and older, who didn't have any other friends. "Frankie was the lonely boy who befriended others with no friends," she said. She remembered the day she met him, Frank Sr. had brought him to her apartment house in Miami Beach so Frankie could meet his half-sisters. Darlene wanted to take them to the pool so she'd asked Frank Sr. to make sure Frankie brought swim trunks. Instead his father forgot—not at all out of character for her ex-husband, she said. So Darlene bought Frankie a bathing suit.

Frank (Frankie) had asked me for Darlene's phone number and when he called later that night she told him that story. He didn't remember it, nor had he realized that Darlene had kept a distanced eye on him while he was growing up, but he appreciated hearing about it now. If nothing else, I'd put Frankie back in touch with part of his family.

The next afternoon we did the three-way. I called Frank first. I'd sent him the pictures of A.W. that he'd sent me the previous November—shots of him in 1983, 2001, and the computer composition of what Adam might look like at age thirty-one. As to the 1983 picture, I'd told Frank what A.W. had told me, that his hair and jaw were different than in the baseball picture because of surgeries after his ordeal. Even given that, Frank said, "That looks similar to him." The 2001 shot, he thought, had the same hairline as Adam in his baseball picture. As for his older face he was unsure. "It definitely could be," he said.

As for what Darlene had said about him as a child, Frank said, "I bring people out to talk. I'm the nurturing one."

“He was the shy one,” he said of Adam. “Baseball was probably new to him. I had been like his big brother. I had been a friend to him.”

I introduced them, Frank, [A.W.]. Neither seemed to recall each other by voice. A.W. seemed a bit nervous at first. He explained and apologized that “I don’t remember anything before the abduction. It’s like being blind to something, to what I allow myself to remember.”

But then he said he recalled fishing. “I remember watching a football game together at my home.” He also said he recalled listening to a radio as they fished.

“That sounds like something I would have done,” said Frank. He and I had Google-mapped the Walsh house at 2801 McKinley Street, and saw that it was a corner lot with a canal behind it, although the lot itself doesn’t border any water. A.W. had remembered it as a lake, and from the satellite image that’s what it looked like, but from the map image it was part of a canal system. “There was an empty lot three houses down,” Frank said, where they’d fished off the seawall.

“That’s how far my mom would have let us go,” said A.W. He said there were “vultures hanging out around the canal.”

I asked about fishing rods. Frank said, “I had a cheap Kmart special.” Had he brought an extra one for Adam? “I may have,” he said. A.W. paused. “I think I had a fishing rod I used with my dad,” he said.

When I posed a question to A.W., I realized I was going back and forth between calling him by his legal name and Adam. I’d never before addressed him as Adam. I later admitted to both he and Frank that I’d felt uncomfortable saying either.

Frank asked if he recognized his Facebook photo. “I remember being friends with a lot of people at the time. Friends from school, friends from the family. When I saw your picture, I thought...” and then he paused, “I thought you looked familiar.”

He added, “It was a rough time for both of us. It wasn’t a winning season. The last time fishing, it was a depressing time fishing.”

Frank: “That sounds right, I don’t know why. I know, the type of person I am, I would have picked up on that. Last time I saw Adam it was a weekend or so before he was abducted. After the abduction I was thinking, I just saw him, now he’s gone. That sticks in my head like a rock. You see things like that on TV, it never happens to you.”

Both agreed the reason they were depressed that last time was because their team was so bad—although nobody else on the team acted like they cared about it, A.W. said. “I hate losing anything,” Frank said, including back then, T-ball games.

Otherwise, A.W. said, “I was very, very psyched about the second grade,” which he was scheduled to enter that coming fall. “It was just a happy time, in general.” He remembered “a lot of competitiveness around. All the adults were competitive.”

Under his new identity, which is two years younger than Adam, A.W. said that he played T-ball again. “I always wore a sweatband under my watch, as a kid.” Then he said, “There might have been something you left at my home.” Frank thought that was possible but neither of them could recall what that might have been.

I asked if they’d caught any fish. “Yeah, mullet and brim,” said Frank. “That was weird because they’re saltwater fish,” A.W. responded. [Wikipedia says some species of mullet are found in fresh water. Brim, also known as bluegill or bream, is a freshwater fish.]

Frank: “We took it back to Adam’s house.”



A.W.: “Did my mom cook the fish for us?”

Frank: “No, I’m not a fish-eater. Do you remember riding my bike? With my mitt strapped on my handlebars?”

A.W.: “I remember doing that. I think I was like a mini-me to you.”

That Adam had tried to emulate him sounded right to Frank. “Like a big brother,” he said.

“How’s the last thirty years been?” A.W. asked. Frank told him he was married, had an eighteen-year-old son, and ran his own small business. “You’ve made your own slice of paradise, and that’s great,” A.W. said. Frank accepted his compliment and A.W. answered, “I can hear his South Florida vernacular. I feel like I’m talking to someone from Hollywood.”

Frank asked if A.W. could remember what position on the team Frank played. Without a lot of certainty A.W. asked, “Did you play first base?” “I think a little,” Frank said, “but there was one position I played.” Frank didn’t offer the answer to that.

I said if Adam and Frank had only known each other during baseball season and not past the end of July, then it was unlikely they’d watched a football game together on television at Adam’s house.

A.W.: “We’d go fishing and listen to the radio. We were completely into sports. We were only connecting intellectually in terms of sports.”

Frank: “I’ve listened to sports every day of my life. Anybody who knows me knows that.”

I asked Frank if Adam had a lot of toys. “Yeah, I can remember that. He had a lot of things I would have liked to have had, I remember.”

“I had a big chest of stuff. I got a lot for birthdays and Christmas,” A.W. said. But, he added, “I didn’t care as much about toys.” He was more concerned about “making a good person out of myself. Like athletics. I got a lot of preaching about being a good athlete.” Then he said, “Anything I had, it was small compared to my dad. He had a computer, a cell phone he could take places.” Back then, he recalled, mobile phones were carried in their own suitcases. I asked, Did he let you play with any of it? No, A.W. said.

Frank didn’t remember seeing a computer. “He kept it next to the television,” A.W. said. I asked A.W. if he’d had a television in his room. He had a radio, he said. Frank remembered listening to it, in his room.

“Do you remember breaking in my glove with me?” A.W. asked Frank.

“Sounds familiar,” Frank said.

A.W. described oiling the baseball glove, placing a ball in the pocket, folding it, and then compressing it under his mattress.

“That definitely sounds familiar,” Frank said. He remembered trying to show him how to do all of that, although at the time Frank himself didn’t know how to do it, either.

A.W.: “Talking to you now is like I’m watching a game on TV with you.”

Frank: “I seem to remember someone at the field saying you need to oil your glove. I said, I’ve done that a thousand times, I’ll show him.” Then he recalled placing it folded under Adam’s mattress. “You laid on the bed, it was lumpy. I was laughing. You said, how am I going to sleep with these things under my back? You remember?”

A.W. laughed. No, he said, he didn’t remember that part.

He wanted to see if Frank remembered a discussion about state capitals. A.W. said he'd insisted that the capital of New York was Buffalo, whereas Frank had responded that it was New York City. No, Frank didn't remember that.

"I was a smart-assed little kid," A.W. said.

"I remember that, when Art said that yesterday," Frank said. "You were like a squirrel."

"I was like a leprechaun," A.W. countered.

"How were you a smart-ass?" Frank asked.

A.W.: "I would want to say the one thing that would make all the adults laugh. But sometimes I did that with my friends." He remembered that he'd pick up bits of information from cartoons, like names of obscure places, and drop them in conversations. "You were showing me how to one-up another kid."

Frank: "Definitely something I would do, to show how to stand up for yourself."

A.W.: "End of that summer, we were like two comedians. You're describing me for sure."

I asked Frank, was Adam a bright kid?

"I remember thinking, how did he know that?" Frank answered.

After about an hour and a half, A.W. excused himself to take another call. I figured that we'd overwhelmed him. Frank and I used the time after to chart the score. We also called Darlene and had a three-way with her.

Here were the things A.W. said that Frank thought matched Adam Walsh:

- *"I remember Adam being sad around that time, for some reason. I didn't remember until he said that."* We speculated that since Jimmy Campbell had left the Walsh house two weeks before the abduction, and Frank thought that the last time he'd seen Adam was a week or so before the abduction, that's what it could have been. As well, he remembered, major league baseball had gone on strike that summer. Looking it up, the strike had begun June 12, and games had not resumed until August 10 (coincidentally the day the head said to be Adam was found). To a pair of kids so consumed with baseball, Frank said, the strike could have gotten them down.
- *A.W.'s agreeing on how bad their T-ball team was.* "It frustrated me how bad we were, and I know we'd said on the field that we're worse than the Bad News Bears." That was a misfit little league team in a 1976 movie of the same name, with a couple of sequels.
- *Breaking in the glove:* "I seem to remember someone saying this is how you do it. I remember him putting it under his bed, him laughing. He had a giggle laugh." Although Frank had helped Adam break in his glove, Frank never did that for any of his own gloves. "I forgot about it, until this. He looked up to me, and I said I knew how to do it" when in fact, he didn't.
- *That A.W. to me had referred to him as Frankie:* "That's pretty good."
- *"He described how I was as a kid, without a doubt. Things I definitely would do—the nurturer, but also, we need to win."*
- *"Mini-me":* "I remember him looking up to me. I remember him acting like he's trying to show me things, trying to impress me."

- *Fishing*: Where they fished together was a No Trespassing sign, three or four houses away from the Walsh house.
- “*Smart-ass*”: “I remember that,” as well as Adam liking to be the center of attention.

I spoke to A.W. later that evening. I told him, now I really don’t know what to call you. He was still [his legal name] but I could no longer see how he couldn’t also be Adam Walsh. There were too many things he and Frank had recognized about each other. That’s when he first suggested, “Just call me A.W.”

I continued speaking to each of them apart and scheduled another three-way for the week after. “It was like I got a promotion for being friends with such an older kid,” A.W. said. Not until high school did that happen again for him, he said.

“He said he was my best friend on the team,” Frank said. “That’s what stays in my mind the most.” He’d long ago told that to his wife when they’d talked about him knowing Adam Walsh.

At games, when Adam swung a bat, Frank remembered him almost always hitting the tee instead of the ball, so the ball would drop to the ground. When he did hit the ball, he didn’t have the strength to get it more than halfway to third base. “I was the only one who could hit the ball to the outfield. We were the worst team, and Adam was the worst player on it.”

Before I’d done the first three-way, A.W. had told me, “I was the smallest kid in that baseball league. But not one to back down from challenges.”

He remembered Frank trying to show him how to hit. He’d pitch to him but since he’d usually miss the ball, “it tired me out. I would always have to chase it.”

He also remembered that Frank had more rapport with adults and the coaches than the other kids did. Frank recalled that, too. A.W. said Frank gave him advice to stay alert to the game, to keep watching the ball including when it was thrown from base to base, and to focus on the infield (from Adam’s right field position). “He told me not to zone out, or wipe off sweat onto my hands because they’ll get wet and slip.”

We did the second three-way. A.W. said that at the beginning of the season “I sat on the bench because I didn’t know how to play.” “I remember some kids not playing,” Frank said, although he couldn’t recall Adam being one of them.

“You wanted to play Pony League,” A.W. said.

Frank: “I wanted to play little league baseball, where they pitched.” He couldn’t recall if that was the same as Pony League. [“Pony League” is the name of a youth baseball-softball organization that has had leagues in Hollywood. “Little League” is a similar but separate organization.] “Yeah, I’m playing T-ball and I’m too old. Yeah, I want to play real baseball.”

A.W.: “At the end we were trying to cheer each other up” because the team was so bad.

Frank: “You were more the cheerful one than me. I remember you being a little clown, or a little silly.”

A.W.: “Yeah, that’s how I am, a joker.”

When I heard that, I wondered, if all this was a joke on me, it was pretty elaborate.

A.W.: “I would get into conversations with adults and say something to them that Frank had said.” Or drop a name of someone in baseball, like Nolan Ryan, the now-Hall of Fame strikeout pitcher. Frank couldn’t remember mentioning to Adam about Nolan Ryan but did recall talking about him.

A.W. remembered the coach getting upset at bad play, “moving his head and going, *Uch, uch.*”

Frank: “I remember the coach being upset but trying not to be. I remember hearing excuses, from the coaches to the parents.”

I asked A.W. how far he could hit the ball, how far his furthest hit went. “My farthest hit was past second base” and into the outfield, he remembered. Then he said, “I would bunt it, intentionally.” But then he was told that bunting was against the rules in T-ball. Against a different opponent he remembered bunting again, and they didn’t know the rule. “I got a triple,” he said.

Frank: “Sounds familiar—about the rule, you can’t do that.”

A.W.: “I was aiming it. Frank told me to aim it. Coach told me about pointing my left foot wherever I wanted it to go. I didn’t have the power to hit the ball as far as Frank, but I had the ingenuity to cause errors whenever I hit the ball, to compensate for being so small.”

Frank: “I can definitely see it, that attitude.”

A.W.: “We wanted to play the full rules of baseball like we saw on TV.” He said they pushed the rules of T-ball so it was more like they were playing real baseball.

Frank: “That’s something I would have done, with him as my accomplice.”

A.W.: “I remember I kicked dirt at the umpire—and the kids cracked up.” Frank laughed at that but couldn’t recall the moment. That would have emulated either of the two great umpire-baiters of the time, managers Earl Weaver of the Orioles or Billy Martin, in 1981 with the Oakland A’s but more famous with the Yankees, before and after.

A.W. said he remembered getting a trophy for playing, which would mean that the season had ended. “The last week before the abduction, I didn’t think I was playing, not with the league.”

Frank: “I’m a hundred percent sure I got a trophy.” That was before he’d found it in his attic. A.W. thought it had a baseball diamond on it, mounted on a pedestal. Frank couldn’t recall that.

As for Adam’s famous baseball picture itself, A.W. said, “I wasn’t happy in that picture.” That surprised me, he looked like he had a big grin. “I remember that picture being the end of my life, as a small child.” In elementary school, as A.W., already with amnesia about being Adam but exposed to the picture as so many children were, he’d bonded with it as a symbol.

Around that time A.W. excused himself from the three-way to take another call. Frank stayed on the line with me.

Thinking more about it, he recalled an argument over bunting. “Now I do remember someone saying you can’t do that.” Adam’s bunt may have been just an intentional half-swing to achieve the same thing.

Could he really be Adam Walsh? “I’m trying to walk the tightrope. Going by what he’s saying, he definitely could be.”

A.W.'s Pony League reference was correct. "I had the feeling of feeling too good to play T-ball. He's saying a lot of things that are me" even though Frank couldn't specifically recall speaking most of those things.

Within the hour we resumed the three-way. A.W. said, in his twenties, a man he'd known had reminded him of Frank, in part because of his laugh and how it was without malice.

Frank: "I would laugh at things [Adam] would do. He was kind of a jokester."

A.W. said that while he was in right field he was paying attention to the batters so he could learn to hit. Frank said Adam was a good student. "I at least had his attention."

Frank asked A.W. if he (Frank) was a good hitter. "Yeah, you were calling the shots from the dugout, where you wanted it to go, the right or the left."

Frank: "I would purposely hit it to left, or turned and hit it to right field. I was bored, the team wasn't going to win, it didn't matter."

A.W. said Frank would say that "some player isn't good, hit it to him. You were watching the game intently. Either talking to me or listening to the coach."

Frank: "Any advantage, I would have done. Sounds exactly how I'd be the lead. I'd talk to the coach about the other team."

A.W.: "That's what we were talking about, in as few words as possible. When we were involved in the game we were talking a lot less."

Then A.W. came up with something else remarkable:

"Frank knew the hand gestures of baseball. We had a conversation, and then we used it in the game."

But from A.W.'s description, neither could decide what the gestures were for. Frank first thought it was to motion Adam to back up because the batter could hit it far. A.W. thought it was a message to a pitcher. But that couldn't be because there's no pitching in T-ball. I suggested a third-base coach's roundhouse motion for a runner to round third and try to score.

A.W.: "Maybe it was two fingers up, when you wanted me to go further out."

I said two fingers sounded like a catcher's sign to the pitcher, one for a fastball, two for a curve. Then I realized what he was talking about:

"Two fingers, two outs. Everybody, we have two outs, one more out to go." I joked, in T-ball getting the third out might not happen before sunset, but somehow we have two outs.

Frank instantly recognized that. "I did do that, like the big ballplayers."

A.W.: "When you did that, I changed the way I played and watched."

Frank had never said which position he'd mostly played and I thought now to re-ask that to A.W. With first base the wrong answer, I guessed to myself that the right answer was second base. That way, while the second baseman was actively in the game, Adam, in the Podunk of right field, would have been watching Frank, his back turned.

A.W. said third base.

"I played third base," said Frank. "I was the big shot of the team, I did that, two fingers, two outs."

The three-way ended shortly after, and again I stayed on with Frank.

I said third base was across the field from right field. Second or shortstop would have been the better guesses. “That’s a little freaky there,” said Frank. “The way he’s warming up to me, it does seem he genuinely knows me or at least seems to know me.”

Frank said throughout his life “I’ve been a mentor to a lot of people.” That A.W. recalled so many more specific things Frank had done than Frank himself could remember, I said, was consistent with being the protégé in a mentor relationship. The protégé studies the mentor and his advice, which is novel to him. To the mentor the advice is ordinary, the relationship less freighted, and the mentor does not study the protégé.

I further compared, let’s say the best-looking girl in the class befriended an ugly duckling boy, and the relationship was not patronizing. If they were to meet years later, the boy might more likely recall all sorts of things about the girl and what they’d done together that the girl might not. Frank agreed that logic was consistent.

Later I thought, despite A.W.’s stated amnesia, he’s an exceptional observer. It may be that all his memory is present, just blocked. And not only Frank but also Billy Capshaw, two persons he could not possibly have imagined I could find to speak with him, are the vehicles to tap it.

At my suggestion, Frank and his wife Jill drove from Tampa on a Friday afternoon to meet A.W. at his apartment the next day. Almost thirty years later, Frank sported a shaved head. Still, in person, it wasn’t hard to identify him from his pictures as a child when he had straight blonde hair combed forward, freckles, and a dimple on his chin. The hair and freckles were gone but the dimple had gotten more pronounced. Later in the day we asked A.W. whether he’d recognized Frank and he said he did. But the issue was whether Frank recognized Adam.

That answer was uncertain. I asked A.W. if he thought he looked anything like Adam as a child and he said no, he’d had too much work done to his face. I mentioned that near the end of our first meeting months earlier I’d thought I’d momentarily seen in A.W.’s laugh the same bright joyous smile that Adam had in his baseball picture. I said I thought I’d just seen it again that day. I admitted that it could have been all in my perception.

Days later, Frank emailed me with the same idea:

In the famous missing picture of Adam with the bat he has a unique smile and cheekbones that really show his smile unlike anyone’s that I can remember.

When I see [A.W.] look a certain way or a certain smile it looks eerily similar.

Another day later, Frank elaborated: he’d seen that Saturday before I’d spoken up and said the same thing.

A.W. showed us a boxful or two of old photographs of himself. It struck me how many distinct looks he’d had in his life. Also striking were two three-by-five prints of him which on the back were penned “1980.” The ink looked old and faded. A.W. said that for a party, his family had made a video of his childhood in which they’d backdated photos to before 1981.

There was also the issue of his two passports from Latin American countries [which he asked me not to identify], with visa stamps from 1979. A.W. had told me about them so I asked to see them. Both had a black and white photo of a young child who A.W. had

said wasn't him and didn't look like him. The name on the passports was the Spanish version of A.W.'s legal first and middle name, followed by two surnames (or family names) other than the legal name he goes under.

A.W. explained that the passports were issued for his parents' (he called them "guardians") natural-born son who had been kidnapped and killed by Dahmer and the others in his group. When A.W. (Adam) survived Dahmer he became his guardians' replacement son and was given the original boy's identity to assume. He'd told me much of this before, but previously he'd said that his guardians' son had survived and been placed with another family, as had happened to him. I attributed the change in story not to deception but to his confusion.

A day later A.W. told me he had a copy of a legal document that had changed his name from the one on the passports to his current name. He gave me the case number in Dade County Family Court and I found its docket sheet online, although it read that the paper file had since been destroyed, consistent with all Dade County civil court files that old.

Here was something else Frank had picked up on: when they were talking about tucking Adam's baseball glove under the mattress and Adam sleeping on it, A.W. said Frank had given him a small bit of advice: "I wouldn't do that."

"I don't remember saying that, in that context," Frank said. But, "it's something I would say" and he'd used exactly those words at other times, in other contexts, kind of like a standard line he'd used. Jill had agreed. She told him, "That's you, that's definitely you."

Jill had also reminded him that he'd previously mentioned to her about helping to break in Adam's glove. Twelve years earlier, when Frank's son was playing baseball, he needed to break in his own glove, and Frank had either showed him how or told him how to do it. He wrote:

Back then when we were talking about it and I told her point blank that I never broke my own glove in as a kid but I helped Adam with his. She remembers me saying this. She brought it up not me. After I told her back then and up until [A.W.] brought it up on the phone I simply forgot that memory. I rarely talked about Adam except once in a while when it would come up that I played on his team. I never even told her we were best friends on the team... So for her to remember this I thought was great.

A.W. had also shown us things Dahmer had done to him. First was what he called a "donkey kick": a backwards kick that had struck him in the nose, like a donkey or horse might do. At my request he stood up and showed us. It had happened, he said, at the Walshes' home, before the abduction. Dahmer was delivering something, and Mrs. Walsh had left the room, perhaps to get money to pay him. A.W. had mentioned this before to me, but on Saturday he said that the delivery was pizza. I immediately challenged him that when I'd told him about Dahmer's job at a place where pizza was delivered that had improved his memory. A.W. stuck to his story. In my mind it was possible this was an enhancement that had come from me or he was just better remembering things from that time since I'd put him together with Frank. He had said previously that he'd seen Dahmer near his parents.

Anyway, Dahmer's donkey kick had made him cry and he'd complained to his mother. Dahmer had denied to her doing anything—the kid had just started crying on his own. Apparently it had been left at that.

"That sounds like Jeff," Billy told me. "Something out of the blue. And he hated kids."

From there I made the connection back to W.C. Fields: on film, hadn't he struck or at least threatened more than one bratty child, causing him or her to cry—and perhaps protest to mother? At least in the films, usually if not always, the child had provoked or even hit Fields first. And of course, Billy had gotten a birthday card from Jeff with a pop-up of Fields, who Jeff admired.

Here are some misanthropic comic lines variously attributed to Fields that sound like Dahmer might have considered a little too literally:

Anyone who hates children and animals can't be all bad.

Children should neither be seen or heard from—ever again.

I never met a kid I liked.

If you're a real good kid, I'll give you a piggy-back ride on a buzz saw.

There's not a man in America who at one time or another hasn't had a secret desire to boot a child in the ass.

and...

Madam, there's no such thing as a tough child—if you parboil them first for seven hours, they always come out tender.

A.W. had also found for us a book of his sketches that he'd mentioned to me. He opened it up: it was talented work, and psychologically dark. He said he'd drawn them about fifteen years earlier, and I got the impression that he understood them better now. There were drawings he said were of Dahmer, and A.W.'s gnarled hand. Dahmer's pictures weren't spitting images, there was some abstraction, and I was unclear whether he knew at the time who he was drawing.

A.W. also opened his mouth to show us his tongue. In the middle it had a deep slash, front to back lengthwise, that had healed imperfectly. Dahmer had done that to him, he said.

It was shocking to me and I think everyone else in the room. He'd never before told me about it. I asked about it the next day. Was that a single slash? No, he said, "It was a continual kind of thing. If I said the wrong thing, he would cut it. Like I said his name—like, Jeffrey Dahmer, like I was going to tell on him. Or after the torture I would cry for my mom, he would cut it until I couldn't talk. I was totally submissive. He'd say, don't worry, it'll heal." That last thing in itself was interesting, it might have indicated that Dahmer didn't intend to kill him.

On Saturday he'd said he had scars all over his body including his genital area. On the phone he told me that Dahmer had bitten the top of his penis, and he had a bite mark scar. He remained functional, but "after he did that, he started calling me Stumpy."

I thought I recalled Billy telling me that Dahmer had bitten him. When I asked, he said he'd only told me about Dahmer's bite mark on his dog tag. He said Dahmer had



done that deliberately so Billy would have something to remember him by. But in fact Billy did have two similar bite marks from Dahmer—not on his penis, but just inches away. A.W. said he remembered Dahmer biting him; Billy said he didn't and had discovered them after he'd awoken. He'd never shown them to anyone besides his psychiatrist Dr. Watermann, and hadn't let him photograph it.

"I couldn't walk—from those bite marks. It was probably when I was tied on my back. It's within two inches of my prostate." The bites came before Jeff's prostate surgery on him, he said.

Had Dahmer bitten his Milwaukee victims? All of the torsos recovered from his apartment were skeletons. However he did preserve a penis from one victim—he'd even painted it the color of Caucasian flesh.

I found this: in his 1992 prison interview with Dahmer, transcribed in his book *I Have Lived in the Monster*, Robert Ressler had asked, "Did you ever do any biting?"

**DAHMER:** "Uh, yeah. With the first one on 26th Street." (Dahmer's Milwaukee apartment was on 25th Street, so maybe that was a transcription error.)

**RESSLER:** "Could you tell me about that?"

**DAHMER:** "Well, after he was dead I did bite the neck."

**RESSLER:** "Just once?"

**DAHMER:** "Hard."

**RESSLER:** "Did you ever repeat that? And what was behind that, the motivation?"

**DAHMER:** "Uh, perverse sexual practice."

**RESSLER:** "And did you repeat that?"

**DAHMER:** "No."

**RESSLER:** "Just the one time?"

**DAHMER:** Uh-huh. Except for the eating."

A.W. also told me Dahmer had cut pieces of flesh from his leg. In a 1994 article entitled *Destructive Hostility: The Jeffrey Dahmer Case* lead written by Dr. Jeffrey Jentzen, the chief Milwaukee County Medical Examiner who supervised the autopsies of Dahmer's victims, and which was published in the *American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, police had found "31 sections of skin and soft tissue consisting of fatty tissue, skeletal muscle, and facial and fibrous tissue" in a plastic bag in Dahmer's portable chest freezer. The pieces were "somewhat square" and the largest was fifteen by seven centimeters, or very roughly, five by three inches. The smallest was 2.5-by-1.5 centimeters, or about an inch by a half-inch.

A.W. elaborated: Some of the pieces Dahmer took from him were larger than five-by-three. They were about a half-inch thick, from both calves and elsewhere. Dahmer had patched them (or others) back, and later A.W.'s surgeons had had to undo and repair his sewing. There remained a faint outline of those areas, which are more pronounced when they get infected, he said.

In a photo Billy sent me of his neck area, I could see a horizontal line a few inches long. That was the same as what A.W. described, Billy told me. It too had a tendency to

infect and get more pronounced, especially from sun exposure. It was at the bottom of an area of blotchy skin discoloration, lighter-colored than the surrounding skin.

He also had what might be a skin graft like A.W. described, he told me: a three-inch symmetrical discoloration on the back of his neck. Although he thought Dahmer did that, he couldn't remember, not even under hypnosis, how it happened or when it might have been fixed.

Billy hadn't thought Dahmer had killed in Germany until his arrest in Milwaukee ten years after. But then he began to put things together: the time Jeff returned to their room with his clothes and skin covered with dried blood, and the warning he'd gotten about Hans, the mutilated man who'd last been seen with Dahmer, just before Billy arrived on base. He'd always been suspicious of Dahmer's combination-padlocked dorm-size refrigerator in their barracks room that he'd never seen inside of. He did see packages go in and out "like clockwork," in one day and out perhaps the next. Dahmer had said, chuckling, they were lunchmeat, like liverwurst, or liver pate. Billy, always hungry because Dahmer limited his access to food, wanted him to share whatever edibles he had. But, he said, they always smelled like bad meat.

In his chest freezer in Milwaukee Dahmer had kept human organs: lungs, a kidney, a liver, a heart, and intestines. He'd told police he'd planned to eat them. Cannibalism was a bad thing to admit to, but Billy thought maybe it wasn't as bad as the real reason Dahmer had those organs: he'd removed them from his victims, to sell.

And maybe he'd been doing that at least since he'd been in Germany.

Dahmer knew enough about anatomy and surgery to be able to remove organs, Billy said. Dahmer had even drilled his knowledge into him, at Billy's peril if he couldn't recite it back. Even thirty years later Billy still remembered much of it; for me he rattled off information about the surgical procedures needle thoracostomy, cricothyrotomy, and pericardiocentesis. "It was like a condensed version of medical school. He had such a vast amount of knowledge, and he knew it all at nineteen, twenty years old," he said, far beyond what an army medic had to know. As for Dahmer needing any supplies, "it was nothing to go into the hospital and get it."

Why he thought Dahmer had sold organs was that he kept otherwise unexplainable large amounts of cash on the top shelf of his locker, which Billy broke into and stole, to hide from him—not that Billy, trapped in the room, could have used any of that money himself. The most he took at one time was \$600-700, in twenties and hundreds in U.S. currency, but new money would quickly replace it. He guessed that in total he'd stolen \$12,000-15,000 from him. Dahmer might have spent some of his money on rental cars to drive off base, Billy said. Behind their barracks he could see a private car lot from which GIs could rent BMWs, Mercedeses, and Italian sports cars. At least on one occasion Dahmer told him he had rented a car from that lot, to drive to Munich for Oktoberfest—he remembered because that's when Dahmer brought him back his (belated) birthday card, his eighteenth birthday had been in mid-September 1980. (An August 1991 FBI document reports that Dahmer said he'd spent "several days" at Oktoberfest in Munich in October 1980.) Dahmer would disappear overnight seemingly at his will, Billy said, which must have required official passes, and didn't have to appear for morning formation, which wasn't a regular thing anyway. Things in his company "were not military," he had told me long ago.

(In its report of Steven Hicks's murder, the Bath, Ohio, Police Department wrote, "Jeffrey L. Dahmer stated he did not drive in the United States Army" or for that matter, while living in Florida. In one of its reports, the Milwaukee Police wrote that Dahmer had explained why he hadn't killed while in the military: "He said he was busy in the Army and after work he'd go out drinking with the guys and get up and work." Later it adds, "He further states that he did not have a homosexual relationship while he was in the Army or in Florida.")

Considering that A.W. had said Dahmer had taken pieces of his flesh, when I told Billy about the thirty-one pieces found in Dahmer's Milwaukee freezer, he suggested they were all meant to be tissue samples, swatches used in advance to determine an organ transplant recipient's blood type compatibility and to cross-match antibodies to reduce the chance of rejection. All thirty-one apparently had been traced to a single Milwaukee victim. I asked Billy, wouldn't blood have been as good to use as tissue samples? Yes, he said, but Dahmer might have taken tissue "to show his product."

For months Billy had been trying to get my attention regarding the C.A. Pound report of the tool mark analysis of the found child said to be Adam. There were six chop marks and other cuts in the skull's neck and jaws, which didn't strike him as the work of Jeff Dahmer, unless maybe he was drunk or in a rush. Dahmer was meticulous and prideful, "a perfectionist," Billy said.

Dr. Jentzen had seen precise work in the Milwaukee victims, possibly even admiring it. He wrote: "Additional autopsy findings indicated a sharp, clean dissection and dismemberment of the bodies through articular joint spaces with a minimum of unnecessary incision cuts."

I noted that the Milwaukee skeletons had their spinal cords severed between cervical vertebrae C5-C6 or C6-C7, but the found child said to be Adam had been severed at the edge of C3, not a match. Billy said Dahmer had taught him that there were reference points between C4, C5, and C6 where a cut can paralyze someone. That would have allowed him to take their organs without resistance, he said.

We wondered why it seemed that no one at least publicly had mentioned the possibility, considering that Dahmer had removed organs and his apparent surgical acumen, he had killed in order to sell the organs. Instead the medical examiner and the psychiatrists who'd examined him had concentrated on his sexual and neurological dysfunctions and lack of impulse control. One answer was that Dahmer had volunteered so much unflattering information about himself that there was a tendency (or desire) to believe that upon capture he'd unloaded everything bad in his life, as he insisted he'd done. And he hadn't mentioned organ sales.

At trial it was explained why he'd dismembered his bodies, as quoted by Joan Ullman in her 1992 reporting for *Psychology Today*: "Dismembering was a disposal problem..." "The disemboweling...[was] the most efficient way of handling all the remains, which only served an administrative function." That served to dismiss the precision of the disembowelment as well as avoided any inquiry into the thirty-one rectangles of flesh.

But it seemed, Ullman wrote, that the trial's larger function was to calm the upset community of Milwaukee: "The words I kept hearing from lawyers, spectators, and forensic experts were 'healing' and 'understanding'. The endless talk about Dahmer's profound mental illness, treatment needs, and prognoses made me think of his homicides

as almost incidental.” The jury was “forced to listen to crazy-sounding arguments pushed to logical absurdities by expert witnesses you could only regard as hired goons.” She’d also watched the prosecutor and defense attorney exchange a bear hug before they began closing arguments.

In other words, the trial of Jeffrey Dahmer was a mostly orchestrated whitewash. Its theme was that he was a loner and acted alone, and he was off the streets because the police had stopped him—even if before his arrest they’d never bothered to realize that the city had a serial killer who’d killed sixteen times. (Separately, the police very publicly fired two officers who had found a naked and incoherently drugged teenager who had escaped Dahmer, who calmly explained that they were boyfriends. The officers released the boy back into Dahmer’s custody and then laughed about it on the police radio. After they left, Dahmer killed the boy.) Pleading not guilty by reason of insanity, Dahmer admitted all fifteen murders he was charged with. Only one expert witness (Dr. George Palermo) disputed that Dahmer had confessed to all the murders he’d ever done. Wisconsin had no capital punishment law, so the jury’s decision to find him insane or not was to either send him to state prison for fifteen life sentences or keep him in a mental institution, which some day in the presumably distant future could decide he was no longer insane and a hazard to others and release him, with no legal establishment of guilt. (Whether or not Dahmer met the legal standard of insanity, indisputably he was madly, truly, deeply nuts. But when the jury rejected the insanity defense, nobody seemed surprised or blamed them.) At sentencing, in *sotto voce*, Dahmer even apologized and endured the barely-restrained rage of family members of his victims. Watching on television, the locals got their catharsis and could move on without realizing much cognitive dissonance.

I had read a number of books about Dahmer plus a great deal of print news coverage from Milwaukee and elsewhere and never saw a reference to those thirty-one pieces of flesh until I found Dr. Jentzen’s journal article, published more than two years after Dahmer’s arrest. Had anyone else? I asked Colleen Henry, the reporter at Milwaukee’s WISN-TV who’d covered the Dahmer story and came to Miami in 2007 to report the Adam connection, and at her suggestion, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner’s Office operations manager Karen Domagalski, who had been a Milwaukee Police detective beginning in 1992, just after Dahmer’s arrest. Neither could recall it. While I had Domagalski I asked if autopsy reports of Dahmer’s victims had ever been released as public record. No, she said, Wisconsin state statutes and case law citing “unwarranted public intrusion” prohibits them from releasing any autopsy reports. However, after forty years they donate their files to a local historical society.

If information about the thirty-one pieces was never released except in a journal that was obscure to non-forensics professionals, should we be surprised? Were the thirty-one pieces just another oddity or was Billy right that they suggested an underground organ supply ring, which would mean that although Dahmer may have been working alone, there were others involved who remained unknown and at large?

So in summary:

While Dahmer was in Germany there was a series of mutilation murders within a radius of fifty miles from his barracks. He traveled off base in cars that required official military passes to rent. Billy once saw him return to their room drenched with dried blood. Dahmer put packages that smelled like spoiled meat into his locked refrigerator.

He had unexplained large amounts of cash. In his Milwaukee apartment he kept human organs and skeletons of the bodies they came from, so he was skilled at removing the organs. The flesh rectangles he kept may have been tissue samples. A.W. told a story of Dahmer cutting similar-sized flesh from him, and he may have done that to Billy too.

Or another way:

In Milwaukee Dahmer dissected and kept organs but no one publicly suggested he was selling them, an idea he apparently pre-empted by claiming he was a cannibal. Yet Milwaukee didn't get, or widely disseminate, two additional pieces of the story: although they knew that German police had suspected him in a series of murders, they didn't have Billy's story which included Dahmer's fridge and his unexplained large amounts of cash. Also, Milwaukee authorities withheld or played down the information about the thirty-one pieces of tissue, therefore no one at least in the public considered they might have been tissue samples intended to be matched with prospective organ recipients.

How far a push is it to suggest that Dahmer was in the organ business?

Now try this: if the jaws of the child said to be Adam did not match him and his mutilation wasn't Dahmer's typical work—yet 4-6 witnesses at Hollywood Mall identified Dahmer there, then what?

Three possibilities:

1. The found child's murder is entirely unrelated to Dahmer.
2. Even though the found child's severance at vertebra C3 as well as its chop marks didn't precisely match his Milwaukee victims whose heads were severed, it was still the work of the drunk or rushed Jeff. The two Publix drivers who saw a blue van within a mile of the turnpike crime scene put Dahmer there.
3. A.W.'s story: Dahmer took Adam but had others involved with him and maybe someone else severed the head that was found.

Here is the contradiction of Jeffrey Dahmer:

Was he in essence insane or otherwise profoundly mentally ill, like he pled to the court? Did he premeditate his crimes? Was he a brilliant or at least an adequate surgeon, without credentials? Was he in the organ business? Was he a cannibal, like he said?

Was he in control of himself or not? Was he Jekyll and Hyde, dependent on alcohol or drugs?

It's possible the answer is yes to all of the above.

What he was not was a complete truth-teller.

With the argument that Dr. Jentzen's journal article had long ago breached the case's confidentiality, I went back to Karen Domagalski and directly requested the Dahmer case autopsy reports. I sent her an electronic copy of the article. Within days she indeed sent me the reports.

I knew Billy wanted to see them, and I expected he could make more sense of them than I (remember, as a paramedic he'd also been trained as a coroner), but I wanted to make sure he could handle it, knowing he came not far at all from being a similar victim. He said he was okay. So outside of the authorities and whoever they'd shown them to privately, he was the second to see them.

Still, he was stunned by what was there. He pointed out to me, in the four victims who had full skeletons remaining—Dahmer's most recent victims, before he was arrested

—Dahmer had made incisions to the trachea. What it indicated was, Dahmer had performed tracheotomies or cricothyrotomies, surgical cuts to insert a tube to keep them breathing because on their own they couldn't bring air into their windpipes.

Why couldn't they breathe? Billy proposed a chilling answer: because Dahmer had paralyzed them with spinal cuts between the C4, C5, and C6 reference points. Those cuts didn't show in the autopsies because their heads had later been severed. But they would have left the victims unable to breathe on their own, necessitating an emergency tracheotomy.

To be able to sever their spinal cords, Billy thought Jeff had probably drugged them, gotten them drunk enough to lose consciousness, or a combination. He wouldn't have needed a scalpel—an ice pick would do, as Jeff had often used an ice pick to hurt him.

The victims also had incisions in the areas around the eighth, ninth, and tenth ribs (count down from the collarbone)—Billy thought those were thoracotomies. That would indicate that at some point the victims' lungs had collapsed. Incisions and tube insertions would re-inflate them by equalizing air pressure.

All of the bodies were mostly stripped of flesh and muscle. The few remaining places that had any were in the regions of the feet, hands, elbows and knees.

"I think he kept those people alive," Billy said. "They went through hell. They got to watch Jeff cut pieces of them off," which is what A.W. said had happened to him. "Feeling would be there but they couldn't move.

"These people did not die a sudden death. That's what I got out of (reading the reports)."

In either his autopsies or journal article, the Milwaukee medical examiner hadn't suggested that Dahmer had performed tracheotomies or thoracotomies, to extend his victims' lives, or that he'd paralyzed them, still alive.

But when the story broke in 1991, everyone following it must have asked at least themselves the question, had Dahmer tortured his victims? How unspeakable of a beast was he? In the press the answer came quickly: No. Confronted by Milwaukee Police, Dahmer insisted, "I was not into torture." He'd asphyxiated his victims, he said, and Jentzen in his article reported that Dahmer had taken Polaroid photos of two bodies that showed identifiable ligature marks about the neck. When he did his surgeries, Dahmer said his victims were already dead—or at least unconscious, like when he used a power drill to open holes in skulls and then pour in Muriatic acid, a cleaning fluid, a failed effort he said intended to mold them into something like zombies who would sexually comply to him. Human compassion, of which Dahmer was low by a couple of quarts, flinches at innocent suffering. Therefore, even his admitted cannibalism wasn't close to as bad as had he admitted to torture. So even though most of what we had to go on was Dahmer's word, the answer he gave on torture was what we all were relieved to hear.

Understandably, sensitive to the families of the victims, it would follow that no one in particular would have wanted to challenge it.

But not just for Dahmer but for everyone else too, was it a convenient fiction?

In the autopsy reports, the incisions that the medical examiners noted were how they found them—not cuts they made. Although the victims' names are well known, I decided here not to say which they are:

Victim A: "The trachea has been irregularly incised to include a portion of the thyroid cartilage." "The larynx has incision of the thyroid and cricoid cartilage." "There

are sharp edge incisions... within the right 8th, 9th and 10th intercostal spaces” of the ribs.

That last, Billy thought, indicated Jeff had tried thoracotomy three times, succeeding the third time. The largest incision was at the tenth space—5-by-2.5 cm—an appropriate size hole for a tube, he said.

Victim B: “Esophagus with attached inferior trachea to a severed point at the carina.” “Sharp cut at 6th rib cartilage” and two superficial incisions at the ninth and tenth rib level.

Victim C: “The trachea has been sharply incised at a point 1.0 cm inferior to the cricoid cartilage.” Also, “The dissected margin of the L2-3 [lumbar] intervertebral disc is smooth and without evidence of a sawing margin. There is similar smooth cutting margin through the intervertebral disc of the lower pelvic margin.” Billy thought that indicated the precision of Jeff’s surgery.

Victim D: “The attached trachea has been severed just inferior to the cricoid cartilage.” “There is an incised defect within the 6th right intercostal space.” “There is a similar defect on the right 6th rib.”

Here’s from Jack Hoffman’s prison interview with Dahmer, also in 1992. Also present was FBI agent Dan Craft:

**HOFFMAN:** “Where did you learn about the, so much about the anatomy, did you have books on this?”

**DAHMER:** “No, it was trial and error, I really didn’t know that much about the anatomy at that time.”

Hoffman pointed out that Dahmer had been a medic in the Army.

**DAHMER:** “Right, but that was just general field, real general knowledge. Probably had as much knowledge as either of you would, about...”

Hoffman also asked how Dahmer had immobilized his victims. “You never had to use physical force to keep them there?”

Dahmer: “One, a couple times I did. I never wanted to. I wanted to... to make it as quick and painless as possible, right.” Later in the interview he said he would administer the sleep medicine Halcion, a benzodiazepine similar to Xanax or Ativan, 0.125 mg, “five or six” at a time. The FDA warns not to take a dosage of more than 0.5 mg, and not to mix it with alcohol. The drug reaches its peak level about two hours after administration and has a half-life within that range. The medical examiner’s toxicology reports showed presence of it in two victims.

In the Milwaukee Police reports, Detective Patrick Kennedy wrote that Dahmer told him what had happened to one victim when “the potion that he had given him of sleeping pills and alcohol was beginning to wear off.” The victim was muscular and Dahmer “did not feel that he would be able to strangle him successfully without putting up a fight; so he took a knife and stabbed him once along the jugular vein in order to kill him.”

In his interview, Robert Ressler asked Dahmer directly, “Were any of these kids tortured?”

Dahmer: “Never. Never.”

Billy: “Top to bottom, reading these autopsies, you can see a lot of torture, a lot of pain. He took them apart piece by piece. I live with the trauma he caused me, every day. He loved to make a person hurt. He loved to inflict pain, a lot of pain. That was what he lived for. That was the glory, for him. That’s what I gathered, being one of his victims.”

Billy guessed that Jeff’s tracheotomies and thoracotomies on the Milwaukee victims kept them alive two or three days. “They were going to die from infection, anyway,” he said. In that period of time, he thought, Jeff might have gone off to work his regular shift at the chocolate factory.

In the Hoffman interview (which Billy hadn’t seen), Dahmer said, “One guy [Victim C]... he was with me a couple days before he died but the second day he was in a comatose state and when I came back from work the second night he had died and it kind of struck me as particularly horrifying because he was the only one that died with his eyes, his eyes were just wide open.”

**HOFFMAN:** “That bothered you?”

**DAHMER:** “Yeah, nobody else had died like that before.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Some type of interpersonal reaction between the two of you?”

**DAHMER:** “Uh huh.”

**HOFFMAN:** “The result was his death with his eyes open.”

**DAHMER:** “Yeah, his eyes were just wide open, I don’t know why, what caused that to happen.”

“He’s not even a good liar,” Billy said. “These autopsies don’t lie.”

Although I had been wary of showing Billy the reports he told me later, “Seeing these autopsies was kind of a healing thing. These people got it a lot worse than I did.”

A.W. had told me that Toole and Dahmer had stabbed him, then “fornicated” into his wounds meanwhile he was “starving and suffering from blood loss.” Answering a question from Dan Craft, Dahmer said he’d done similar to his Milwaukee victims, although after they’d died:

**CRAFT:** “Something I didn’t ask last week that I just thought of now, when you had sex with them, would it be penis to anus?”

**DAHMER:** “Sometimes.”

**CRAFT:** “What other?”

**DAHMER:** “Uhh... sometimes just masturbating over them... sometimes, uh... penis to the mouth... other times I’d make a slit right here in the front, a small slit. I know it sounds horrible and it was and uh... do it that way.”

**CRAFT:** “Did you find that...?”

**DAHMER:** “Then I did... yeah.”

**CRAFT:** “Arousing?”

**DAHMER:** “Yeah.”

If Dahmer was in the organ business, Billy thought, he sent off rectangles of flesh as tissue samples meanwhile keeping the bodies alive but permanently immobilized. If he got a commission to harvest their organs, he’d do it. Otherwise, they’d just die and he’d harvest them anyway and keep them.



Rot in hell, Jeffrey Dahmer.

In 2012, I made a public records request to Hollywood Police for the C.A. Pound Human Identification Lab Adam Walsh case file. In December 2008 Hollywood had released its conclusion report, most of it written in 1997 by tool mark expert analyst Steven Symes, a doctor of pathology at the University of Tennessee, Memphis, who had not been able to rule in or out any of the four blades submitted and tested, two of which were associated with Ottis Toole. My interest in the Pound file was to get their photographs of the found child, which its current director, Dr. Michael Warren, had said he'd personally taken. Looking at them, his description to me of how far expressed the top two front teeth were closely matched my own description when I'd seen the photos at the Broward M.E. But when I'd made public records requests directly to Warren, he hadn't responded.

Hollywood got the Pound lab to produce its file, but without the photos I'd wanted. Most of what was present was Symes's concluding report.

But there was in fact something significant in it that Hollywood hadn't possessed before I'd asked them to get it, therefore, it hadn't previously been released as a public record.

After Mark Smith had hand-delivered the skull to the Pound lab in January 1997, to review the evidence the lab had gathered its director, a forensic anthropologist, plus six forensic anthropology graduate students (including Warren), and one forensic entomology graduate student. One of the students or a secretary took handwritten notes, capturing some of their dialogue. This is what grabbed my eye:

A photograph of a handwritten note on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Vertebral foramen - C3 - fine cut - scalpel?". There is a question mark at the end of the second line.

**From a note page in the C.A. Pound lab Adam Walsh case file**

The Pound team had found a possible cut by a scalpel? Symes had not written that in his final submitted report. Scalpel use was absolutely antithetical to Ottis Toole.

But Dahmer, it seems from the Milwaukee autopsies of his victims, did use scalpels. Not to mention his surgical removal of part of Billy's prostate.

A little more technical anatomy here: the vertebral foramen is the opening for the spinal cord that begins at C1, the atlas. Noted at C3 was a fine cut. This was in contrast to "approximate[ly] 5 to 10 or more chops to the neck [which] appear to be deliberate attempts to dismember a dead body," Symes wrote.

Symes also wrote that the skull had only "a small fragment" of C3, which was where the remains ended. Just above C3, according to anatomical dictionaries, is cervical spinal nerve 3, which originates from the spinal column.

I asked Billy if what he had said for C4-C7, that a proper cut in those areas would paralyze the spine below, also applied to C3, He said yes.

"Mother fucker," he said.

The Publix truck drivers had reported seeing a plain blue van (that matched the one where Dahmer worked, down to the single seat) parked on the side of the Florida Turnpike less than a mile of where the head would be found days later. Now add that to

the Pound lab's observation of a fine cut at the bottom of the found child that might have been made by a scalpel. Does that corroborate A.W.'s story that Dahmer took one of the children's heads he'd already severed and dropped it somewhere so someone would find it, to make police think it was Adam so they would end the search?

I'd continued asking Billy about the conversations he'd had with A.W., out of my earshot, about Dahmer. Although he wasn't certain at first, by now he was convinced that A.W. had met Jeff: "He told me everything I already knew. He really knew what he was talking about. He didn't have it rehearsed. He had it right on the nose. The confidence, the change in [Jeff's] personality in less than a second. It was so twisted. It was so chilling to me, listening to him. There's no way he could have known that without knowing him.

"He described Jeff perfectly. He knew too much about Jeff's body language. He remembers the jaw, the panther-walk—that was part of him." He also told him how Jeff could be sitting still, then get up and be running at full speed.

"I know, without any doubt in my mind, that he met Jeff. I know the way Jeff was—and so does [A.W.]"

That they both had scars remaining from Dahmer's bite marks, and maybe skin grafts, added physical proof to that, even if the marks might be too old to be positively compared.

I told Billy that A.W. said to me that after Dahmer cut his tongue, Dahmer had told him, "Don't worry, it'll heal." Billy said that after Dahmer would hurt him, he'd say that "all the time: 'It will heal.' It reeks of Jeff," Billy said.

On many occasions, Billy and A.W. both had wondered out loud to me how or why they'd survived. But for Dahmer to tell both of them that they would heal suggested he'd intended for them to live. A commonality in Dahmer's admitted murders was his de-personalization of victims, and that he didn't know them for long. All of them were pickups. But possibly he knew both Billy and Adam too well to kill them. In Billy's case it was because they were army roommates—and despite however much Dahmer damaged Billy, if he'd killed him he would have needed to explain his death. For Adam it might have been because of, as A.W. had expressed, the high-publicity search going on for him. Within those two weeks, Billy thought, Adam had tried to distract Dahmer from his work. "I used to do that, too," Billy said. "It worked for a little while."

Billy said A.W. "was watching him like a hawk. You know how I know? Because I watched him like a hawk. Because I had to. Because I was trying to save my own damn life."

On my assumption that sociopaths, generally lacking in human emotion and sympathy, aren't especially funny people, I asked Billy if Jeff ever made jokes. He was a bit stunned by the question. He rattled off a joke Jeff once made, for which Jeff had used W.C. Fields's inflection: "What do you do with a bad kid? You throw him off the Empire State Building. You watch him get flat as a pancake."

Flat was also how the joke landed, but that was the point, Billy said. "Jeff thought he was being funny, but his jokes were insane." Jeff laughed at his own jokes, demanded laughter from others, and didn't understand why no one else thought they were funny. He laughed at people's mistakes and misfortunes. Once, when someone in the barracks had overdosed, Jeff laughed "like crazy. He thought it was stupid that someone overdosed."

He kept laughing at the thought of all the things that would be done to that person at the hospital.

“You could see in Jeff’s eyes, when he was joking—the insanity.”

A.W., Billy said, had made the same point to him about Jeff. That was maybe the observation that tipped him to believing A.W. had encountered Jeff.

“When I got off the phone with [A.W.], I had chill-bumps,” he said. “I had a very emotional conversation with him. I had to know if he knew the same person I knew.

“I needed to know if he was just somebody who thinks he’s Adam Walsh. He exposed himself big time when he talked to me. He told me everything about Jeff I needed to know. [A.W.] is one of the luckiest guys, aside from me.”

“He knew how he walked, he ran, his facial features, his jokes. Sounds just like Jeff. There’s nothing on the Internet that’s anything like what he’s talking about.”

I asked A.W. if he remembered whether Dahmer had made jokes. He thought about it, then tried to recall the movie star he was thinking of. “He had a W.C. Fields thing,” he said. He remembered Dahmer telling him, in Fields’ personae, “‘Shaddup,’ and then slapping me.” I was pretty sure I’d never mentioned Billy’s Fields reference to him, and Billy said he hadn’t told him, either.

As A.W. and I got further too, he began to recall more things. Were they real or false memories? He said that starting about a year before he’d found me he’d begun to have flashbacks. “Before that I had breakdowns that were really flashbacks. I really did think I was hearing voices, when I was really hearing the voices from the past, the voices of my abusers.”

Then the audial had become visual as well. “I began seeing the surroundings where everything had occurred. The face of Jeff.” In 1991 in a high school current events class he’d seen Dahmer’s arrest on CNN. Although he hadn’t put it together then, seeing it “made me close to going off the deep end.”

In the last year the flashbacks had included being in the hospital after his torture. He remembered his consciousness between surgeries: “Six hours of sleep, another surgery. Two days of coma. Both of my legs, grafted. Another day, coma. Almost a complete skin and scalp re-graft. Sleep. A view of a park.” As he spoke to me, he was grasping for air, crying for the first time that I’d heard. “A parakeet on somebody’s finger. Mercy Hospital [a hospital in Miami]. It might have been months after—or the same day.

“I had two very short legs, a shortened torso. They re-fused the leg bones. They were chainsawed. There was lots of blood in that home and other places. Lots of body parts, only a few survivors.” He said he got a cadaver jaw from the child whose identity was given to him.

He told me that on live TV he had watched Hollywood Police’s press conference, which was in December 2008. “It took a week to realize,” he said, and then he began to research Adam Walsh on the Internet. He found the PhoJoe picture—a computer-created rendering of what Adam would look like twenty-five years after his abduction. “I do look like that picture,” he said. Then he thought, “If I’m still alive, Jeff is probably still alive too.”

“I started to recall a pain party that was done on me. Then the recuperation. Looking at myself in the mirror. Powerful memories, funny memories, everything mixed with trauma, like I was a war hero instead of a child.

“That press conference was like a door shutting in my face,” he said. “Finally, the Adam case is over.”

It had taken me quite a while, but it had gotten impossible for me to dismiss that A.W. was Adam Walsh.

It now seemed likely that he was.

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With my scales now tipped that A.W. actually might be Adam, I thought again about DNA testing.

A.W. already had given me his swab and hair samples, which I had sent to Jan Johnson to store, but they only had value if they could be compared to one of the Walshes. Then I realized I already had a set of DNA results for Reve Walsh—they were mitochondrial.

I did a crash course on understanding mitochondrial DNA. Reve’s mitochondrial DNA profile was 16209C, 263G, and 315.1C. I Google searched those numbers and letters and began reading sites.

The letters represent nucleotide bases—A, T, C, G—and the sequence numbers show locations on the DNA strand, a small portion of the complete gene, broken into two “hypervariable” regions, or HVRs. The reported variations are comparisons against what is called the Cambridge Reference Standard (CRS), which is actually one European woman’s mitochondrial DNA, taken by geneticists at the Cambridge Research Institute. The bases reported in anyone’s mitochondrial DNA profile are actually just variances from hers; every base unreported means they were the same. (Mitochondrial testing includes about 780 bases.) In comparison, the CRS has 16209T, 263A, and at 315 there is no extra base (reported in our samples as 315 .1C).

From the Internet I found a company called DNA Heritage based in Texas and the U.K. and I spoke to its owner, Alastair Greenshields. He thought Reve’s markers belonged to someone in “haplogroup” H—a common European grouping. In profiles on the Internet I had noticed that 263G and 315.1C were common, and he agreed they were “hot spots.” Nor was 16209C particularly rare, he said.

Jack Remus had thought that Bode’s suggestion of a match between Reve and the found child was technically correct but misleading at first glance, and Greenshields agreed. The results did significantly support the possibility that the found child was Adam but the report didn’t emphasize that it wasn’t nearly exact enough to be certain.

When Jan Johnson told me that her friend’s DNA lab doesn’t test for mitochondrial DNA, I called back Greenshields and this time told him what I had withheld from our first conversation, that the case I was inquiring about concerned Adam Walsh. An Englishman, he wasn’t familiar with the story but while we talked he searched Wikipedia and found it. I got him to agree to do a mitochondrial test. First he sent me a test kit, which included a sort of toothbrush, better than a swab, he said, for gathering DNA material from the cheek.

Here was the plan: if A.W. had the same three markers as Reve Walsh, he would seem to be on equal footing to the found child. If not, I could exclude him.

IN PROMOTION FOR THE MIAMI BOOK FAIR in November 2010 I discovered the pending release of a new book about the case, *Bringing Adam Home: The Abduction that Changed America*, co-authored by Joe Matthews. He and primary author Les Standiford would be presenting the story, although the book wouldn't be released for sale until March 2011. I emailed a friend I'd met at the Book Fair the previous year who told me she had a galley copy she'd gotten when the authors had presented it at a regional booksellers' convention two months before. I also learned that the *Miami Herald* had been sent a copy for a book review.

At the Book Fair, outside the room where Matthews and Standiford would tell their story was a table with all the books by the authors presenting in that area that weekend. Not seeing *Bringing Adam Home*, I asked about it and was told it wasn't for sale but I could have a gratis advance copy.

At their presentation, the authors said a prominent local bookstore owner had introduced them days after the 2008 press conference. The book was based on Matthews's report, and except for reading some police transcripts and speaking to the Walshes, Standiford admitted that he'd relied almost entirely on Matthews. Its premise was, Ottis Toole killed Adam and the original Hollywood detectives were inexplicably blind to this painfully obvious point. Fortunately Matthews, later working pro bono for the Walshes, had dug deeper, found the irrefutable evidence, presented it in his report to Hollywood Chief Chad Wagner, and he had acknowledged it.

The book told how the report was accepted as the premise on which to close the case:

In January 2008, just after Wagner had become interim chief, he had reached out to John Walsh in a letter. [I'd previously asked Hollywood P.D. for it; it turned out to be a one-paragraph letter of introduction telling Walsh "I am also aware of your frustrations concerning the investigation" while offering to do anything he could do for him. Four months earlier, ABC *Primetime* had aired its Dahmer story.] Later in January, Matthews got himself introduced to Wagner and told him he was finishing a report on his investigation of the case, which had been authorized by the previous chief, and Wagner responded, "I'll read every page." Matthews delivered it on April 30, 2008, and Wagner eventually asked him to a meeting at the Broward State Attorney's office on November 20. Also present then were: Chuck Morton, Mark Smith, Hollywood P.D. legal advisor Joel Cantor, John and Reve Walsh, and their personal attorney Kelly Hancock, a former Broward homicide prosecutor. (In a later story in the *Herald*, Cantor denied attending the meeting.)

Matthews presented the premise of his findings:

- *Toole knew "crime scene details only the killer could have known"*
- *There were "multiple eyewitness identifications of Toole taking Adam from Sears"*
- *Arlene and Heidi Mayer had identified Toole at Kmart in Hollywood "the night before Adam was taken"*

- *The “damning extortion letter Toole wrote John Walsh offering to lead him to his son’s body”*
- *Toole had made twenty-five “independent confessions” to the crime, “including to family member Linda Fralick before Adam’s remains were found”*
- *“And the most damning image of them all... which had both haunted and sustained Matthews... as powerful to him as the Shroud of Turin”: in photographs FDLE had taken of the interior of Toole’s car but he said Hollywood police didn’t have:*

Traced in the blue glow of luminol was the outline of a familiar young boy’s face, a negative pressed into floorboard carpeting, eye sockets blackened blank cavities, mouth twisted in an oval of pain.

The outline of Adam’s face, etched in his own blood—was as stark as any fragment of bone; and the cry that issued from his battered lips was as damning an indictment as anyone might ever hear. Poor Adam, friend Joe, the truth singing to the world at last.

Wow.

After Matthews’s presentation, they wrote, all in the room agreed that he had solved the mystery and that the case would be exceptionally cleared pending approval from Broward State Attorney Michael Satz. On December 9 Satz’s chief assistant Chuck Morton wrote Wagner that Satz did agree, and the next week Wagner and the Walshes held their press conference.

In January 2011, in an interview in *Publisher’s Weekly*, Matthews said that his evidence met the legal standard that would have allowed a jury to convict. He said he “was able to prove beyond any reasonable doubt—based on direct and circumstantial evidence which cannot be disputed—that Ottis Toole abducted and murdered Adam. Only because of those facts was the case officially closed.”

Okay, let’s return to Hollywood’s and the Broward State Attorney’s lack of production of documents. As stated earlier, in Willis’s public records suit, Joel Cantor had responded to the court that Wagner didn’t save Matthews’s report because it was a “regurgitation” of Hollywood’s facts. Nor did Wagner even want to read it—he gave it to Mark Smith, who wrote a report on it, although neither Hollywood nor the state attorney had presented that as a public record either.

But now there was a new issue: the “Shroud of Turin” photographs were certainly public record but also had not been provided as part of Joe Matthews’s report when we’d asked for it. Although the galley copy had not included photographs, its back cover said that the for-sale book would have eight pages of color photos. Likely it would be there.

I searched FDLE reports in the Hollywood Police file and found a reference to it, sans drama. On October 20, 1983, FDLE’s Jacksonville crime lab had sprayed all of the interior and trunk of Toole’s car with luminol, which chemically reacts with metals such as the iron in blood, casting an electric-blue glow. As reported in a letter to Hollywood Police on November 9, 1983, three areas of carpeting or the padding underneath it displayed “strongly persistent luminescence” which indicated “a trace of bloodstaining on

these carpets and padding.” However, “There was an insufficient amount of blood for further tests.”

In a November 14, 1983 letter to Hollywood Police, FDLE wrote that on November 2 the samples had been sprayed again with luminol and photographed on five rolls of film. There was no mention of whether FDLE had delivered those prints to Hollywood, although Matthews wrote that Hollywood told him they didn’t have them, and an FDLE public information officer told him that prints had never been made. “But you can be the first” to see them, he wrote that the PIO had said.

It made no sense that FDLE wouldn’t have sent those photos. For them this was a high profile investigation, as proved by a November 18 front page banner headline in the *Miami News: Laser scan used in Walsh probe*, which documented how FDLE was using new technology to find fingerprints, shoeprints, and other impressions inside the Cadillac.

Matthews detailed the photo process: after shooting the car interior in regular light, they shot another round in darkness, lens wide open for about a minute, to highlight any blue luminol glow. He said those shots exposed what the regular light photos of the same areas didn’t. As for what it actually indicated, however, he conceded, it was possible he “was just finding images in clouds.”

Regardless, DNA work had never been done on the carpet samples. In 1983 DNA criminal forensics was in its earliest stages, and in 1996, on the release of the case file, it was reported that police had misplaced those samples. John Walsh made a point then (and after) of saying that modern DNA profiling might have made a conclusive match between the blood and Adam, but there remained the question of whether the trace amount of blood on the carpets, so many years later, could successfully be tested even now. I asked Alastair Greenshields who said yes, such samples could now yield DNA, but it would depend on how degraded the sample was. So at best, had the samples not been lost, even with current technology it would be hit or miss.

There were also about fifty strands of hair that FDLE had collected from inside the Cadillac. In 1983 they compared them to the found child: no match. In 1997 FDLE tried DNA analysis on them but couldn’t get any results.

To get the Shroud photos, I went first to the Broward state attorney’s office, although as I expected, they said they hadn’t kept them either. Since Joe Matthews obviously had them, I asked the state attorney to ask Matthews for them so they could show them to me. In writing, Chuck Morton refused my request. So next I went to FDLE.

In reviewing Matthews’s argument, I realized a pattern: he’d re-interviewed a small number of people the original detectives had determined were on the margins of the investigation and they’d given him information that contradicted what they’d first said on the record. Some of these re-interviews were done around 1996, others around 2006 and after. In the time since, their recollections had changed.

They included: Brevard County detective Steve Kindrick, the first detective to whom Toole had (obliquely) referred to killing Adam; Arlene and Heidi Mayer; and Toole’s sister Linda Fralick, who the Hollywood detectives had never found.

The trouble with declaring any case closed by exceptional clearance is that the evidence is never tested at trial. Witnesses are never cross-examined. Although Matthews in his book raises some of the problems with his theory, new evidence, and witnesses, he

doesn't deal with all of the problems. Follows is what some of the cross-examination might have touched:

- *Toole knew "crime scene details only the killer could have known"*

Toole as well as Lucas were such unusual suspects because they were confessing to hundreds of murders in jurisdictions across the country. Detectives with unsolved homicides who thought they could have been responsible beat paths to their jailhouses. Considering the volume of murders they said they'd done, to introduce their cases, detectives would get them started with case facts and photos so they could recall "crime scene details only the killer could have known."

But giving suspects any information is a dodgy business. As the Lucas-Toole circus continued, officers began to suspect they were being played. Detectives from Oklahoma and Dallas separately invented cases to see if Lucas would admit to them—and he did. A 1983 Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation report warned, "Anyone interviewing Lucas in the future should be cautious not to give Lucas any details of the crime he is being questioned about. It is believed that Lucas will use any information given to him to try to convince officers that he committed that crime."

Phil Ryan, who as a Texas Ranger spent a great deal of time with Lucas and coordinated his meetings with detectives from other jurisdictions, quickly realized, he told me, that every detective needed to know what the previous detective who'd discussed the same case had already told Lucas.

In 1985, Lucas told a press conference, "They'll show you pictures of crimes. They'll give you all the information in the crime. They'll even take you back and point out the crime to you, and all you have to do is stand there and say, 'Yeah, I did it.'"

"They think I'm stupid," the *Dallas Times Herald* quoted Lucas in a prominent story in 1985 headlined *Henry Lee Lucas: Mass murderer or massive hoax?* "But before all this is over, everyone will know who's really stupid."

Questions never adequately answered included, Were some of Lucas and Toole's confessions real but not others? Were they competing with each other in numbers of confessions? Were they serial killers, serial confessors, or both?

Often Lucas's information was very specific, and he drew surprisingly talented pencil drawings of who he said were his victims. Some of the women were nudes. But other times he and Toole were vague in terms of time, place, and circumstance. Ryan, who early in the investigation was dubious that Lucas had killed more than once, told me he now thinks Lucas actually committed about fifty murders—not the six hundred he claimed, but still enough to make him one of the worst criminals in modern history.

In a 1992 interview done by Brad Shellady and found in documents posted on the Internet by former Texas District Attorney Vic Feazell, Ryan tried to explain Lucas's behavior.

"Whatever he thinks your interests are, he's going to adapt. If he's around a bunch of policemen, he's going to give them what he thinks they want to hear. If he's around somebody that wants to hear the negative part or that he didn't do it, he's going to give them what he want to. He just goes through periods."

"It makes you wonder," said Shellady, "if anybody will ever know the truth."

"They won't," Ryan answered. "I don't know if Henry knows." Asked to characterize him, Ryan offered, "A chameleon. A psychopathic chameleon."



Ryan did maintain that he proved Lucas killed twice: Toole's niece, Frieda Powell, and an elderly Texas woman, Kate Rich. He said he would stake his reputation on it. "Yep... he did those."

Toole's ability to recall, however, was less than Lucas's. As a result, his confessions were eventually largely dismissed. All that got pinned on him was his arson of a Jacksonville flophouse that resulted in a death and a handful of Northwest Florida robbery-murders he was believed to have done with Lucas. And Adam Walsh, according to Hollywood Police in 2008 and Joe Matthews.

As the transcripts of their taped interviews showed, on the first night Hoffman and Hickman went over the entire case with Toole, story and pictures, in the hope, they both told me, that Toole would be able to recall something, anything real that they hadn't prompted him with. He never did.

They told him that the head had been found in water near a wooden pier over a canal and showed him a picture of the nearest turnpike mile marker, 130; that the child's name was Adam Walsh; and that he'd been taken from a Sears. What Toole gave them back that night was that Lucas was with him and had actually killed the child (Lucas was in jail that day); that the month of the crime was around the beginning of the year and apparently that the child was wearing mittens (it was July); twice he didn't confirm Adam's "Missing" picture as the child he said he took (although interestingly, he did say he recognized pictures of the found child); and when prompted by a question of whether Adam had anything unusual about his teeth, he mentioned nothing.

So, yes, Matthews was right that Toole knew "crime scene details that only the killer could have known" but left out that he had gotten it all from the police.

In an interview at the Jacksonville jail in November 1983, the transcript of which is in the Hollywood Police file, detectives from Pueblo, Colorado, tried to pin Toole down on details of their three unsolved murders, which Toole willing to admit to. At a surly moment, as best he could, Toole spelled out what he was doing:

"Oh, I can keep through it and that's why it keeps changin' and changin', you know. I mean, that's the way, if somebody keeps hittin' me on the same case, on the same case over and over, I start makin' it change in my mind the way I want it to change, the way the whole thing be all screwed up."

A bit later, speaking directly to Jacksonville detective Buddy Terry, sitting in, he complained:

"They keep goin' over the same detail, time after time, and then you tryin' to stable that in your mind and they come up with other shit, and then they want to go back over the same shit again, they're gonna have me tellin' five, six different stories 'fore it's over."

Arguing for Toole's guilt, Matthews and Standiford wrote of Steve Kindrick's interview of Toole on October 10, 1983, nine days before the Hollywood detectives arrived in Jacksonville. It was also hours before NBC would premiere its Adam Walsh TV movie, but after the network had run days of promos leading up to it. Kindrick had questioned Toole about an unsolved murder in Brevard County, in mid-state Florida, but Toole asked if he was from Fort Lauderdale. Kindrick figured he'd confused Brevard with Broward County but asked Toole if he'd done something in Broward. He indicated

yes. Previously he'd been boastful about committing sixty-five murders but then his tone changed to upset.

That much was in a one-page affidavit Kindrick wrote and signed on October 25, 1983.

But then the authors wrote things Kindrick remembered that he hadn't put in the affidavit: He'd asked Toole, "Why don't you tell me about it?" Toole then spoke of finding a child at Sears, telling him that he had candy in his Cadillac, and deciding to take the boy back to Jacksonville to raise as his own. "But it all changed when this Adam started crying and saying he wanted to get out of the car," the authors reported Kindrick said. Toole then hit him, turned off the highway onto a dirt road, killed him, cut off his head and threw it in water by the roadside.

According to the authors, after the interview Kindrick told Jacksonville Sheriff's Detective Buddy Terry: "He says he cut him up and left the body in two different places. This is all out of the clear blue sky."

Matthews and Standiford then narrate:

In hindsight, one might wonder why such a bombshell did not mark the end of the hunt for the killer of Adam Walsh then and there.

This is the impeachment of Kindrick's story the authors left out:

In the October 25 affidavit, Kindrick wrote that after Toole answered he was expecting a detective from Fort Lauderdale to interview him about whatever it was he'd done there, Kindrick didn't pursue the matter with him. "Reporting Agent felt due to Toole's obvious nervousness about Ft. Lauderdale, it would be best not to pursue the matter, but to have Agent Terry do so."

In 1996, interviewed by Phil Mundy, Kindrick told a story close to what Matthews and Standiford wrote. However, Mundy challenged Kindrick that thirteen years earlier he hadn't offered the same detail. Kindrick answered that he hadn't put it in his affidavit because he expected that the news media would eventually see it. Mundy countered that the Hollywood detectives had interviewed him under oath on November 4, 1983 and he hadn't spoken of it then either. Kindrick responded that was because he'd only answered the questions they'd asked.

But Hoffman and Hickman had asked the right questions. After Kindrick said that Toole "never mentioned Adam Walsh's name to me" nor did he tell Toole the name, he repeated the story in his affidavit of Toole's initial mention of Fort Lauderdale. Hoffman next asked: "Is there anything else that occurred during that interview when you were in contact with Mr. Toole?"

Kindrick: "No, sir."

I give Kindrick a break on this. He'd spoken to Toole again after their first meeting and knew (and apparently believed) his story to Hollywood's detectives of luring Adam into his Cadillac and beheading him. It sounded like that in 1996 and later, Kindrick had confused what Toole had told him initially with what he'd said afterward. But Matthews and Standiford should have checked that.

Kindrick had called Hoffman on October 11, 1983, and Hoffman that day tried to reach Buddy Terry but didn't get a callback until October 19.

The police record shows it was October 18 when Toole first told the story of luring a child into his car. He told it to Monroe, Louisiana detectives Jay Via and Joe Cummings, and Terry, who when he did connect with Hoffman the next day prompted him and Hickman to rush to Jacksonville.

But Toole had told the Louisiana detectives and Terry at least two significant things that were wrong which he later changed. One, he and Lucas had found the child. Two, it had been in the area of West Palm Beach and they'd traveled with him south for about an hour until they'd found a dirt road leading to a swampy wooded site where they'd killed and mutilated him and severed his head. They kept the head until they reached or almost reached Fort Lauderdale and then dumped it into a canal or ditch. (Fort Lauderdale is about forty-five miles south of West Palm Beach.) Leaving there they'd continued south toward the Florida Keys. The Louisiana detectives' report also doesn't say that Toole mentioned the name Adam Walsh.

There was also a glaring section where Matthews and Standiford invented dialogue between Hoffman and Toole that wasn't on the record then used it to slam Hoffman. It came after Hoffman had confronted Toole with the fact that Lucas was in jail on the day Adam was taken. In substance it wasn't much different from what was actually in the transcript but still:

**HOFFMAN:** "And you also said that Henry Lee got a blow job from the head. Was that really you that got the blow job from the head?"

**TOOLE:** "No. I didn't even fuck it."

This was the actual dialogue from the transcript:

**HOFFMAN:** "Why did you tell me that Henry, in the first interview I had with you, fucked the child's head? Why did you tell me that?"

**TOOLE:** "Because I figure I could tie him up in it and get even with his ass."

**HOFFMAN:** "Get even. Did he do something to you that you want to get even with him?"

**TOOLE:** "Uh huh."

**HOFFMAN:** "Did you have any sexual contact with the child?"

**TOOLE:** "No."

**HOFFMAN:** "Is that the truth?"

**TOOLE:** "Yes."

After the authors wrote that Toole recognized a photo of Adam that Hoffman showed him, they opined:

Once again, it might seem to any sentient observer that every element was in hand for a swift delivery of justice... An individual with a history of violent behavior has made three unbidden confessions of murder to law officers from three different jurisdictions, providing details obviously known previously only to the medical examiners and the detectives in charge of the case. Surely justice was about to be dispensed. How could it possibly not be?

Then after writing that detectives brought Toole to Hollywood and showed him the Hollywood Sears and then the most direct route to where the head was found, and Toole said he recognized the area near turnpike mile marker 126 (Hoffman the day before had shown him a photo of mile marker 130)—and identified both places as where he'd committed the murder and then disposed of the head, Matthews and Standiford apparently felt entitled to say this:

Perhaps it was annoying that a public defender would have to be engaged at the taxpayers' expense, along with a costly trial to be followed—were a death penalty handed down—by any number of appeals based on what would be surely specious ground.

Later, after one of Toole's recantations, the authors criticized Hoffman's judgment downplaying him as a suspect:

a more experienced homicide investigator might have reassured the Hollywood detective that this was not out of the ordinary... The fact remained that Ottis Toole had confessed to this killing on multiple occasions, citing details that only someone who'd been present could have known.

But others higher in rank in the investigation agreed with Hoffman. This is what Hollywood Lieutenant J.B. Smith said in 1984 at a national convention for detectives investigating Lucas and Toole: "In the four or five months that we have been looking at Toole, we can't confirm one thing he is saying about our case."

Hollywood Capt. Steve Davis was even stronger. In 1985 he told the *Miami Herald* he had since come to distrust Toole: "Everything the man told us proved false. We left no stone unturned."

The Broward State Attorney's office felt the same. In October 1984, for a story a year after Hollywood's urgent late-evening press conference claiming they had their man, Toole, spokesman Dave Casey told the Central Florida newspaper *Cocoa Today* that they'd dropped him as a suspect "several months ago when we started to see discrepancies." The story also quoted Hoffman: "He was a suspect until we were able to put holes in his story. His confession only vaguely matched (details in the killing)."

And in 2006, for a story marking the crime's twenty-fifth anniversary, Mark Smith, by then a captain in the Hollywood Police, told the community newspaper *Hollywood Gazette*, "There's nothing conclusive that Ottis did or did not do it."

- *There were "multiple eyewitness identifications of Toole taking Adam from Sears"*

Mary Hagan said she saw Toole inside Sears and so did Nellie Schreck, who said she was at Sears after two o'clock that day—Adam was reported missing just after 12 noon, but neither reported seeing Toole take Adam from Sears. That left Bill Mistler, who did say he saw Toole take Adam from outside Sears, but even Phil Mundy, a supporter of the Toole theory, had told me he wouldn't rely on Mistler as a witness.

- *Arlene and Heidi Mayer had identified Toole at Kmart in Hollywood “the night before Adam was taken”*

It wasn't the night before, they said it was the Friday or Saturday evening around seven before the Monday abduction, but as I already wrote, it was still problematic whether they'd seen Toole.

Matthews and Standiford wrote that Toole “was not sure when he finally boarded a bus bound for Jacksonville, and that he was not sure when he arrived back in the north Florida city, though bus schedules suggest it would have had to have been sometime early Saturday morning.” But elsewhere they wrote, “At 6:30 p.m. he was on board... It was around eleven on Saturday morning when Ottis Toole stepped off his bus at the Greyhound terminal in Jacksonville.” So Toole wasn't certain of the times but Matthews and Standiford were.

For the authors to advance that Toole arrived Saturday morning was cherry-picking the evidence. In fact, when Hoffman had interviewed Toole about it he'd given contradictory answers.

First asked whether he'd left Newport News in daylight or nighttime, Toole said, “I'm pretty sure it was late in the evening.” That implied the Friday 10:50 P.M. departure, arriving 4:20 Saturday afternoon. Asked if recalled whether it was morning, afternoon or evening when he arrived, Toole said, “Damn I wish I could remember the time.”

Had Toole's bus arrived in Jacksonville at 4:20 P.M. it would have been impossible for him to be in Hollywood, 375 miles away, by seven. Further, by the end of that interview Toole had denied leaving Jacksonville immediately after arriving from Newport News, which also meant he denied killing Adam. The session ended with Toole crying and hysterical and what seemed like Detective Terry in his face.

Not fifteen minutes later the interview restarted, and Hoffman re-asked when he arrived. This time Toole said, “I'd say it was eleven, eleven-thirty in the day time” on Saturday. That matched the Friday evening bus that departed at 6:30, when it was still light, scheduled to arrive in Jacksonville at 10:25 Saturday morning. Hoffman noted that he'd previously told Toole the bus schedules.

Even if you believed that Toole arrived in Jacksonville at 10:25 or eleven on Saturday morning, he still had issues that took time before he could leave for South Florida.

Toole said he walked from the bus station to the roofing company where his Cadillac was parked and opened the gate with keys he'd been carrying. He was less clear on whether he was also carrying the car keys but implied they were at his mother's house, where he said he dug up \$300 cash he'd buried in a can. He didn't say whether he drove there or walked.

Two Hollywood lieutenants had measured distances between the bus station, the roofing company, and Toole's mother's house. When Matthews and Standiford cited the results, they seemed to be hedging on whether Toole may have taken a different route than he said: in fact walking from the bus station first to his mother's house—3.6 miles—where he might have gotten the Cadillac keys, then walking to the roofing company—7.8 miles. The authors called that “an hour's walk to one, two hours to the other.”

If it happened that way after Toole's 10:30 A.M. arrival, he might have left Jacksonville around two o'clock.

But elsewhere they wrote that once off the bus, Toole “began the seven-mile walk to Reaves Roofing,” which took him “about two hours.” Using the car keys they said he had on him, he got the Caddy, drove to his mother’s house, dug up the money, “and set out the on the five-hour drive down I-95 to South Florida.”

Toole had told Hoffman his drive south took 8-9 hours, which means he wouldn’t have been at Kmart in Hollywood by seven.

Besides, Toole didn’t say he stopped in Hollywood. He said he went to downtown Miami, about twenty-five miles further, to a park on Biscayne Bay where he could turn homosexual tricks.

The authors wrote:

It was his intention to hit the gay parks up and down Biscayne Boulevard in Miami... but by the time he passed Fort Lauderdale, a half hour north of his target, it seemed a bit early for such goings-on... Accordingly, at the Hollywood Exit, he swung the Cadillac off I-95 and cruised along the boulevard until he spotted a Kmart up ahead.

Aside from how conveniently this writing fits their theory despite the evidence and competing possibilities, Kmart in Hollywood wasn’t on Hollywood Blvd., it was about a half-mile south of it on U.S. 441.

The authors wrote:

Had Hoffman bothered to confirm Toole’s encounter with the Mayers when he had the chance, all this could have very likely been concluded back in 1983.

Actually, this whole exchange above was prompted by Hoffman and Hickman’s interviews of the Mayers, two days earlier. True, they hadn’t confronted Toole on whether he’d been at the Hollywood Kmart; when he said he drove to Miami, they didn’t try to get him to correct himself.

The other glaring problem with Toole’s story, which the authors didn’t mention, was that Toole had said he took Adam the day after the Saturday evening he arrived in Miami. Adam was reported lost on Monday.

There was more in the authors’ narrative about the Mayers that indicated how they’d adjusted facts to fit their theory. They wrote that in 1983, just after Toole’s photo had first appeared in the local newspaper, Arlene Mayer:

...told the detectives that following the confrontation with her daughter, she’d found a Kmart security guard to walk them to her car, and that the big white car that both she and her daughter had seen the man get out of was still sitting in the lot at the time. Furthermore, she told Hoffman, she had driven straight home and called Hollywood PD to report the incident.

Although the Mayers may have said that to Matthews, almost everything in those quoted lines was absent from or contradicted by what they’d told police at the time and was in the official record—which again, the authors did not say. Further, it was also

absent from the version John Walsh and co-author Susan Schindehette (who had apparently interviewed them herself) put in *Tears of Rage*.

In their separate taped and transcribed sworn statements to Hoffman and Hickman, taken October 24, 1983, the Mayers said they hadn't spoken to a store security guard; they didn't know the color of the suspect's car; they said nothing about seeing that car still in the parking lot when they left; and they weren't sure if they had immediately called police.

Heidi, twelve at the time of the incident, said that when they walked toward the store, "This guy got out of his car and I don't remember the color of the car or what kind of car it was cause I didn't see the car."

Hoffman returned to that later: "You indicated when the statement opened here that you saw him get out of a car but you can't describe the car."

**HEIDI:** "No, I didn't see, he got out of a car, but I didn't see exactly what the car was."

**HOFFMAN:** "Did you see the color of the car?"

**HEIDI:** "No." She did describe it as "medium-sized, it was a good-sized car."

Arlene Mayer gave no description of the car at all. When she said she'd called Hollywood police after the incident, she said "they kept on sayin', what kinda car, what kinda car." (That matched what Willis and Mary Hagan said they'd been asked when they'd tried to report what they'd seen, days after the abduction when police were hot on the Pottenburgh blue van lead. Both were dismissed after they said they hadn't seen a vehicle.) "See, I didn't know any, what kind of car he got out of or what," Arlene said.

Hoffman also asked: "After this incident, did you file any report to either the store or the police department?"

Arlene: "I called the police department." She didn't mention telling anyone at the store.

Schindehette (apparently), in 1996 or 1997, had gotten a bit more detail from the Mayers, including Wayne Mayer, husband and father. He said he'd driven Arlene and Heidi to Kmart but waited in the car in the lot while they shopped. He worked in construction and was in his work clothes, no doubt sweaty considering it was July. Inside, Arlene went to the layaway department, Heidi to the toy department, which is where the man had offered to give her a ride in his shopping cart. Heidi then ran toward her mother, screaming, "It's that guy again!"

Schindehette wrote that Arlene found a security guard but "for a long time, the two were afraid to leave the store. Finally, they spotted Wayne walking up to the entrance and ran out to tell him what had happened." In Schindehette's interview, Arlene described the car as a "hillbilly car" that looked as if someone was living in it, "something like an old T-bird or a Cadillac."

Schindehette also reported that Wayne told her he was certain it had happened on a Friday, after work. But then she asked if he'd ever worked on Saturdays. "Why, sure. I worked Saturdays all the time." She didn't follow up in her writing why he remained certain it was a Friday.

- *The “damning extortion letter Toole wrote John Walsh offering to lead him to his son’s body”*

This was long ago resolved. It was one of a series of similar letters, sent in 1988 under Toole’s name but actually written by another state prison inmate, Gerard John Schaefer. John Walsh in *Tears of Rage* wrote, “As it turned out, Toole had dictated the letter to a cellmate who could write, a guy named Gerard Schaefer.” The two, he wrote, had written letters “trying to extort money for alleged ‘information.’” They were “long on ghoulish detail. No hard proof.”

And as I wrote earlier, two Broward Sheriff’s sergeants had interviewed Toole and Schaefer and wrote that Schaefer appeared to be controlling Toole. Toole had no new information on where the rest of the body was.

- *Toole had made twenty-five “independent confessions” to the crime, “including to family member Linda Fralick before Adam’s remains were found”*

Matthews doesn’t say how he counted twenty-five confessions, but on my rough count Toole’s confession-to-recantation ratio was somewhere around even-Steven.

As to confessions to family members, let’s start with Sarah Patterson, Toole’s niece. She had called *America’s Most Wanted* in 1996 after it aired its Adam Walsh segment. She said she’d visited Ottis in prison just before he died and he’d confessed to killing Adam, and she believed him.

Wendy Sapp Fralick had also called *AMW* in 1996 and said that when she was eight in 1982 Ottis had told her and other relatives that he’d killed Adam. It was 1983 when Toole was arrested and first confessed that to police. Fralick’s stepfather was the brother of Georgia Toole, who was Ottis’s brother Howell’s wife, and Ottis often babysat for Wendy.

Matthews wrote that he found Wendy’s mother Linda (Fralick) Orand. She said that in 1981 or ’82, she took her kids to Howell and Georgia’s home and Ottis was there. He announced then to Linda and her husband at the time that he had taken Adam Walsh. When they asked whom that was, Ottis said, “The one who’s been missing.”

Ottis explained he’d taken the child from Broward County, had anal sex with him, cut up his body, put it in plastic bags and dumped it. “The descriptions were so vivid that Linda stood up and vomited into some nearby bushes,” Matthews wrote.

“Everyone in the family knew Ottis had killed Adam Walsh, she said. It was simply common knowledge.” He asked why she had never told anyone that before. Nobody ever asked, she said.

It does seem that before Matthews no one in law enforcement had ever asked Linda Fralick, but in 1983 the Hollywood detectives had asked a number of Toole’s closer relations if Ottis ever told them he’d taken Adam.

They asked Ottis’s brother Vernon Toole, “Did he ever tell you that he went down to Hollywood, Florida and abducted a child down there?”

“No sir. If he did I’d turn his ass in myself.”

They asked Toole’s wife Norvella (Rita) Toole, “Did he ever tell you that he confessed to the police to murdering Adam Walsh, a six-year-old boy?”

“No, Lord no, uh uh!!!!”

They asked Howell Toole, “Did he ever talk about the Adam Walsh case in Fort Lauderdale? Did you know about the Adam Walsh case?”



“No, I didn’t know nothing about it. I started reading the paper and my wife talked to me about it. About that child?”

“Yes.”

“The only thing I know about it I find out from the papers and people tell me about it.”

To Robert Lee Harley, Ottis’s stepfather, who lived with him, they asked, “Did he ever tell you about any murders he committed?”

“No, I don’t think Ottis ever would.”

“Do you have any personal knowledge if Ottis ever traveled to Dade County or Fort Lauderdale, Broward County?”

“Not to my knowledge, no.”

Matthews took another potshot at Hoffman regarding the child-sized green shorts and yellow rubber flip-flop sandal that FDLE had found in January 1984 when it excavated Toole’s mother’s backyard in Jacksonville, after Toole changed his story and said he’d buried the rest of Adam’s remains there. On the day Adam was abducted, Reve had told police he was wearing green Adidas shorts and yellow rubber sandals.

The authors wrote that those items had “inexplicably remained unexamined” by the Walshes until 1996. Hollywood had kept them in its property room but never told John and Reve.

But Matthews doesn’t explain why Hoffman might not have shown them. Hoffman wrote in his report that the sandal seemed to be of a size that would be worn by “a two or three year old child.” About six weeks before it was found, Hoffman had asked Reve to again describe what Adam was wearing: she said “green Adidas shorts with white vertical stripes” and rubber sandals “with yellow bottoms and blue tops.”

Moreover, *Tears of Rage* had covered this already and dismissed it. John Walsh reported the moment when he and Reve finally saw both items: “A tiny little flip-flop. No bigger than what a three-year-old would wear. Reve knew immediately that they weren’t Adam’s.

““They’re not Adam’s. Take them away,”” she said.

On the day both the *Miami Herald* and *Sun Sentinel* published news stories questioning Matthews’s book in advance of its publication, I called Ron Hickman and asked if he’d ever seen the Shroud of Turin-like image. It was the first he’d heard anything about it.

In fact, Hickman said, he was present when FDLE took photos of the Cadillac. And no, neither he nor anyone else there saw anything like what Matthews described, which Hickman called “pure conjecture.” “He’s pulling this stuff out of his butt. This is all baloney, a way to make John Walsh feel good.”

Hickman also pointed out that when he and Hoffman found the Cadillac, it had been more than two years since Adam’s abduction and the car had changed ownership.

Referring to Toole, he said, “The guy didn’t do it. We all know he didn’t do it.” And it was never more obvious than when Hollywood detectives took Toole to the crime scenes. He said Toole hemmed and hawed at the place where the head was found, and he couldn’t even identify the correct Sears store.

While I had him, I asked whether he'd ever seen Dr. Wright's autopsy report. "We would have a copy of that" forwarded from the Medical Examiner's office, he said. When I said it wasn't in Hollywood's file, I asked him again, had he ever seen it? No, he hadn't, he said. "We don't think about that stuff in the beginning of the case." But he added that it would be essential to a prosecution: "You can't file a case without it." He said it must be somewhere, but then I told him it wasn't in the Broward medical examiner's file either, or anywhere else. "That's very unusual," he said. "That doesn't make sense."

Had he seen Adam's dental records? No.

I found this gem in *Tears of Rage*: "Hoffman and Hickman were of course familiar with Adam's autopsy report..." Did Walsh mean the autopsy report that Dr. Wright said neither he nor anyone else in his office wrote, the one that Phil Mundy said must have been there although he couldn't remember seeing it, that Mark Smith wrote in 1994 he was looking for, and that Hickman just confirmed he hadn't seen? No, he must have been referring to Dr. Cox's preliminary autopsy report, which included an external observation only, not an internal examination, which by statute meant that it wasn't an autopsy report.

In August 2013, after I published the first edition of Book Two, a reader of both books emailed me a question: why hadn't I mentioned something in *Bringing Adam Home*, which he thought was potentially a blockbuster. Curiously to him, Matthews and Standiford had played it down, too. They had given it less than a page.

It was a tip to *America's Most Wanted* just after it aired its Adam Walsh story in 1996. A man named Joel Cockerman had called to say that he and his sister, Mia Dunaway, had seen Adam in the mall the day he was taken. When they saw Toole's picture on screen, she instantly recognized it as the man who had led Adam from the curb outside Sears and into the parking lot. "That's him," they wrote that she said. "He had more hair then, but that's him."

Closely but not exactly hewing to what an *AMW* tip operator had written (it was in the Hollywood P.D. public record), Matthews and Standiford wrote that Joel had been playing the videogame Asteroids with Adam when other kids started some trouble and the security guard came to ask them all to leave. Outside, Joel told his mother that he wanted to stay with his "little friend" until his parents came for him, but Joel's mother had said, "Look, his dad is there now," pointing to a disheveled-looking man with Adam. Matthews and Standiford added that this story corroborated what William Mistler, another mall witness who said he'd seen Toole outside Sears, said he'd seen. (Former Broward State Attorney's Office investigator Phil Mundy, who'd taken Mistler's multiple statements and was also a proponent of the Toole theory, had long dismissed Mistler as a reliable witness.)

Matthews and Standiford wrote that in 1981 Joel was eight and Mia was nine, and that Matthews spoke to Joel sometime after his *AMW* tip. When I'd reviewed the newly-released Hollywood case file at the end of 2008, Willis Morgan and I tried to find Joel and Mia, without success. Because of that, I left out the reference to them.

But given the reader's note to me, I tried again, this time bumming a newspaper reporter friend's access to a database used by law enforcement, private investigators, and the press. The *AMW* tip operator had written that Joel's surname was *Cockerham*, and it turned out he was right, Matthews and Standiford had misspelled it as Cockerman. Second, Joel had died in 2006. But I did find some possible phone numbers for Mia, and

connected with her. Her name was now Mia Taylor, she and her family had grown up in South Dade County, but she was now living upstate in Palm Bay, Florida.

I asked if she knew whether anyone had ever contacted Joel about his 1996 tip. She said when Joel had died, he was living in her house, and he'd never mentioned it. It had been a common-enough topic of conversation, so she was pretty certain that no one had ever called.

She said it was Joel who'd identified the photo of Toole. For herself, she wasn't as sure. Whenever they were at the mall, their mother's instructions were to stay together at all times. When one went to the bathroom, the other went in the same bathroom, too. In fact, at the time Joel was nine and she was ten, and he looked similar to Adam, she said. She sent me old photos.

I asked her to tell me her story. Actually, she said, there were incidents at the mall involving the same man on two straight days, the first on Sunday, the day before Adam's kidnapping, then Monday. Both days she and Joel were in the mall because their father would spend part of the day at Calder Race Track, about twenty minutes from the mall, making bets and watching the first few horse races of the day. To give himself enough time to arrive before the first race, at one o'clock, he'd drop off all the kids and their mother at Hollywood Mall. Then at a prearranged time near the end of the afternoon he'd pick them up, always at the same place, the entrance to Sears on the side nearest to Publix Supermarket. (This sounded like the catalog desk entrance, close to the toy department.)

Searching online old copies of *The Miami News*, I was able to confirm that post time for Calder's first race was at one o'clock. That Sunday, she said, her dad picked them up late in the afternoon, but on Monday he stayed at Calder only long enough to cash in his winning tickets (if any) and make his bets for that day's races. Although she couldn't be sure, she guessed it was 1:30 or 2 when he picked them up.

On Sunday, walking through the center aisle of Sears past the toy department, Joel stopped to look at a small game in which you guided the balls into holes. Although Joel was a year younger than her, she described him as much taller and older-looking, but also learning disabled, or "slow." Suddenly a man "stepped out in front of us, two steps in front of Joel," inappropriately close, she said. He was interested in Joel only. As she remembered the conversation, he asked Joel if he knew how to play the game. "It was a silly question," she said. She told Joel, Come on, let's leave.

She described the man as "creepy," and said his breath stank of stale beer. Her father didn't drink, and this was the first time she had ever smelled that; to this day, she said, whenever she whiffs that on anyone else, her mind returns to this incident.

That description could have fit Toole. But it also could have been Dahmer, Billy Capshaw told me, in between conversations with Mia. Disheveled could have been either of them, too.

With the caveat of being ten years old at the time, Mia said she thought the man was about 5'9", 170 pounds or a little less. He'd been unshaven for several days. She said his hair was thin and greasy-looking, and he had "monster" teeth. She thought he was in his thirties, "rugged thirties."

I asked if the man had any accent. It was "a cross between Michigan and a southern" accent, she said. She was now married to a man from Michigan, and everyone she knows from there (she apologized for the description) "talks through their nose." I would return to that later.

Did he speak well? Yes, she said, although he was drunk and slurred his words. As for his eyes, she remembered “maybe a glare, a stern look.” About his jaw, she said, “you know how you tense your jaw, and it’s a muscle?” He was “clenching his teeth.”

She remembered that day in part because she’d found, on the floor somewhere in the mall, almost a hundred dollars in cash, wrapped by a \$10 bill. It was the next day, Monday, when they’d seen the same man again, this time outside.

She and Joel were at the videogames display and Joel was handling the controller for one of the games. However, she said, he didn’t know how to play; in fact, at home, in very far west Dade County, in what’s called the East Everglades, they didn’t even have a television set. As she recalled, other boys who wanted to play got impatient when they realized Joel didn’t know how. That sparked an incident that got loud in which the security guard came over and asked them all to leave.

Afraid they’d get in trouble, Mia rushed Joel away; besides, it was around the time they were supposed to be outside and waiting for their dad. If they weren’t on time they’d get in trouble with their parents.

At the games, Joel had been with a younger child who may have been Adam, although Mia wasn’t certain it was him.

Outside, she saw the little boy again, and talking to him was the same man who’d approached Joel, wearing the same clothes as he had the day before. “He was really close to the kid, leaning over and talking to him. He leaned down, took his hand—by his fingertips, as he is talking to him.” The little boy looked confused, and she didn’t hear him say anything.

She confirmed the dialogue Joel had reported to *AMW*. Joel had wanted to stay with the little boy until one of his parents came, but then their mother pointed out that the little boy’s father was there. “He was creepy,” Mia repeated, but then added, “creepy people have kids, too.” By then Mia’s father had arrived, the family left, and Mia recalled nothing else. Her mother has since died, as well.

I asked if she’d seen a blue van. She answered that the *AMW* report had mentioned that; she and Joel had seen one, of the blue color on a Pepsi can, parked in a regular space near the Sears entrance where they went in, although she wasn’t sure if that was on Sunday or Monday. One reason they recalled it was that at the time, their father drove a white van.

As I had with the other four witnesses at the mall whom I’d found in the 2008 Hollywood Police public records, I guided Mia to an Internet search page of images of Ottis Toole. We did this by phone.

On Google Images, I recognized that most of the pictures had been taken in 1983-84. “This looks like the guy maybe a little older. The guy I saw was younger,” she said. As for his hair, she said the guy she’d seen had it longer. But when she first saw pictures of Toole, “he reminded me of the man.”

Until then, I’d only mentioned that I’d wanted to show her pictures of someone else, I hadn’t said whom.

I guided her to a page of Dahmer photos. “He’s got the mouth,” she said. “There’s the longer hair.” Referring to Dahmer’s August 1982 Milwaukee County mugshot, in color, she said, “That’s the forehead, with the stern look. The lines in his forehead, when he was talking to my brother.

“In these pictures, it could very well be the guy.”

She said the man she'd seen had a thicker bearded scruff and his hair was "more messed up. He didn't look clean." She then added that Toole in his pictures "looks too old."

"It could be the guy," she repeated. "The teeth remind me of the monster."

Returning to the 1982 color mugshot, she said, "I found one that I'm absolutely positive that was the person. A little more familiar hair, more disheveled, that's the person I saw. I think you might be on to something. The mouth, I could identify." As for his forehead, "He gives the look of death to someone because you're mad at him."

Without me asking, she explained why she'd thought it had been Toole: "They already said Ottis Toole did it, and I just blew it off."

Next I had her watch a YouTube video of the interview Dahmer had done with the show *Inside Edition*. I stopped her after about a minute in.

"That's how the guy sounded, through the nose" like the Michigan accent she described. "That's the tone I remember. I'm pretty sure that's the voice I heard." She'd heard Toole speak in interviews, also. "It was more this voice (Dahmer's) than that (Toole's)."

Although she'd seen pictures of Dahmer in bits of a documentary she'd watched, she'd never before heard him speak. On the documentary she'd seen his "eyebrows go up, but go down, like he's mad." However, "by then, they'd already said Ottis Toole did it."

"The more I think about it, after seeing both pictures, yeah, it was the other dude," she said, meaning Dahmer.

The next day, I did a three-way call with Mia and Billy. Adding to her description of the incident with Joel, she said, now referring to Dahmer, "At first he was real nice, then he stumbled over his words, then he got really angry." Billy wanted to know how the man walked. "It was a funny gait," she said. "A shorter gait, energetic. He came after us fast," although without running. That matched Jeff, Billy said.

**30**

Pottersville

HOLD TIGHT, BECAUSE NOW I'M GOING TO FLIP THIS ARGUMENT. Despite all the problems just mentioned, maybe Arlene and Heidi Mayer *did* see Ottis Toole:

When Arlene told the detectives it was either Friday or Saturday night, she added, "mostly likely I'd say a Saturday night."

In December 1983, in the Georgetown, Texas, jail, Jack Hoffman and Lieutenant J.B. Smith asked Henry Lee Lucas whether once Toole arrived home from a trip he might have immediately gone somewhere else—as he said he'd done when he got home from Newport News.

"Oh yes. Yes. That's very possible... He's liable to take off the same day he gets back in Jacksonville without money."

"You've known him to do that in the past?"

"Oh yes."

I'd wondered if Toole's clunker ten-year-old '71 Cadillac would be reliable enough for the long schleps he and Lucas had described, but Lucas portrayed himself as a master

mechanic who worked on cars like that. Besides, when they broke down or ran out of gas and they didn't have money to fill the tank, they just abandoned them and bought (or stole) another. As for Toole as a driver, Lucas said, "Ottis is wild as far as driving. He runs a lot of stop signs, he's reckless on the road, and he speeds a lot." Nor did he ever have a driver's license. (A poor reader, Ottis didn't think he could pass the written portion of the exam.) When they were together Lucas did all the driving. He added they'd drive for long periods without stopping. "Like I say, I was on drugs and booze all the time and sleeping didn't matter to me."

Would Toole, alone, do the same? "Yeah, I think he could drive maybe, oh, maybe two days without sleep. But he'd get so reckless after a while he'd just have to pull off and get some sleep. He drove quite a bit there in Florida, well, he drove from Jacksonville to Miami and back." That was in 1979, he said.

Although Toole had told Hoffman and Terry it had taken him 8-9 hours to drive to Miami, to cover four hundred miles at that pace, without stopping, meant he would have been driving below the speed limit. If Toole averaged 80-90 M.P.H. (not unreasonable considering I've driven that stretch myself, speedometer sometimes touching ninety), he could have done it in less than five hours. He said he stopped only once, for gas, in Daytona Beach.

Not to say that the Mayers wouldn't have been cross-examinable witnesses. And I still don't think Chief Wagner at the 2008 press conference was justified saying, "With the acknowledgment that our investigation placed Ottis Toole in Hollywood, Florida at or near the time of Adam's abduction..."

But considering the Mayers' insistence they saw Toole, I'm inclined to think he could have been at the Kmart on Saturday evening July 25.

And even if he wasn't, was there maybe something true in his narrative of being in South Florida that weekend? There was no evidence that he was elsewhere on Monday July 27.

Hollywood was always short on evidence that Toole had been in South Florida at any time. But they missed that he apparently had been here two months before.

I revisited this fact: Lucas was indicted in Dade County after he'd admitted killing two girls near the Everglades. He'd correctly described how they were found tied and the Indian-style jewelry they were wearing, and picked out their pictures from a photo lineup of girls a Metro-Dade police detective had shown him.

I looked up more details about the murders. The *Miami Herald* is electronically searchable only back to 1982, but the *Miami News*, defunct since 1988, by now had its microfilm archives online (at the *Palm Beach Post's* website) with the added benefit that it was searchable by terms. Their first story was in the "Briefly" column on June 1, 1981:

### *2 dead women found in drain ditch*

A husband and wife on an evening bike ride discovered the bodies of two women in a South Dade drainage ditch, Metro police said. The unidentified women appeared to be in their teens or 20s and had been dead about a week when they were found about 8 p.m. yesterday [May 31] in a swampy area at SW

97th Avenue and 249th Street. Police hope to identify the women through fingerprints and jewelry found on the bodies, detectives said.

Days later, the paper followed up with this:



**Miami News, June 5, 1981**

The girls were Linda Karbin, seventeen, and Hazel Haack, nineteen, last seen on the evening of May 27 at Bea’s Pub, a storefront bar a block from the ocean in Sunny Isles where kids hung out. The drainage ditch where they were found was ten feet deep. The Dade medical examiner said there were no wounds on the bodies and concluded they had drowned.

“It’s murder, all right. They were dropped there,” the News quoted Detective Al Singleton.

According to a friend of Hazel’s interviewed by the News, she had been a runaway and often slept on Haulover Beach, a mile-and-a-half-long oceanfront county park, where such kids gathered. Haulover’s northern edge was about two-thirds of a mile from Bea’s. In the previous year, Hazel had arrests for disorderly conduct and shoplifting. The friend said she did a lot of drugs and that in the past month, “She started hanging out down on Biscayne Boulevard, at night,” transparent code for prostituting. The police report added that she had been selling drugs. Her two mugshots in the paper, taken about six months apart, showed a pretty teenager who had become a weathered adult.

Linda was from a more affluent family and went to school but after meeting Hazel on the beach they had become fast friends. She slept at home and her mother had let Hazel sort of move in. The police report said that Linda’s mother had not initially reported her as a missing person because in the past she’d run away a number of times.

Lucas’s indictment was announced March 15, 1984. In 1997, when the Metro-Dade detective who had interviewed Lucas spoke to me, he asked me not to use his name. But on my discovery of his quotes in the newspapers the day after the indictment, and knowing that he has since retired from official police work, I will name him now: Greg Smith. I wrote a previous book about one of his cases and from that experience I respect him and his professional judgment absolutely.

Smith had told the *News* that Lucas and Toole were together when the girls were killed although Toole was not charged. He'd interviewed Lucas on January 9, 1984; actually, he'd talked to Toole in prison first, on October 27, 1983, eight days after his first interview with Hollywood detectives and in the midst of some police backtracking on whether they could ever bring a case against him. As in the Walsh case Toole had offered few specifics on his own. In an Associated Press story that ran in the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* three days later, Smith said Toole told him about murders he said he'd done in Dade: "He is extremely vague about the ones he said he committed. He says he committed so many murders that they all ran together. But we're checking out the things he told us." Smith had told me that check produced no matches.

Lucas, however, "described the murder scenes, the victims and had independent knowledge about how they were murdered," Smith told the *Miami Herald*. He told the *News* that Lucas had described in "refined" detail how they had abducted the girls at gunpoint while they were hitchhiking or jogging on the beach. (The *News's* 1981 feature story said the girls didn't have a car, and commonly hitchhiked.) They'd tried to escape but the two men forcibly held them, and they were raped and strangled.

Since the case was closed by arrest—although as Smith had expected in 1984, Lucas never faced trial on their charges, he died of natural causes in a Texas prison in 2001—police let me see their file. It included much they hadn't told the press.

The girls were found floating face down, nude and each hogtied, that is, their wrists were tied behind their backs with pillowcase or bed sheet cloth, as were their ankles, and their necks were tied with nylon rope looped behind their knees, which forced them into fetal positions. Also, dishrags were stuffed into their mouths topped by more cloth over their mouths tied behind their necks.

In his police report Smith said Lucas had correctly described the victims as seventeen to nineteen years old, one with straight blonde hair (Haack), the other with light brown curly hair (Karbin). He thought they were both wearing shorts and tube tops—which both girls often wore. He said that traveling with them at the time were Toole's nephew and niece Frank and Becky Powell, then twelve and fourteen. Becky was also known as Frieda.

With the two girls in the car, hands tied behind their backs, Lucas said he drove south then west for two to three hours before he found dirt roads, close to the Everglades, where he and Toole raped them. He was unsure if they'd left them partially or totally unclothed but said they'd disposed of their clothing elsewhere. He said one or both girls were wearing jewelry—a necklace, earrings, and a ring, and that he left it on them.

Smith then showed Lucas a lineup of women: the victims and three girls who were alive. Lucas picked out Haack and Karbin.

A document created in 1983 in part by Texas Ranger Phil Ryan, found in Hollywood's Walsh file, reviewing Lucas's "method of operation" said that he "prefers runaways, hitchhikers, transients" and would "pick up any female, age and race no factor... These victims will normally have their hands tied behind with any handy article, such as the victim's clothing... Subject dumps bodies on side roads near Interstates." The bodies of Haack and Karbin were found within about a mile of a toll plaza on the Florida Turnpike.

However, a November 1985 *Miami Herald* story had doubted the validity of the indictment. A reporter, using some of the research published by the *Dallas Times Herald*



seven months earlier, wrote he'd obtained 1981 records from a Jacksonville scrap metal dealer, Commercial Metals Company, showing that Lucas was paid \$14.62 on May 27 and \$77.35 on May 29. He quoted the Dade case prosecutor, George Yoss: "I didn't know about that."

Smith had videotaped his interview with Lucas and the police made a copy for me. There was no transcript. It was four hours long and an insight into how difficult it was to discern whether Lucas (and separately, Toole) was telling the truth.

How smart was Lucas? According to a biography, when he was fourteen he was still in fifth grade and his IQ was tested at seventy-six, but in the interview he was nobody's fool. He knew how to get away with his crimes. He knew that bodies, especially without identification, were much less likely to be recognized when dumped across police jurisdictions. Smith joked to him that he knew a lot of the problems homicide detectives encountered.

He was forthcoming to all of Smith's questions but most of what he said Smith couldn't match. Was it because Lucas confused facts from so many of his killings? He estimated that between he and Toole they'd killed upwards of five hundred. Maybe he only got times and places wrong. Or maybe he was making shit up.

But before seeing any photos of Haack and Karbin he'd gotten their ages exactly right and their hair close enough. Although he couldn't remember exactly where on the beach they'd found them he called the area North Miami Beach—the informal (although technically wrong) name for then-unincorporated Sunny Isles, which also proved that he knew the area. The real City of North Miami Beach is on the mainland, go figure. He said they were jogging. Hitching seemed more likely.

If a confession matches every fact you should be suspicious that someone fed the confessor all the details. Here's where Lucas was wrong, inaccurate, or his facts were in dispute: he thought the murder had taken place in late April 1981, before Toole's mother had died, which was May 16, 1981. On Smith's prodding he conceded he could have been wrong about that but didn't think so. He said they'd found the girls in the late afternoon, between 5:30-7. The girls were reported last seen at Bea's around eight. He said where they killed them a "waterway" was nearby but said it was a "football field" away. There was a waterway but to where the bodies were discovered it was much closer than that. He said he and Toole had raped and strangled them—the medical examiner hadn't determined either. Their official cause of death was drowning. And a 1986 report by the Texas Attorney General said that on May 27, 1981, both Frank and Frieda Powell were present in school, in Jacksonville.

But two things alone probably convinced Smith he was otherwise telling the truth:

**SMITH:** Of these five pictures, did you kill any of these girls?

**LUCAS:** Yeah, these two here, I know.

**SMITH:** Okay, that's Karbin and Hazel Haack.

Later, Smith asked Lucas to show him how they'd tied up the girls. Lucas posed Smith, hands behind his back, to demonstrate how they'd tied their wrists, ankles, and necks, forcing him forward into the fetal position. In the file I'd seen pictures of how the girls were found at the crime scene, it was just the same. Only Lucas wasn't sure he'd

done that to Haack and Karbin, as he also wasn't sure he'd gagged or drowned—or even shot them, in the head with a .22 revolver. He just said he'd done that sort of thing.

I thought to compare Smith's interview to the transcript of Hollywood's first-night interview of Toole. In both instances there was an inevitable tendency to lead the witness—Smith even told Lucas he was on guard trying not to. Problem was, Lucas was talking much about murders Smith knew nothing about. Smith wanted him to talk about cases he was carrying with him.

Maybe the biggest difference in the two interviews was that after Toole had started giving consistently and annoyingly wrong or vague answers about taking Adam, the Hollywood detectives and Buddy Terry, understandably frustrated, started guiding his answers with multiple choices. When they showed Toole Adam's photo it was alone, they hadn't composed a lineup. (And anyway, Toole initially said he didn't recognize it.) But Smith had had time to prepare for Lucas; Hollywood flew to Jacksonville as soon as they heard about Toole.

To further the point about Lucas's memory, in October 1984, nine months later, on a single day he told two FDLE agents about 107 murders he'd done in Florida, including twenty-one in Dade and Broward plus what FDLE wrote was “a conservative estimate of 25” more in the Everglades. Needless to say, most of his details were sketchy. In March 1985 agents interviewed Toole over ten days and got seventy-eight incidents, some probably overlapping Lucas's.

From Lucas's list I spotted this one, in Miami, dated either 1980 or '81:

*Cuban female, which had short brown hair, approximately 5'03", 125 lbs., wearing glasses. Location of death would be close to the convention center. The victim was stabbed, and her underclothes were left on except for the panties which had been ripped off and they were left in the area. They took the money out of the victim's purse and threw the purse in the shrubbery close by. This would have been approximately 1 or 2 days after Toole's mother's death, at approximately 9:30-10:00 P.M. at night. They were driving the Olds Vista Cruiser at the time.*

Lucas and Toole changed cars like underwear—well, maybe they changed cars more frequently, and the Vista Cruiser was the same one Lucas said they'd driven when they'd picked up Haack and Karbin. Also there's the benchmark of Toole's mother's death (May 16), this time afterwards. Had the newspapers reported anything like this? Again I searched the 1981 *Miami News*, beginning May 16, for murder stories that might match and found one that had occurred on May 28, the day after Haack and Karbin were last seen:

## Cops seek clues to victims' names

Metro detectives are asking for help in identifying two homicide victims. The body of a woman was found floating yesterday in the Little River Canal at NW 87th Street and 7th Avenue. She was described as white, possibly Latin, in her late 20s, 5-foot-2, 105 to 110 pounds, with dark hair and brown eyes. She was wearing a short-sleeved, blue and purple top, peach-colored slacks, beige high-heeled shoes and gold braided loop earrings. Police are also asking for help in identifying a Latin male whose body was found

Miami News, May 29, 1981

### *Cops seek clues to victims' names*

Metro detectives are asking for help in identifying two homicide victims. The body of a woman was found floating yesterday [May 28, 1981] in the Little River Canal at NW 87th Street and 7th Avenue. She was described as white, possibly Latin, in her late 20s, 5-foot-2, 105 to 110 pounds, with dark hair and brown eyes. She was wearing a short-sleeved blue and purple top, peach-colored slacks, beige high-heeled shoes and gold braided loop earrings.

For a case that old, Central Records at Metro Police—now Miami-Dade P.D.—needed a case number to locate its report. To get it, same as I did for the case of the dead man near the meter room behind the sub shop, I called the Miami-Dade M.E. records department because its archive is much smaller, holding only death cases. But when the clerk searched its 1981 files she couldn't find it, not in the Homicide book or the Accidentals or Suicides. Finally, she went down into the rarely visited dusty basement (where I joked to her, they *really* keep the buried bodies) and found the master book for the year, everything logged in by handwriting in consecutive order by case number. That produced the answer: the case had never been officially classified with a manner of death. Not unheard of, the clerk said, but odd.

With the M.E. case number she found the police case number. When I finally got the autopsy report, within the police file, I saw that the dead woman had never been identified. Her fingerprints had been checked at Metro, City of Miami Police, and the FBI with no matches found. In his report of examination, the medical examiner left blank the manner and cause of death.

The Florida state Medical Examiner's Commission guidelines require medical examiners to establish manner and cause of death within ninety days of an autopsy with exceptions made only when data such as lab results are pending. Two years later, in June 1983, the cause of death still hadn't been determined. The police file reads that because

the original assistant medical examiner had since left the office, the case needed a review by another assistant M.E. Upon completion the police would be informed of the results.

That was the last entry in the file.

Without a medical examiner's finding of homicide, the dead woman never got a police homicide investigation. Instead the police in effect treated her case like an accidental death. If she had been murdered, as police initially told the Miami News, it was like the state victimized her a second time. And because she'd never been identified, and her next of kin never notified, no one was there to argue for her.

In preparation to interview Lucas, Greg Smith reviewed a number of his agency's cold case homicide files to see if Lucas's information would match any. But Smith never asked him about the Little River Canal woman, probably because he didn't have it on his list.

Here was the problem: The autopsy examination showed no injury to her to suggest that she'd been killed. All she had was small puncture marks in both arms that suggested she was a junkie, and torn sleeves and a pant leg. Otherwise she was fully clothed, including the sandals and earrings. In the police report the M.E. had said it appeared she had drowned. A toxicological report indicated no alcohol or methaqualone in her system.

As for the comparison to Lucas's information, again, it's not exact but it's tantalizing.

His "Cuban female" matches the story's "white, possibly Latin [female]" and his "approximately 5'03", 125 lbs." is close to the police's "5-feet-2, 105 to 110 pounds." On the autopsy table she measured five-one, 104. She had short brown hair and her purse was never discovered.

Likely she had died days before she was found. The medical examiner had never determined her time of death, but bodies in water typically submerge before rising. In similar conditions, Haack and Karbin were discovered on the surface four days after they were last seen. After Adam went missing on a Monday, on Wednesday police began searching area canals for him, telling the newspapers that if his body had been dumped in water, the timeframe for when he'd surface was two days later.

Contradicting Lucas's account, the Little River Canal woman was fully clothed, including panties, and she wasn't stabbed. But he had been confused on both those points about Haack and Karbin. Same for rape: Both Lucas and the medical examiner were silent on whether the Little River Canal woman was raped—as the M.E. had never determined any rapes of Haack and Karbin.

The only "convention center" in Dade County was the Miami Beach Convention Center, and the Little River Canal woman was found on the mainland, north of downtown Miami and about a block west of I-95.

But now back to Texas Ranger Phil Ryan's document about Lucas's M.O.:

"Sometimes he intends only to rape his victim, but can not satisfy himself with just that. Subject prefers to engage in sex with his victim after death... Prefers sex immediately after death, but due to circumstances may carry the body from the murder site to a more suitable site for sex." Lucas told Smith he'd raped Haack and Karbin before death, but who knows, that might have been posturing too.

On May 27 Haack and Karbin were last seen and were possibly drowned, raped (or maybe not), then found in a ditch about a mile from a Florida Turnpike interchange in southwest Dade, about thirty miles away from where they were last seen in Sunny Isles.

On May 28, the Little River Canal woman was found dead in a Miami waterway within sight of an I-95 interchange, about eight miles from the Miami Beach convention center.

About two months later when Flo Ella Miller was found near the Dania Cutoff Canal, like the Little River Canal victim she too was fully clothed and didn't reveal a life-taking injury. The medical examiner hadn't ruled her a homicide victim either. Unlike the Little River Canal woman, Miller was found to have had residual drugs in her system.

But the same question stood for both women: what were they doing face down dead in the middle of canals if someone hadn't put them there? Neither were ruled suicides; Miller was ruled an accidental death. But conceivably, how? And for that matter, how was Jaida Bohumil, the man from the meter room who Dahmer said he found, not a homicide? He too appeared uninjured but his ruling of accidental death by chronic ethanolism was diminished when the lab results returned showing no fatty metamorphosis of liver.

Could the answer to all three have been suffocation?

From his personal experience as an emergency paramedic and victim of Dahmer, Billy Capshaw knew that suffocation leaves few if any marks or indicators and even they would be lost after decomposition or immersion in water.

Billy said Dahmer would sit on his chest or back, depressing his lungs. Although he could barely breathe, he knew to act unaffected and then Jeff would get tired of it.

"Jeff did like to make a person wish for oxygen!" he wrote me in an email. "He liked to play with a person, you know to the point where you wish you were dead! Air hunger is a bitch!!!"

I found a second questionable determination of accidental death by chronic alcoholism, on May 16, 1981. Thomas Lynch, sixty-two, an executive visiting from Zanesville, Ohio, had been found laying face up in his bed at the oceanfront Pan American Hotel in Sunny Isles. Not only was the pillowcase and mattress "heavy with blood," read his Metro-Dade police report, but a second single bed in the room looked the same. As well, there was blood in the bathroom on the basin, toilet, tub, and floors, and on the wall leading to the bathroom. The officer noted six lacerations to his forehead plus others to the right side of his nose and behind his right ear, as well as "a black and blue right eye."

The officer referred the case to the homicide department but it never got a homicide investigation. Instead, after the man's son John Lynch told the medical examiner that his father had been an alcoholic since age twenty-five and had a history of DTs and bleeding, she ruled the death by natural causes.

Here were the problems with the case: Lynch had taken the room some time earlier on that calendar day, May 16. Before ten A.M. the switchboard operator, noticing that the room's phone was off the hook, sent a housekeeper to check. After she didn't get a response, the houseman forced open the door—it was chained from the inside. A door that opened onto a patio was also locked from the inside, by dead bolt.

Chronic alcoholics sometimes bleed from their esophagus through the nose. But Lynch had nine counted lacerations to his head, and presumably soaked two beds plus the bathroom area with his blood. Although there was no evidence noted that anyone else had been in the room, since police hadn't investigated it as a homicide there were no latent fingerprints taken or blood samples compared for consistency.

If he hadn't been alone, how to explain the front door chain-locked from the inside?

Well, here's a *New York Times* story from March 2010, datelined Dubai, about a murder of a Hamas operative in an airport hotel, blamed on the Israeli Mossad. This may have been a bit more involved than Lynch's death, but still:

The killers "seem to have thought they could pass it off as a natural death, or perhaps just another of this region's macabre mysteries. They injected him with a muscle relaxant, suffocated him and then smoothed away any signs of struggle, reattaching the hotel door chain as they left the room, investigators say."

Billy told me that he knew from his paramedic experiences that firefighters use a tool to unhinge chain locks so they don't have to break down doors unnecessarily. He found an example on Ebay: it was a thin hook and cost \$10.

Next: since Lynch had bled so much and apparently moved around the room quite a lot, and his phone was off the hook, if he was alone why didn't he try a little harder to get help?

I found another of Lynch's sons, Thomas Lynch Jr., living in suburban Cincinnati, who told me he had no argument with the medical examiner's determination. He said his father had been "a binge drinker all his life." He knew that alcoholics can bleed from their esophagus but said he hadn't known that his father prior to his death had ever done that. He also didn't know about the lacerations and said he'd never seen the police or autopsy reports.

He added information not in the police report: his father's secretary had been in Jacksonville at the time and had called the room. Lynch Sr. had told her he was "very ill." She had called the front desk but "by the time they got there it was too late." Although Lynch Jr. was polite in speaking with me, he was otherwise dismissive of my inquiry and our conversation was brief.

But if the secretary had called, when was it? The switchboard operator had realized Lynch's phone was off the hook and sent the housekeeper to check his room. At 9:50 A.M. she found him dead. At 11:15 police arrived and wrote in their report that the body was cool and rigor mortis (stiffness) was full. Rigor mortis begins about three hours after death and reaches its maximum at about twelve hours. That suggested he'd been dead since no later than say, eight A.M., and possibly much earlier. So if the secretary had called the front desk just after she last spoke to him but no one was sent until almost ten, why didn't she follow up either with the front desk or herself call for an ambulance? Police had reported nothing of that.

The police report also didn't say whether Lynch's wallet was found or how much was in it. Nor was there an explanation for his lacerations and black eye; hotel rooms don't usually have sharp surfaces. Billy said that if the victim had bled that much from his esophagus and nose, it wouldn't have been the first time he'd done so.

When he was found, Lynch was wearing a button-down shirt and swim trunks. He could have been to the pool—but likely overnight it would have been closed. Maybe instead he'd been to the beach—the Pan American was on the ocean at 178th and Collins Avenue, between Sunshine Subs and Mr. Pizza. It was similarly a short distance to Haulover Beach—remember Mr. Pizza's "Larry" was said to have sent an employee to find young gay men there. In mid-May, Dahmer may not yet have been working at the sub shop but he'd told Jack Hoffman that around then he was sleeping on the beach. Could Mr. Lynch have spent some of the overnight prior strolling Haulover or elsewhere and had the misfortune to find Jeffrey Dahmer, who he brought back to his room? Might

Dahmer have fought with him, bloodied his face and blackened his eye and then suffocated him? Might that be why Lynch apparently moved around the room but didn't successfully get help and was found face up in one of the two bloody beds?

So how come I was discovering all these problems with medical examiner findings and reports? Not to mention the two most significant—the misidentification of Adam Walsh by the Indian River County M.E., and the absence of an autopsy report narrative by the Broward M.E.

1981 was the record year for homicides in Dade and Broward counties—803 combined, double that of three years earlier. It was the era of the cocaine cowboys. Talking with local detectives who had worked during that time, they all said they were overwhelmed. One said, “You’d work one case and two or three more would happen during.” Nor were there enough assistant medical examiners either, or even storage spaces for bodies. Both counties rented refrigerated trucks as morgue auxiliaries.

No life-ending trauma was found on the bodies of Lynch, Miller, Bohumil, the Little River Canal woman, or Haack and Karbin. But while Haack and Karbin were found nude and bound and gagged, the others were dressed and not encumbered. Their deaths were more mysterious. It seems though that the police and medical examiners didn't have much time or inclination for such things, and in two of the cases, there was no next-of-kin to go to the mat with them. Of the other two, the Millers did bitterly argue with their medical examiner's ruling, to no avail, although the Lynches, from out of town, did not.

In his March 1981 feature story in the *Fort Lauderdale News/Sun-Sentinel*, Ronald Wright explained that determining the manner of death—“homicide, suicide, accidental, natural, or ‘I don't know’”—is often demanding. “And not all cases are what they first appear to be. An apparent drowning may not be a drowning, a traffic fatality may not be a traffic fatality.” Later he added, “The job is attractive to me because I like the challenge of having puzzles to solve. I suppose I like trying to figure out what the questions are and figuring out the answers to them.” Miller as well as Adam Walsh were cases under his charge, four months after he said this.

The Haack and Karbin police investigation was surprisingly lengthy, largely tracing Hazel's drug connections. But closing the case took an out-of-left-field confession from a random serial killer. Had medical examiners ruled the other four victims also as homicides, in 1984 I expect Greg Smith (as Metro's cold case detective) would have asked Lucas about the Little River Canal victim—another woman in a canal, found the day after Haack and Karbin went missing. Then in 1991 after learning that Dahmer had been in Miami for six months in 1981, I also expect Smith would have reviewed his cold cases from then and not have missed “Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer” as the reporter of the Bohumil death, just twenty days before Adam Walsh. Maybe Smith even would have revisited the alley and the meter room and found all that blood spatter we discovered in 2007, sixteen years later. Once he showed that to Hollywood, would their thinking about Dahmer have totally changed? Further, Smith might have suspected his connection to Thomas Lynch, and Hollywood might have considered he'd killed Flo Ella Miller. And there would have crumbled Dahmer's blanket denial that he'd committed no crimes while he was in South Florida. And the same for everyone else's notion that once he was arrested he gushed the full truth, he did seventeen murders and none more, and they all fit the M.O. attributed to him.

So the Adam Walsh case first derailed not when Jack Hoffman in 1992 looked into Dahmer's eyes and declared him a truth-teller, but more than two weeks *before* the child was even abducted. That's when Dr. Charles V. Wetli, the Deputy Chief Dade County Medical Examiner (who had recently replaced Wright in the position), concluded that a seventy-eight-pound, fifty-five-year-old homeless "derelict" (as police called him) who nobody seemed to miss, whose shaggy gray hair and similar beard made him look much older and was wearing only one tennis shoe, who was found face down in gravel outside the meter room in an alley died primarily of fatty metamorphosis of liver and did not review his opinion although days after his autopsy microscopic exam results came back showing no fatty metamorphosis—and no alcohol in his system.

Wright revealed what might have been the prevailing attitude among medical examiners toward such cases, in a 1982 interview in a magazine published by syndicated columnist Jack Anderson called *The Investigative Reporter*: it wrote that Wright "appreciates a good murder, not 'victim-participated homicides,' he says, explaining that they are 'when two trash bags kill each other.' Those are crimes which are relatively easy to solve, 'typical of homicides in the United States and throughout the world.' Not for him, that kind. Give him a good murder mystery, one in which he can match wits with imaginative killers."

In 1982, no public official could have gotten away with slurring racial, ethnic, nationality or sexual orientation groups, especially in a mixed place like South Florida. But "trash bags" had no advancement or pride organizations, no parades on Columbus Day like the other communities, so Ron Wright at least didn't feel the need to guard against being trash bag-ist.

I asked current Miami-Dade Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Bruce Hyma to re-examine the case. He replied that at my request he did, "but we have no evidence that Mr. Bohumil died of anything other than chronic ethanolism. The investigation did not identify any evidence for homicide. The association with Mr. Dahmer is interesting, but not indicative of anything sinister."

And that was the problem with all four cases: although none of the bodies appeared to have been killed, their settings all indicated homicides. In each case the medical examiners chose to overlook the setting, a decision that incidentally created less investigative work. And Hyma's response suggests to me they would make similar choices even now.

This must be Wetli and Hyma's theory of the death: it relied on a witness's (Dahmer) statement to police that the deceased had been living in the meter room and "had been complaining lately of ill health." Maybe when he realized he was dying of his illness (but not the one Wetli diagnosed) and dehydration, he tried to find help wearing just one shoe, struggled but got only as far as outside the meter room where he collapsed face down in gravel and couldn't right himself.

Rigor mortis set in, so he had been dead a few hours when on his trash duty for the sub shop, he was found by Jeffrey Dahmer.

What did the officers on the scene think? They quickly referred the case to the homicide department. So did the officers who found the Little River Canal woman and Thomas Lynch.



Let's look at our collected death cases: a homeless man who slept in a meter room (Bohumil); a Latin woman, possibly a junkie and a prostitute (Little River Canal woman); a drug-user party girl (Miller); an executive whose out of town family didn't push for a homicide investigation (Lynch); a blonde teenager who had a pretty mugshot (Haack) and her middle-class younger high school-age Jewish girlfriend (Karbin), whose deaths made above the fold in a local newspaper; and a cute 6-year-old little leaguer from a suburban home with attractive and articulate young parents (Adam).

Now let's add three more Broward cases from that spring and summer. My information comes from a document Bob Foley, formerly of the Broward Sheriff's Office, had kept, a 1985 Broward M.E. compilation of "Current Unidentified Remains" that included capsule summaries, which I combined with information posted on the Internet by the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System database (NamUs).

All three were found in canals or watery ditches:

On April 17, 1981, Miramar Police reported "partial skeletal parts" of a white male, 20-30, about six-foot-five and probably athletic, found face down in a drainage ditch near the Florida Turnpike, wrapped in a plastic bag weighted down with an anchor. He was fully clothed and several syringes were found in his pocket.

Does this sound like a probable homicide? Because the Broward M.E. couldn't document any injuries that might have caused death, they left the manner of death as "Pending." On the 1985 list, it was "Unclassified."

On August 26, 1981, the decomposed body of a white female was found floating in a canal in the Everglades west of U.S. 27. She was missing both of her arms and her right leg below the knee. She was about twenty, five feet, 104 pounds, with red hair about ten inches long and extensive dental work, clothed in blue jeans and a red pullover.

Homicide? "Pending." Again, the M.E. couldn't find any injuries that caused death.

On September 28, 1981, police in Coconut Creek, a northwest Broward suburb bordered by the Florida Turnpike, found a woman in a canal who's body was in "advanced decomposition." She had multiple gunshot wounds to her head and plastic bags on her head and feet. She was white, five-foot-seven, ninety-eight pounds, with brown hair in plastic curlers, and she wore a zippered dress. The M.E. classified her death as a homicide.

So maybe it wasn't simply that in 1981 police and medical examiners were overwhelmed. Haack and Karbin got a lot of attention, and probably nobody in the history of Broward County got a larger investigation as measured by detective man-hours than Adam Walsh. Yet how different were the circumstances that let Haack and Karbin have homicide investigations but kept the Little River Canal woman, the U.S. 27 canal woman, the Miramar drainage ditch man, and Flo Ella Miller from also being ruled and investigated as homicides?

In those last four, medical examiners couldn't find wounds or trauma that caused death, but nor could they for Haack and Karbin. They were found tied up and said to have drowned. But the man's body in Miramar was found in a bag. Also, in his and the U.S. 27 case, body parts were missing. The Haack and Karbin police detective said that in the water where they were found, "They were dropped there." And the Miramar man, the U.S. 27 and the Little River Canal women, and Flo Ella Miller, none ruled as homicides, weren't?

What really made the difference? I would suggest it was a determination or prejudice among police and medical examiners that there were tiers of victims. Media did (or does) it too but they do not represent public agencies. Here's who got (or get) the most attention: the attractive, the especially innocent, and those who have kin who keep after the police and medical examiners—and media. In the bottom tier, with no identified kin, medical examiners left the unidentified victims in the probably permanent limbo of unclassified or pending manners of death and therefore without homicide investigations. Worse still, as the M.E.s knew, they probably never would be identified. They were, pardon, shit out of luck, the flotsam and jetsam of humanity.

In contrast, all of the identified bodies got definitive rulings of manner of death: Haack, Karbin, Bohumil, Lynch, and Miller—but only Haack and Karbin got homicide investigations. Bohumil had no identified kin, the Lynch family didn't object to the ruling, and only the Miller family did, to no avail.

To remain unidentified long after death suggests to me that those people abandoned or lost most or all of their social capital. They became loners and drifters, runaways and discards. Their lives had bad middles and worse ends. We can afford for them at least a lump in our throats and a There but for the Grace of God... They don't get thought about or written about much.

But the larger group of drifters and discards also includes people like Lucas, Toole, and Dahmer, who in their Hobbesian worlds, life nasty, brutish, and short, prey viciously on other vulnerable loners and runaways. Yet as Ron Wright suggested, when one trash bag kills another, it's ho-hum.

But when a trash bag took Adam Walsh, he crossed the red line. As my attorney friend Christina Spudeas had suggested, if Dahmer took Adam, from the public reaction he learned never to do anything like that again. His later sixteen admitted victims in Milwaukee were older boys and men of color and gays. While they were missing, when their kin went to police and media they got scant attention—nothing like what happened when Adam went missing.

Then police arrested Dahmer, an intelligent well-spoken man whose father had a doctorate in chemistry. Had Dahmer looked or sounded more like Lucas or Toole, his murders would have been a story but not risen to the level of folklore, as they did.

Ironic then that both the Dahmer and Adam investigations hinged on cases officials apparently considered lesser tier—or trash bag—incidents when they occurred. In Milwaukee, police should have determined a pattern of missing persons and theorized there was a serial perpetrator. In South Florida, medical examiners and police also should have realized a pattern of victims, mostly female, found in canals or ditches near major highways, none of them with obvious trauma but all quite dead and in places they obviously didn't get to on their own, and investigated them as homicides.

In the Christmas movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, when Jimmy Stewart's character George Bailey finally gets so frustrated at his worsening circumstances that he wishes out loud he'd never existed, after his guardian angel Clarence fails to talk him out of the idea he grants him a glimpse of how life would have been without him. In this alternative universe instead of Bedford Falls his hometown is called Pottersville, after the Scrooge-like banker who was the nemesis of the Bailey Brothers Building & Loan Association, the very marginal bank that George ran and kept afloat at great personal cost. Now the town is a mecca of debauchery—bars, neon casinos, easy women. The building and loan

is gone, presumably it had failed during the 1929 stock market crash when there had been a bank run, which George had stopped by using all of his honeymoon cash—but this time he wasn't there. As a result the town is no longer a place of families that had constructed and owned modest homes with mortgages the building and loan had been present to grant. They visit the grave of his brother Harry, who as a child in a mishap had drowned in cold water. In the original story, George had saved him, at the cost of permanent loss of hearing in one of George's ears. Therefore Harry wasn't a wartime hero and the soldiers he'd saved had died because he wasn't there. As well, George's wife was a lonely spinster librarian, his old mother had to take in boarders, and his children were of course never conceived.

The Adam Walsh case is Pottersville, the bad alternative universe because a better one didn't happen. Because, because, because. In the absence of an unsung hero like George Bailey who when he stepped up always seemed to take it on the chin, we have Dr. Wetli, who didn't change his natural death ruling on Bohumil after the microscopic exam results returned. Had he ruled it a homicide, the police might have grumbled that they had little to investigate, it looked like a case that would never be solved. So in 1991 when police discovered Dahmer had been here and Greg Smith likely checked his cold case murder files from then he didn't have that file and so he didn't see the reference in it to "Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer" and as a consequence Dahmer was never seriously considered as a suspect in Walsh. Much later when I made the connection it was too late, Dahmer was dead and therefore beyond prosecution, and Hollywood Police didn't want to consider it.

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In Hollywood's file was an FDLE case number for their Lucas and Toole investigation, which I ordered through public records. I was hoping FDLE was involved in the Dade County cases but their documents concerned a late 1980s investigation of four murders they suspected the pair had committed in the rural northwest part of the state, all near Interstate 10, about 250 miles from its terminus in Jacksonville:

- December 15, 1980, John P. McDaniels, near Marianna
- February 10, 1981, Jerilyn Murphy Peoples, in Holmes County
- March 25, 1981, Brenda Jo Burton, in Bonifay
- April 9, 1981, Mary Ruby McCray, in Chipley

In addition, the documents spoke of two murders within those months in Texas. Lucas had pled guilty in one and was suspected in the other:

December 7, 1980, Lucas was suspected in the murder of Libbie Rhymes (or Rhyme) in Killeen, He told investigators that Toole and Frank and Becky Powell were with him;

April 26, 1981, for the murder of Dianna Lynne Bryant, killed in Terry County, near Lubbock, Lucas alone pled guilty in 1984 and was sentenced to seventy-five years.

I already knew that in 1991 the state of Florida had taken guilty pleas from Toole for five murders. It wasn't a well-reported story in the press at the time. Searching now, I could only find stories about it in the *Houston Chronicle*, which was more interested in Lucas.

They wrote that in 1989 both Lucas and Toole were indicted for three of the above murders, then later McCray was added. Lucas denied the charges, blaming Toole for lying about their participation. The paper quoted him: "It's just a conspiracy to get all the unsolved murders pinned on me. They want to get another capital murder on me because they know this one is going to be overturned."

Actually, Lucas was right that his death sentence would not stand. Although no court ever reversed it, in 1998 the Texas Board of Pardons and Parole recommended 17-1 to Gov. George W. Bush that he commute Lucas's sentence to life in prison, and four days before Lucas was to receive his lethal injection Bush in fact did so, the only time in his governorship he took that action. (Talk about *deus ex machina!*)

Said Bush, "Henry Lee Lucas is unquestionably guilty of other despicable crimes which he has been sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison. However, I believe there is enough doubt about this particular crime that the state of Texas should not impose its ultimate penalty by executing him."

The case was the murder of "Orange Socks," a never-identified woman in her twenties called that because that was all she was wearing when she was found, in a culvert near I-35 in Williamson County, Texas, in October 1979. Relying on Lucas's confessions but no physical evidence or witnesses, the jury had convicted in 1984. Of the rest of Lucas's convictions, eight were by guilty plea and one by jury decision, but in none of those was he sentenced to death.

In an interview with an AP reporter published June 15, 1998, two weeks before his scheduled execution, Lucas said that police had coached him with the case facts. Instead of him leading police to the crime scene, they had led him to it, and he agreed, he said.

"I used to confess to everything under the sun. I thought if I confessed to a bunch of crimes at one time, people would say: 'No, that couldn't happen.' I enjoyed it. Until I got tired of it.

"I set out to break and corrupt any law enforcement officer I could get. I think I did a pretty good job. I feel I've accomplished what I set out to accomplish.

"A fool like me comes along and says he's committed 600 murders and gives police a chance to solve all their unsolved murder cases."

In the interview Lucas denied killing anyone except his mother, in Virginia, in 1960. And even that he qualified with "maybe." He'd said, long before, that although he'd assaulted her during an argument with a knife in his hand, she hadn't died of the slight wound he'd inflicted but instead from a heart attack after he left. Lucas's mother, by any definition, had seriously abused him as a child. (Don't ask.)

After a year spent investigating Lucas's confessions, the office of Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox issued a report in April 1986 that found a "notable lack of physical evidence linking Lucas to the crimes to which he confessed," with the exception of the murders of Lucas's mother, Frieda Powell, and Kate Rich. As for how Lucas knew details about the other cases, the report said he learned them "through the interview process... when Lucas was shown written crime reports and photographs of crime scenes."

In a July 2, 1998 AP story, Mattox said that every other murder Lucas had confessed to and cleared should be reopened.

"I think you're going to find there's nothing to tie him to any of these cases but his confessions," Mattox said.

So just to scorecard this, the Mattox report counted more than 600 murders Lucas had confessed to but considered only three of those good. However, it added, "Questions about Henry Lee Lucas will be debated for decades. This report is not offered as a final answer. There may never be a final answer."

Texas Ranger Phil Ryan said in 1992 he knew that two were good for sure, and told me he thought Lucas killed about fifty; George W. Bush, as governor of Texas, said Lucas committed many despicable crimes but maybe not the murder of Orange Socks, for which he'd been sentenced to die; and then there was Lucas himself, who in his later tellings said he'd only killed his mother, maybe.

Now back to the Florida cases:

Lucas was extradited to northwest Florida but in October 1991 the cases ended with a whimper; the two small counties that had brought charges decided they couldn't afford the trial. Lucas was returned to Texas with charges in effect dropped, but Toole pled guilty to all four, accepting four life sentences as well as agreeing to testify against Lucas if he was ever brought to trial. In terms of prison time it didn't matter, Toole was already serving a life sentence for a death resulting from his arson of a flophouse in Jacksonville in January 1982. For that he'd originally gotten the death penalty but in 1986 it was reduced to life.

The fifth case may have been the murder of David Scott Schallert, killed in Washington County, Florida, although the *Chronicle* story didn't say. (FDLE wrote that his murder occurred on February 2, 1980; the Texas Attorney General had it on February 6, called him Scott D. Schallert, and said he was eighteen years old.)

Same as Jim Mattox's view of Lucas, by themselves Toole's pleas had never convinced me that he was the killer he'd represented himself as, especially in the absence of physical evidence or witnesses. A December 1985 letter written by FDLE to Metro-Dade Police read that by mid-1985, both he and Lucas had recanted most of their confessions and declared they'd lied to law enforcement. As a result, that had been the end of most everyone asking them for information to solve their open cases. In Adam's case Hollywood P.D. had long since trashed him. In August 1985 Capt. Steve Davis told the *Miami Herald*, "Everything he said was very ambiguous."

But a few years later the game was back afoot. In FDLE's investigative summary reports of the northwest Florida murders, Toole's information was specific. Further, despite what Lucas told the press in 1989, a year before he had confessed to them as well, and his information matched Toole's. Even further, it matched what FDLE had gotten from Frank Powell, as well as evidence from the crime scenes.

Forgetting their uninspiring conclusions and Lucas's remarks to the contrary, these cases looked real. Including Haack and Karbin, Lucas and Toole were spree killers like they'd said. As for the rest of their maddening confessions, who knows?

Look at the dates, the end of 1980 and spring of '81. Now add in that in May they were in Dade County.

Now recall that in July in Delaware, Toole and Lucas fought and they separated. Then on July 22 Lucas was arrested in Maryland and spent the rest of the summer in jail. The children were taken into Maryland state custody and transferred to Florida.

Toole didn't know about Lucas's arrest or the children in custody, at least not until he got home from Newport News. He'd told Hoffman and Hickman that he wanted to

find them. Might he first have asked around, or left quickly to search for them? Did he have a reason to think he'd find them in South Florida? They'd been there together two months earlier.

Adam's abduction and supposed murder is unlike the northwest Florida murders Toole did with Lucas. Three were rural home invasions and burglaries and another was the robbery of a gas station. On the other hand, Adam has much in common with Haack and Karbin. In both instances victims were in public places (within twenty minutes of each other), were probably rushed, forced or lured into vehicles, and bodies were found later floating in remote canals near the Florida Turnpike. There were obvious differences too. Together Lucas and Toole apparently could handle two late-teenage girls. Alone, Adam's kidnapper might have selected a small child. It was certainly easier than getting Willis out of the mall.

The FDLE reports answered another loose end:

Toole said he and Lucas's trips west of Jacksonville were in part forays to find scrap metal they could gather and sell at home. After killing Brenda Burton in March 1981, he said he and Lucas had returned to Jacksonville and driven to a junkyard. He couldn't remember its name but said if he'd heard it he'd recognize it. The investigators read him a list of five, and from those Toole identified Commercial (Commercial Metals)—the yard that had logs of Lucas's sales to them on May 27 and 29, 1981 and on many other occasions. Toole added that a black man who lived near Lucas sold scrap metal to Commercial using Lucas's name. That man, who he didn't name, had since died, he said.

Now that I think that we're safe in establishing that Lucas and Toole really were killers, and they'd been in South Florida at least at the end of May 1981, we can say for sure that three serial killers at the same time had been in the same place: Sunny Isles.

This is how Bill Bowen would say it: *How damn weird is that?*

Bea's Pub, where Haack and Karbin were last seen, was walking distance, a block east on 163rd Street to Collins Avenue, then a quarter-mile north, from Sunshine Subs, where Dahmer had worked that spring and summer. Although Ken Haupt Sr. couldn't pinpoint when he'd hired Dahmer, he did recall that it was a few weeks or a month or so before the day Dahmer had told him about the dead body near the dumpster. That was July 7, so when Haupt had first seen him dive that same dumpster for food, which was maybe a week before he'd hired him, it was May or June. Although Dahmer didn't tell Jack Hoffman which beach he'd slept on, distinct possibilities were Haulover, where Hazel Haack sometimes slept—the only beach I can think of on the barrier island that has wild seagrape foliage which can provide natural cover, or the Sunny Isles Pier, at the end of 163rd Street. Every other beach around there fronts a hotel or apartment building, limiting the opportunities for sleeping raw.

Aside from A.W. saying that Dahmer and Toole were together on July 27, could I objectively show that Dahmer, Toole, and Lucas knew each other?

I asked Phil Ryan whether Lucas had ever mentioned Dahmer to him. Ryan said he was largely done with Lucas long before 1991, when Dahmer's name became familiar. But thinking similarly, he had asked Lucas if he'd teamed up with any other serial killers known at the time.

I searched the FDLE reports to see if Lucas and Toole ever had others along during their murders, besides Frank and Becky. In fact, yes, Lucas said. He hadn't wanted to give up the name, but Toole's brother-in-law Rodney Syphurs had traveled with them in a separate car during some crimes that resulted in murders including the killing of the service station attendant John McDaniel. Lucas said Syphurs shot McDaniel and added that Syphurs was a member of the Hand of Death cult. Syphurs died in 2005.

I couldn't reach Frank Powell but did speak at length to his daughter, a young adult. She told me her father had told her a lot about his travels with Henry and Uncle Ottis (she said the family pronounced it "Otis") but she knew nothing about them in South Florida. She asked her mother, divorced from Frank, who responded through her that she'd never heard Frank mention Jeffrey Dahmer's name.

I had hoped that Lucas in his interview with Smith had mentioned meeting or joining up with another killer or fellow traveler around the time he and Toole killed Haack and Karbin. He didn't. But he did say that in 1979 he and others in the Hand of Death together killed a number of people in South Florida, probably in the Everglades.

In *Hand of Death: The Henry Lee Lucas Story*, Lucas spoke at length to author Max Call about his cult training in the Everglades. I was looking for anything at all specific about South Florida—and found virtually nothing. Narrating Lucas's story, Call wrote that Lucas met his contact in the cult at a "warehouse on Miami's waterfront." Then, at nighttime, "after leaving the Miami city limits, they drove northwest for about an hour before turning off the highway into the Everglades." That, plus what Lucas told the FBI in 1984 (repeating essentially what he told Call, with some contradictions), sounds like he's describing Alligator Alley (Florida State Road 84, now I-75, in Broward and continuing west across the state); they'd stopped "at a remote marina" where Lucas's contact "rousted the operator and led the way to an air-boat tied to the dock."

There was also a reference to something that sounded like the killing of Haack and Karbin, but it was written in the author's narrative, not Lucas's: "Henry's memory didn't reveal that he'd killed and robbed two women during his blackout... Leaving Ottis and his friend in Miami, he drove north." Call published in 1985; Dade County had indicted Lucas for Haack and Karbin's murders in 1984.

Who was Ottis's friend? A few paragraphs earlier, Call described him and the scene:

"Getting ready to leave Miami, Henry ran into Ottis in a bar. This wasn't unusual because it was a common hangout for members of the *Hand*. It was a contact point where orders for contract killings could be picked up, or simply a place where superiors could find loyal and willing servants for Satan.

"Ottis was traveling with an effeminate friend, but the man's pale blue eyes were cold as ice."

Eyes cold as ice? Let's review some of the observations of Dahmer I gathered:

Willis: "He had a look on him, like the Devil was in him." Ken Hauptert, Sr.: "I saw hell in his eyes once." Billy Capshaw: "An expression like he just wasn't there... If you've ever seen that—I promise you, you will never forget that eye contact." Linda Swisher: "his eyes were like ice."

Were Dahmer's eyes blue? That's what the FBI wrote in a narrative document dated August 16, 1991.

I read the line in Call's book to Billy, and he reacted, "Wow, that's good." He said Jeff's eyes changed colors depending on the light and maybe even the season. "I looked

at his eyes a lot. They're not a deep blue, not the kind of blue that jumped out at you, a beautiful blue." Instead he called them "grayish-blue," or "fluffy-blue." "Between pale blue and grayish-blue," he said.

I asked the same to Preston Davis, who had also been in Billy and Jeff's barracks in Baumholder, except that Preston had left in the beginning of 1980 and Billy had replaced him, so they had never met until recently, on the phone, then later in person. "Blue eyes," he said. Were they pale blue? "Light blue," he said. He said Jeff's gaze, when he was drunk, could be "intimidating."

Was Jeff effeminate? Not in his TV interviews. Billy said Jeff usually would hold himself in "a manly way. But around the right people, that might have changed." Privately to Billy, he "prissed around, happy-prissy" when he was drinking. He'd shake his butt, drop his hand in a limp-wristed way, and turn his head "the way a gay man does," as well as be "happy and jumpy." Jeff didn't show that to most people, "but if you were around him a lot," as Billy was, you would have seen it, he said. When I asked that to Davis, he said he'd never seen it but he didn't doubt what Billy said.

I asked A.W. if he'd seen it. Yes, he said. "The way he'd move his hands, like an Egyptian"—his actual reference was the song "Walk like an Egyptian." He saw it "when he'd try to minimize my pain.

"He had a gay voice, when he started to get aroused, I guess. He descended into this gay persona" as well as cross-dressed, he said. "He seemed like a tough kind of person, then he'd become this wacky kind of gay person when he got behind closed doors."

After first publication of this book, another man found me on Facebook and said that Dahmer had tried to pick him up using an obviously gay voice.

Sean Adams said the incident had occurred in 1979 in Morgan City, Louisiana, a bayou town, where Adams grew up. He was eleven at the time. He knew of my Dahmer books but had not read them.

In 1995, watching a documentary about Dahmer, Adams recognized him as the same man. The documentary showed his August 1982 Milwaukee County mugshot, whereas before then Adams had only seen current shots of Dahmer. The mugshot had Dahmer with a mustache and gold-rimmed eyeglasses, both of which Adams said the man he encountered had.

Adams had since learned that in 1979 Dahmer had been in the Army stationed at Fort Sam Houston, in San Antonio. That was about 400 miles from Morgan City, which then, Adams said, had the reputation of a party town. He couldn't recall the month or season when the incident occurred, but according to military records, Dahmer had been at Fort Sam Houston from May 11 to June 22, 1979. (From there he was sent to Germany.)

Adams described himself then as skinny and long-haired yet very tall for his age. He said he was walking toward the riverfront to join his brother to fish. Mapping it out together on Google Maps, he showed me where the incident had occurred: on the thin sidewalk in front of what he said was then a biker bar, on Railroad Avenue at Second Street. It was an afternoon. When Adams passed, he said the man was in the driver's seat of a new white van, he thought a Dodge, parked in a space on a slant. He said he'd taken note of the van's license plate; although he hadn't written it down, he remembered it wasn't a Louisiana plate, he said Louisiana issued plates only for the rear of vehicles and this had been on the front. It might have been a Government plate, he thought.



“He said, ‘Excuse me, do you know where there are any gay bars?’” Adams said he told him Morgan City had none but he’d heard there were some in New Orleans, further east.

He said the man’s voice was “high-pitched and gay—more on the fruity side, a put-on voice.” They talked for a bit, about gay bars, then the man “asked me if I would have a drink someplace.” His reaction was to get away: “Fuck that. Not going there,” he told me.

Wary of being snatched, he’d kept just enough distance from the man as well as glanced to notice that there were other people around. He told the man that those people included some of his family members—quick thinking for an eleven-year-old.

Adams said he was very polite to the man and didn’t see him angry, or any stare from him. But after he took off, he didn’t look back.

As for being pals with someone like Toole, Billy said, “I can see Jeff just going along for the ride.” If it was so, it suggested to him “that Jeff needed someone around all the time, like he needed me around. He was a loner but he needed people around—does that make any sense?” he asked.

I had told A.W. that I’d seen a quote from Gerald Boyle, Dahmer’s defense attorney at his Milwaukee murder trial, that Dahmer was the “wimpiest” person he’d ever met. “That’s what I’ve been saying,” A.W. answered. “Jeff would say, ‘Oh, I have a pain, I feel so bad,’” this after “he’s put a spike through your abdomen.

“He didn’t have charisma,” he said. Leaders have charisma, and Jeff didn’t.

“Jeff was wimpy,” Billy agreed, “except when he was torturing you.”

Billy recalled that Jeff was usually angry with him, maybe because he always resisted being his partner in crimes. I thought, after Jeff was separated from Billy, the next partner he met might have been Ottis Toole.

Here’s the rebuttal that Call’s narrative isn’t reliable:

Just before his description of Lucas seeing Toole’s friend at the Miami bar, Call writes that Lucas had killed Becky Powell, in Texas. Call’s book is sparse on dates but Mike Cox, a former journalist who also interviewed Lucas, wrote in *The Confessions of Henry Lee Lucas* that Lucas admitted he’d killed her in August 1982. Lucas’s last time in Florida—and at that, North Florida, not South Florida—was weeks after Becky’s mother died in December 1981. The state of Florida had placed Becky in a children’s shelter and Lucas had liberated her, in January 1982, and together they’d headed west.

In Call’s telling, the day after Lucas killed Becky, Toole found him, near where the murder happened, in Texas. He quoted this dialogue:

Ottis: “Henry, where the hell have you been? And where’s Becky?”

In front of someone else, Lucas told Toole “Becky ran off with a truck driver.”

But once they were alone, Toole asked him, “Okay, what really happened to Becky?”

**HENRY:** “I killed her. Her body’s up in the field on a blanket.”

**OTTIS:** “She’ll have to be buried. We’ll give her a great send-off.”

Cox didn’t have that scene. Instead he quoted a letter Lucas wrote to Toole on November 12, 1983, when both were incarcerated, at which time he admitted to him her murder. The grammar is intact:

“Dear Ottis, I have tried to write you many times but with everything happening to me, I couldn’t. The reason I have not told you about Becky was I never wanted to hurt you...”

In Call’s prologue, he writes, because Lucas’s motives were so “bizarre... to understand them we must report them with the power and style of fiction.” A bit further he explains, “This book will tell the true story of how Henry changed masters before it was too late.” That is, he dropped Satan and embraced Jesus. I checked other titles by Call’s publisher, Prescott Press, and found the words Satan, Antichrist, Beast, and Armageddon. Further, the last few chapters of Call’s book are devoted to how a woman in his church, Clementine Schroeder, or Sister Clemmie, had ministered to Lucas in jail.

In April 1985, Sister Clemmie, who in fact had become Lucas’s closest friend, had testified to a grand jury sitting in Waco, Texas. To a question prefaced that Lucas was then saying he wasn’t a member of the Hand of Death, she answered, “In my heart, I am not really sure about that because he could just go into so much detail about the ceremony.”

Lucas, in his own testimony the next day, said, “I have never been in Miami, Florida, in my life.”

But can we still trust Call’s writing that Lucas had seen a man with cold-as-ice blue eyes with Toole in Miami—but maybe one of them got the date confused, it was in or around May 1981?

And if that was Dahmer, might Toole have met him at a Hand of Death training camp, as Lucas described it?

Lucas told the FBI in May 1984 that after his initial training in the Everglades with the cult he occasionally renewed it, the last time being in 1981. Some cult gatherings, he said, were at night on a deserted beach just south of Fort Lauderdale, held annually he thought in June or July. (That sounded to me very much like John U. Lloyd State Recreation Area, just south of Port Everglades, on the barrier island dividing the Intracoastal Waterway from the ocean. Its only land access happens to be a mile or less from where Flo Ella Miller’s body was found in a canal, two days after Adam disappeared. That or Hollywood’s North Beach, then undeveloped, which is also within about the same distance as where Miller was found. Every other beach possibly fitting that description had homes, apartments, or hotels on it.) Dahmer was in South Florida starting at the end of March ’81. Maybe for some of his poorly-accounted time here from then to when Ken Hauptert saw him go through his dumpster looking for food, in May or June, he was training with the cult. Whomever Lucas is describing with Toole, he’s implying he’s a cult member, hanging at a cult hangout bar.

Let’s take an admittedly speculative leap off the deep edge, mixing things we know and things that might fit:

By the weekend before Adam is kidnapped, Dahmer has been working at Sunshine Subs and has the apartment Hauptert got him. Over the weekend, driving the Sunshine Subs/Beach Pizza blue van he finds Flo Ella, barefoot and walking around Hallandale, near his apartment. On the promise of drugs he lures her there (I would guess that might have worked on her). They have sex, on Sunday afternoon, drunk, he calls Germany and tells that to Billy, who doesn’t want to talk to him. Angry at the rebuff, which Billy never before could do to him, Jeff takes it out on Flo, suffocates her, dumps her body in a ditch near the Dania Cutoff Canal, very close to John U. Lloyd park or Hollywood’s North

Beach, an area he knows from cult training. Staying drunk, he shows for work Monday morning at 10, where Hauptert tells him go home and return the next day. Instead he goes to Hollywood Mall—with Toole, who he's previously met along with Lucas, who isn't with Toole this weekend. Both Jeff and Ottis are seen at the mall around noon. Still drunk, Jeff attempts to grab Willis and settles for Adam. They leave in the blue van. In his own car, Toole follows him (or leads him to) the torture house on Miami Beach, run by a cult leader.

Might it fit that Dahmer was part of the Hand? As Lucas had it, they murdered for Satan, trained how not to leave clues of their crimes, and practiced cannibalism. To the Milwaukee Police, Dahmer had admitted checking out Satanism while he was living with his churchgoing grandmother in West Allis, Wisconsin, in the early 1980s: "He stated he felt he did this because he felt that since religion wasn't working, maybe he should just delve into the occult and to Satanism. However, after reading several books and dabbling in it, he realized this was not for him."

That Dahmer's dabble with devil-worship was brief isn't credible. His father Lionel wrote in his book that when Jeff was 18 in 1978, Lionel broke up a séance party at their house and found a chalk pentagram drawn on a table. Also, in 1991 in his Milwaukee apartment police found an occult altar that included skulls. Exactly where Dahmer would have made the connection to the Hand, who knows? But I'll toss this out: after he left the Army, did he come to Miami not because, as the Milwaukee Police says he told them, "he thought it would be nice with the warm weather all the time," but because he already was part of the cult?

No law enforcement agent seems to have believed that the cult actually existed. Although Lucas often spoke in detail about it, and even gave the FBI a few names of other members, nothing apparently checked out. But the best reason to think it wasn't just Lucas's imagination was that Toole, separately, also gave the FBI a lot of essentially overlapping details about it while adding some and contradicting others. Could these two blockheads have made it all up?

One overlap was the tattoos. In the report of Toole's March 1984 interview, an FBI agent wrote that Toole said "Lucas had a tattoo of a cross with hands at the base and flames of fire in the web of his right hand and that this is a sign of the members of the Hand of Death." Toole said he didn't have a tattoo but he'd worn a ring with a devil's head, as did others in the cult. In the report of Lucas's FBI interview in May 1984, another agent wrote, "Lucas stated that members can also recognize one another by a tattoo they should have on their right hand in the webbing between the thumb and forefinger. Lucas stated that tattoo is of a cross, flames, and hands."

Lucas showed the agent what he said was his tattoo, although he admitted it had nearly worn off. The agent reported he could only see some "very faint dark lines whose shape could not be discerned." (A 1998 AP story reported that Lucas's arms had tattoos of a naked woman, a sinking ship, the comic strip character Blondie, and a Boy Scout fleur-de-lis.)

Lucas added that some members had tattoos signifying additional things. Those with snakes were kidnappers, and those with scorpions were "ritual killers who kill for the ceremonies the cult engages in."

A.W. had said his captors called themselves the Electric Scorpions and that they'd tortured him with electrocution. So I asked whether he remembered either Toole or Dahmer wearing jewelry or if they had tattoos.

I got an answer I wasn't expecting. He couldn't recall any tattoos but said Toole wore "pearly" kinds of things, like "costume jewelry" an old woman would wear. In fact, "he dressed up like an old woman. He had a pearl fetish." He said the jewelry included rings, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings.

Dahmer, he said, wore a dolphin brooch on his jacket "like a warrior pin."

A number of Google results reported Toole dressed like a woman to pick up men, as well as *Bringing Adam Home*, which quoted Sarah Patterson that "Uncle Ottis" shaved his legs and wore stockings, panties, a bra, and a wig "when he hustled other fags." Mike Cox in his book wrote, "When wearing a wig, makeup, a flashy dress, and sheer stockings, [Toole] fooled many a man into thinking he was a woman." Toole said it himself in his interview with Pueblo, Colorado detectives: "I would dress up like a woman."

There had been a fire at Toole's mother's house on June 23, 1981, a month after she died, that Ottis apparently set. When family members discovered valuables from there missing, they all figured Ottis and Lucas took them. Robert Lee Harley told the Hollywood detectives the valuables were jewelry worth about \$8,000. Howell Toole said it was worth \$30,000 and included his mother's diamond ring. Vernon Toole called it "watches, rings, [and] old antique stuff."

Lucas admitted to Jack Hoffman that he and Ottis had taken things from his mother's house but he called it "costume jewelry" that they'd sold in San Antonio for \$14.

I asked Billy if he remembered Jeff having a dolphin brooch. No, he said, but Jeff had a beach towel with an illustration of a dolphin, the corona of a yellow sun, and blue, which he had bought at the base PX. I said it sounded like a Miami Dolphins logo, although Billy couldn't remember any words on it. I asked A.W. if the brooch had a Dolphins logo but he didn't think so.

Here is one more anomaly that in part supports A.W.'s story. I quoted this exchange earlier:

When the Hollywood detectives first asked Toole to identify Adam's "Missing" picture, he answered, "I don't think so. No, I don't think that's the kid, though."

But later when they showed him a picture of the severed head, he paused then said, "I'd say, I'd say it was. I'm pretty sure that's the kid."

Then they showed him the "Missing" picture again.

"The other pictures, the other pictures, the other pictures look more like him than that one does."

Hoffman returned to the severed head photo. "Is this the child?"

"Yeah, I'd say, yeah, that's him."

"Alright, for the record, he has identified the photographs of Adam Walsh."

But that was only if you thought the found child was Adam Walsh.

In November 2014, a witness found me to say that he'd seen Dahmer and Toole together—at Hollywood Mall when Adam was taken.

He was Charles Sutera, who grew up and still lived in Hollywood. He contacted me by Twitter after he saw on the Internet some of the tumult my reporting had created, and then saw my book covers.

He wrote, "I know the 10yr old boy thrown outside along with Adam to the curb of Sears." It was a reference to the Sears security guard who said she'd broken up a ruckus around the videogames and sent outside all the children, possibly including Adam.

When we spoke, Sutera told me that he was the ten-year-old outside Sears with Adam. Inside, he had played a videogame while Adam watched. They weren't together but had noticed each other. Sutera remembered the game: "I know I did something really well, like hit a home run—whoa!"

Older boys around them had gotten rowdy and were making a lot of noise, he said. "That's why she threw them out. But she threw us out, too," although neither he nor Adam had been loud. Nor did she give them a chance to find their mothers elsewhere in the store. "The security guard was mean," he said.

She separated the older and younger boys and told them all to wait outside for their mothers. Once outside, the older boys simply walked away, leaving him and Adam, both shy and somewhat confused. "My mom would leave me because she trusted me to stay where I was," Sutera said.

He wasn't certain by which door he left, but outside, by the curb, next to bushes, "in a matter of seconds this guy walked up to us, very nice." It was Toole, he said. He was wearing a "really nice" white or light-colored short-sleeved shirt "like he'd just been to church." His manner was "very welcoming and charming," and he spoke well with "a little bit of a drawl," maybe a Southern accent. "I had no fear at the beginning," he said.

He asked what the kids were doing outside by themselves. Sutera answered that they were told to go out and wait for their mothers. Toole then told them, "Your moms told us to come out here and take you around to the front of the store" in his car, to meet them there.

They got into the back seat of the car, a luxury model Sutera couldn't name because at ten he wasn't then familiar with it. "It wasn't a crappy car," he said. He couldn't recall its color but it had four doors and "vertical" upholstered fabric he'd never seen before. Toole put Adam in the middle and fastened his seat belt. But then Sutera realized that Toole wasn't getting into the driver's seat.

Out of nowhere, "another fellow got into the car" and almost immediately Sutera realized they'd been had. "I was maybe a second from that door being locked when it just clicked, No way our mothers could have told us" to go with these guys. Adam realized it then, too, he said.

"I jumped up and tried to undo the belt buckle for Adam but I couldn't get him out," he said, and Adam was unable to release himself by pushing the button. At the same time, Toole was trying to shut the door to keep Sutera inside but he managed to slip underneath him. Outside the car, Toole, kneeling, grabbed him.

Sutera described Toole: "He wasn't a strong man, like my dad," who was a foreman for Eastern Airlines, "or as big as my dad," who was just under six feet and weighed 185.

The other man wore "beggar-type clothes," he said, including tight-fitting red corduroy shorts and a Polo shirt. "He was not dressed like for church," he said. He had blonde scruffy hair and wore aviator sunglasses. He'd checked pictures of Henry Lee

Lucas, he told me, and it wasn't him: "he was tall and thin and younger. He was telling Toole to quiet down the kid in the car (Adam, crying) as I was pulling away from him."

He then saw that man put a tight clear plastic bag over Adam's head, to hush him. "It shut him up, quick, then I couldn't hear Adam anymore."

That was Sutera's last glimpse of Adam, he said, because right then Sutera's mother came out of Sears, shouting his name. Toole asked him, "Is that your mother?" Then, "he grabbed me, really got a hold of me, and said, 'If I ever said anything, he would murder my mother, murder me, and hunt down the rest of my family.'

"I was crying, scared, frightened out of my mind," he said. His mother asked why he was so scared but he wouldn't tell her, he just took her hand and tried to get her back into the store, and then as quickly as possible out another exit. He said he was protective of his mom because she had scoliosis (degenerative curvature of the spine), didn't walk well, "and couldn't do everything other moms can do.

"My main concern was getting my mom out of there. My mom is quiet, and I wouldn't answer her questions. I was crying and she didn't know what was wrong with me. I never said a word because of that threat, we still needed to drive out of here, that guy's still out there. He scared me to death. If looks could kill, he would have killed me."

On their way out of Sears and into the main mall, Sutera said a motorcycle policeman stopped them, possibly because "I was a gibbering, crying mess." He described him as "really big, huge, a guy who worked out." He wouldn't tell the cop, either, what was bothering him, but "something I said got me out of the store, with my mom. They never should have let me go." In telling me, Sutera had thought that the policeman was there to look for Adam, but it seemed much too soon for that.

"I never felt so much evil at one time," he said. "To this day, it's not something that's easy for me." He tweeted me later, "I am lucky to be alive if I didn't get away."

Sutera had said he contacted me because my writing about the abduction was correct, but so far his story more closely matched the account of William Mistler, who said he saw Toole kneeling and talking to Adam near a white Cadillac.

But Sutera contradicted Mistler on other things. Mistler said Toole didn't look presentable; he was wearing a filthy, stained T-shirt, his hair was uncombed, and he had a beard. Mary Hagan—originally introduced to the story by John Walsh as Mary H., who said she saw Toole inside Sears, also described him as badly dressed. She said his pants were stained from work materials, his sandals were dirty, and from even a few feet away he smelled awful. I'd asked Sutera about Toole's body odor. He hadn't noticed any, he said.

As for Mistler's description of Toole's car, which he said was a Cadillac, it was in good condition except for a big dent in the rear bumper and some rust stains, and its back seat had gardening tools.

Sutera thought that the child who Mistler said he saw Toole kneeling to speak with outside his car was him. At the time, he said, he looked kind of like Adam, except that his hair was dark brown and Brylcreemed, and Adam's was lighter-colored. A photo Sutera sent me of himself, at younger than ten, kind of supported that. Mistler might not have actually seen inside the car, therefore not seeing Adam or anyone else with him, he thought.

That still didn't exactly match what Mistler had said. He told police he'd seen Toole take Adam by the arm, walk him toward the Cadillac, then Adam entered the front seat.

Sutera said he didn't see a blue van. In light of what he'd said to me, I reviewed the statements of the two people who said they'd seen a man in a blue van drive off with Adam, or at least, a child close to his description.

On his second telling to police, in 1981, ten-year-old Timothy Pottenburgh said he'd seen a man inside the toy department loitering, reading comic books. His description closely fit Dahmer in terms of his size and his look in his 1982 Milwaukee County mug shot. Pottenburgh said he'd then seen him follow a small boy out of the store and run to get his blue van. Stopped in front of the garden shop, the van door open, he'd motioned to the little boy, who walked to the van and was then pulled inside.

But during a hypnosis session, later, Pottenburgh added this detail, which hadn't fit before: there was a second white man inside the van, in the passenger seat.

Recall now that Toole's first story to Hollywood detectives was that he did the abduction with a second person—Lucas. When detectives checked and discovered that Lucas was in jail in Maryland that day, Toole quickly revised his story to abducting Adam by himself.

In 1991, the day he saw a newspaper story and photo about Dahmer's arrest in Milwaukee, Bill Bowen called Hollywood Police to say that at Hollywood Mall on the day Adam disappeared he'd seen a man he now thought was Dahmer "manhandling" a little boy, throwing him into a blue van parked in the fire lane next to a Sears entrance. But when I found Bowen in 2002 he insisted he'd told police that the man he thought threw a child into a vehicle and then got away was Toole, and that his vehicle was a white Cadillac. He added that just before he'd called police, the newspaper story he'd read was about Toole.

When I pointed out to him that he hadn't said that, he disbelieved me. But he also said this: "I was distracted by the blue van—which may have had nothing to do with the white car."

Only after I mailed him a copy of his statement to police did Bowen realize that I was right, to the police he'd described a man he thought was Dahmer throwing a child he thought was Adam into a blue van. And then he changed his story back to Dahmer and a blue van.

Another witness said he'd seen both a white car and a blue van in the Sears parking lot that day. By the Sears entrance, Phillip Lohr had seen a blue van parked inappropriately, holding up traffic, then behind it was a county bus and a white car. Lohr had spotted a good parking space nearby but then the white car darted in front of him, cutting him off, and took it. It incensed him so much that he remembered it so many years later. The white car wasn't a Cadillac, he said, it might have been a Ford.

Neither Sutera nor Mistler said they saw Toole drive away with Adam, although Mistler did say that the Cadillac was gone from its parking space a few moments later when he turned to look for it. Meanwhile, there were two witnesses who said that Adam had left in a blue van: Bowen and A.W., plus there was Pottenburgh, although he didn't report seeing anything after the man had pulled Adam inside it. (Neither Bowen nor Pottenburgh were certain that the small child was Adam.)

A.W. didn't say that at the mall there were two abductors of him, a second vehicle, and a second intended victim, but was it possible that all of those things were there that day?

It would be surprising (alarming, actually) if all of the witness statements all fit together. But there may be a coherent line through them. Here's some speculation: after Sutera escaped from the white car, Toole and Dahmer might have expected that the child would tell on them, targeting their car. If they had a second vehicle, driven by Dahmer, why not transfer Adam to it and get away in that?

Bowen's story then fits; he saw a man throw a protesting child into a blue van and hurriedly leave. Pottenburgh's might as well—he might have seen Dahmer in the store and outside with a blue van, but Pottenburgh might have been elsewhere and not seen the part about the white car. His recollection under hypnosis that there was a second person in the van could also be possible. Mistler's story is close—maybe he saw the beginning of what happened, Toole kneeling to talk to a child (Sutera?), then walking him toward his white car. And then all the witnesses who saw a blue van parked in the same spot at the curb outside the Sears exit were also right.

Could it be so? Both Toole *and* Dahmer; both a blue van *and* a white car; and then, both Adam Walsh *and* Chuck Sutera?

The largest problem with Sutera's story was that he'd never before come forward as a witness. If he didn't tell his mom, why not his dad? Sutera explained that his dad was a "functional alcoholic" who drank every night, and often the next day didn't recall conversations from the previous night. So at ten, himself traumatized, he in effect sublimated the experience. When he saw a story on the Internet about the female security guard, "I had a huge flashback. I started to see things," he told me. Reading further, he recognized photos of Toole and Dahmer as the men in the car. He asked his mom if they'd been at Hollywood Mall on the day that Adam was reported missing. She said yes. He also posted some of what he recalled on a Facebook page called "I Grew Up in Hollywood, Florida" but he removed it after a number of people shouted him down.

When we looked together at Internet video of an interview of Toole, probably shot in the late eighties or early nineties, he said, "Yeah, that's the man. He's got a soft voice. He wasn't a good-looking man but he wasn't hideous. He's not scary-looking, he's not unapproachable." Unlike in the video, he saw Toole unshaven. A black-and-white still of Toole, taken by police in 1983, looked even more like him, he said.

"Ottis knew how to present himself," he said. "He did not give away that he wanted to harm me."

When I showed him video of Stone Phillips's 1994 interview of Dahmer, he responded, "That's the angle I'd seen him at. He was younger, then." He didn't recall his voice but recognized his dirty blonde hair color, "not as dark as the other guy. He was taller, lankier than the other guy. He fits the profile completely." Looking at Dahmer's 1982 Milwaukee County mug shot, he said, "I remember the hair, the mustache, very familiar." I then asked him outright, Was it Jeffrey Dahmer? "I'm pretty sure," he answered. When he'd first seen Dahmer's picture online, inside one of the stories descended from my reporting, he said, "I wanted to knock him out."

Here are some other thoughts, pro and con:

Sutera described the man he thought was Dahmer as wearing aviator glasses. Dahmer wore glasses like that.

Bowen, Pottenburgh, and A.W. all say that Adam didn't enter the vehicle (the blue van) voluntarily, but Sutera said both he and Adam did enter (the white luxury car)



voluntarily. Toole told detectives that he lured Adam with candy to the white Cadillac, then guided him inside, but he never mentioned a second child.

When Toole told detectives he recognized Adam from the photo of the found child but didn't at first recognize him from his baseball picture, was that because the found child's hair was dark in the photo, possibly because it was still wet, which may have made the child look more like Sutera? Hollywood's initial police report described Adam's hair as "SANDY, BL"—sandy blonde. And Sutera said Toole spent much more time with him than Adam.

Although Sutera said that Dahmer put a tight plastic bag over Adam's head and he stopped making noise after that, it doesn't mean he suffocated. The bag would have needed to be tight around his neck and his hands would have needed to be restrained so he couldn't tear a hole in it. Sutera said he wasn't there long enough to see that.

Of course by escaping and not immediately telling what happened, if his story is true, Sutera left Adam to his abductors. It's hard to justify that, but Sutera was ten years old and said he was terrified by Toole's threat against his family. Nor in the next days may he have realized that there was a search on for Adam.

Do I find him credible? The trauma he communicated to me is very credible, I think. Something happened to this man when he was a child, and it's affected his life since. All of the corroboration I could find is indirect. But it's very possible that his story is true, or close enough.

## 31

### Dahmer on a Spree

NOW, CONSIDER INCIDENTS OF POSSIBLE ATTEMPTED ABDUCTIONS that summer all with reasons to believe there are connections to Dahmer:

- *Days after Dahmer's arrest in Milwaukee in 1991, Vernon Galbraith told the FBI he'd recognized him from a shopping trip he'd made in 1981 to a mall in Hialeah, in Dade County, sometime around the time when Adam was abducted. Of course then he didn't know who Dahmer was. Geoff Martz of ABC got this first, in 2007, from Neil Purtell, the retired Milwaukee-based FBI agent. When I received public records from the FBI's Adam Walsh file, I got the details: Galbraith, in 1991 living in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, had contacted the FBI's Knoxville office. (Galbraith's name was blacked out on the released material.) In 1981 he'd run a business in Hialeah. It was unclear whether when he called the FBI he'd seen reports that Dahmer had been in Miami when Adam was taken.*

Purtell told Martz that the FBI had passed on their information to Hollywood Police, although I found no mention of it in Hollywood's file.

The largest mall in Hialeah is Westland Mall, which then as now had a Sears. In 1981 it was one of three nearly equidistant Sears stores from Sunny Isles, each between 10-16 miles away: Westland west, Hollywood Mall north, and the Sears Tower south, on Biscayne Blvd. near downtown Miami. (Dahmer told Jack Hoffman that he'd once taken a bus to Omni Mall, which was two blocks north of the Sears Tower.)

Galbraith said he and his son saw a man outside a shop window taking photos and handing out cards. He'd asked Galbraith "if he knew some young men who wanted to get into the modeling business," read the FBI's summary document.

Galbraith recalled that the man had created a scene. In the FBI's narration, "A young man was approached by this individual. The young man cursed, backed off and said, 'Hell no, you son-of-a-bitch.' The young man tells Galbraith, 'He thinks I'm a queer and wants me to pose nude.'"

Galbraith described the man with a camera as "a cold-eyed, very disturbing-type person." In 1991, after he saw Dahmer's picture in the news, Galbraith said he "believes the individual he saw inside the mall in Hialeah, Florida was Jeffrey Dahmer."

Galbraith was fifty-five in 1981 and in 2007 Martz and I learned that he had since died. We tried to reach his children but couldn't.

Could that have been Dahmer, using a pickup line on young men, similar to how he operated in the mall in Milwaukee years later?

For younger boys, Dahmer may have dispensed altogether with lines and just looked for chances to snatch. Terry Keaton said that's what happened to him in the toy department of Sears in North Palm Beach on July 13, 1981, two Mondays before Adam. Terry was then ten. Like Galbraith, as soon as he saw Dahmer's picture on the news, he identified him.

Ginger Keaton, Terry's mother, who had also seen the man but couldn't positively identify him, said, "he had weird, scary eyes."

Terry said Dahmer gave his mother "this look." When I'd asked Ginger if the man's stare was like right through her, she said yes. "He's probably the only person who stared at me who I was totally afraid of. Put the fear of God into me. It stopped me from telling on him."

Even Lionel Dahmer, Jeffrey's father, had described the same thing. In 2007 he told Stone Phillips of NBC that in 1978 when he'd discovered Jeff left alone in the family house in Bath, Ohio, he had a "dead look in his eyes."

- *Virginia Jackson thought she'd seen a plain dark blue van driven by a man who matched the composite of the suspect drawn by the Houvourases after they'd reported Terry Keaton's incident. Jackson saw the drawing on the local TV evening news of August 13, 1981, and the next morning before 9 she called the Deerfield Beach Police, in north Broward, where she lived.*

Jackson said the incident had happened in the parking lot of the post office in Deerfield Beach on a Sunday about a month earlier, which was close to when the Keaton incident had occurred. The man had been watching her and a small white girl, although it was unclear from her police report whether they were together. As he circled the lot, he continued to look at Jackson.

A Deerfield Beach sergeant immediately called Hollywood police and told Lieutenant Richard Hynds there was a possible link to Adam Walsh. The Deerfield Beach report says that Hynds then spoke to Jackson. Although the Deerfield Beach report was in the Hollywood file, I found no Hollywood detectives' notes about it. The lead had been dismissed, apparently quickly. Willis had tried to find Jackson but couldn't.

- *At Sears in Hollywood Mall near the girls' clothing department about a week before Adam's abduction, Denise Smith thought the man who had stared inappropriately at her handicapped thirteen-year-old daughter was Dahmer.*

Smith contacted me the week in February 2007 that my Dahmer-Adam stories were first broadcast. She called Colleen Henry, the Milwaukee television reporter who did one of the stories, to ask to reach me.

"I remember he was just standing there like he was waiting for somebody," Smith told me. He was leaning against a post in the middle of the aisle and didn't move. She especially remembered his eyes: he was "not looking at her right. The way he was looking at her was not a natural way."

Smith said it was not unusual for people, especially children, to stare at her daughter because of her handicap and slow gait. When someone would do that, "I will stare them in the eye until they see me staring."

In 1981 she'd lived in Miramar, close to Hollywood. She was clear on about when the incident occurred because her daughter's birthday was July 7. Months earlier Smith had divorced her husband, and he'd given their daughter a present of a Sears gift certificate, the last year he'd bought her any birthday gift, she said. When she saw the Dahmer story on television in 2007, the memory of that moment in Sears gave her "chills, the way you know you've seen somebody." But she'd never before reported the incident because she hadn't known Dahmer had been in South Florida, she thought "he was up in Milwaukee."

- *Walking past a blue van parked on Pennsylvania Avenue in south Miami Beach on August 17, 1981, ten-year-old German Lebedin heard knocking from inside the van. He crossed the street and the van started and followed him. When the man got out of the van, he chased Lebedin, who ran inside an apartment house and into his friend's place. The pursuer knocked on and kicked at the door for about fifteen minutes.*

Lebedin and another ten-year-old boy, David Papismedov, who observed the incident, described it for Miami Beach Police: the man was 20-23, five-ten, dark brown curly short hair, dark complexion, thin build, pencil-thin mustache, and wore black sunglasses. The van was dark blue with little to distinguish it. It wasn't a recreational van. The police report reads, "The above information is very close to the description of the W/M suspect and vehicle in the Adam Walsh homicide," and they gave a copy to Hollywood police.

Willis reached Papismedov and I reached Lebedin. Neither could add much, thirty years later. I asked Lebedin whether anyone from Hollywood Police had ever contacted him. He said no.

Within the week after the head was found, Hollywood got four new tips that seemed to connect, only one of which made much impact at the time: Terry Keaton, who they dismissed without ever speaking to directly; the two Publix drivers, who they spent about five minutes with on the phone, who said they'd seen a man and a blue van at midnight by the side of the turnpike in Indian River County within a half-mile of where the head would be found days later; Virginia Jackson, whom Hollywood spoke with briefly, and German Lebedin, who they never contacted at all.

The Publix drivers, Lebedin, and Jackson had seen a blue van, as had Timothy Pottenburgh. Unlike all or most all the other blue van sightings that had come to Hollywood police, their reports had narratives, not just someone spotted a blue van somewhere. Both Lebedin and Keaton had been chased by a man whose description was similar to whom Pottenburgh saw. Jackson said she saw the man the Houvourases had drawn in their composite. And people who have identified Dahmer or come close to it said he approached boys or young men in three malls that had Sears stores: witness Galbraith in Westland Mall and almost-victims Vernon Jones in Hollywood Mall and Keaton in Twin City Mall. Also, Denise Smith thought it was Dahmer who stared inappropriately at her disabled daughter at the Hollywood Sears. Smith's observation was the only one never reported to Hollywood police, directly or through other police agencies.

I asked Billy Capshaw if Dahmer had ever chased him. Yes, he said, when he would escape his barracks room, he would take off at top speed and Dahmer would follow. In 1991 he told the *Arkansas Gazette*: "When he drank, he made a 180-degree turn. Bad. He would run after me and grab hold of me and I had to knock him off. I'm not making this [shit] up. I'm telling you the truth."

So here's a master timeline, 1981:

**May 16:** Thomas Lynch, dead in his bloody hotel bed in Sunny Isles

**May 27:** Lucas and Toole abduct Haack and Karbin, runaway-types, from Sunny Isles

**May 28:** never-identified woman found in Little River Canal, possibly a junkie, near I-95, Miami

**May 31:** Haack and Karbin found hogtied, in water near Florida Turnpike, South Dade

**July 7:** Jaida Bohumil, homeless, found dead by Dahmer behind Sunshine Subs, Sunny Isles

**Undated, possibly Sunday July 12:** Driver in a blue van said to match Houvourases' later composite, Deerfield Beach

**July 13:** Terry Keaton, ten, chased in attempted abduction, North Palm Beach Sears

**Undated, approximately July 20:** Man stared improperly at Denise Smith's thirteen-year-old disabled daughter, Hollywood Sears

**July 25:** Flo Ella Miller, recreational drug user, last heard from, previously last seen in Hallandale

**July 26:** In Germany, Billy Capshaw got an unwanted call from Dahmer who said he had a girlfriend. Re-traumatized by the call, Billy got off the phone as soon as possible

**Undated, likely before Adam Walsh:** attempted solicitation (with camera) of young man, Hialeah Sears mall

**July 27:** Possible attempted abductions, Willis Morgan, thirty-four, Vernon Jones, nine, Hollywood Sears

**July 27:** Adam Walsh abducted, Hollywood Sears

**July 29:** Flo Ella Miller found in a watery ditch, Hollywood

**August 7:** Two Publix drivers saw a man and a blue van on the Florida Turnpike roadside near where the head would be found, Indian River County

**August 10:** Head said to be Adam found in canal off turnpike

**August 17:** German Lebedin, ten, chased in attempted abduction, Miami Beach

Here's what the timeline says to me: at the end of May, Lucas and Toole are here. The rest are potentially Dahmer. In July, corresponding to about the time he's hired by the sub shop, he has access to wheels.

In his first interview with Hoffman and Hickman, Toole talked about traveling with Lucas to Texas and California just after his mother's funeral, which was May 19, 1981.

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay. Okay in May, you started to go out west?"

**TOOLE:** "There's May, we didn't stay in Jacksonville after, too long after momma died."

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay."

**TOOLE:** "There's May and there's June."

Hoffman asked how long they were gone from Jacksonville.

**TOOLE:** "I would say, ah, we couldn't have been gone ah, 'tween six weeks and a month."

**HOFFMAN:** "Okay, six weeks, so that will put it, all of June would be four weeks and the last two weeks of May."

Toole did not confirm that. Instead he answered, "And I took my niece and nephew with me."

Hoffman asked where he went after he came back from Texas.

**TOOLE:** "Well, we did go down the states, you know."

**HOFFMAN:** "Florida?"

**TOOLE:** "Yes."

**HOFFMAN:** "That's when you started traveling the state of Florida. Okay. Is that the time period after you came back from Texas that you think you came down to Broward County, Florida?"

**TOOLE:** "Yea."

**HOFFMAN:** "That would put the summer of 1981."

**TOOLE:** "Yea... After my mother's death."

**HOFFMAN:** "And after you returned from Texas."

Hoffman was trying to get Toole to admit he was in Hollywood at the end of July, but note that Toole may not have been exactly responsive to the questions or may just be agreeing with what Hoffman said.

A week later, Hoffman returned to the same subject:

**HOFFMAN:** “Now like I said I’d like to clear up some points. When we took that first statement from you, you did indicate that after your mother’s death and after she was buried that you and Henry Lucas went to the west coast.”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Do you remember that?”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah I remember that.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Okay that would have been right after your mother’s funeral?”

**TOOLE:** “It would have been, uh huh, a week and a half or two weeks, not more than about two weeks at the most.”

**HOFFMAN:** “She was buried on the 19th...”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**HOFFMAN:** “... okay, so a week and a half or two weeks, that would have put us into the first week of June, correct?”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

**HOFFMAN:** “Is that when you and Henry went out to the West Coast, June?”

**TOOLE:** “Yeah.”

Hoffman didn’t ask Toole where he was those roughly two weeks before they left for Texas. But he opened the possibility he could have been in South Florida.

Here is a post-May 19 timeline of Lucas and Toole later compiled by the Texas Bureau of Public Safety:

**May 22:** Lucas bought a vehicle in Jacksonville.

**May 27:** Lucas and Toole killed Haack and Karbin in Miami.

**Undated:** In San Antonio, a Jacksonville newspaper dated May 31 was found in a vehicle tied to the two.

**June 2-3:** They were “possibly” in the area of Del Rio, Texas.

**June 5:** Lucas was documented at a blood bank in Houston.

The window of when they could have been in South Florida was May 22-31.

Here is more evidence that Lucas and Toole had been in South Florida:

When talking on videotape to Greg Smith about their membership in the Hand of Death, or as Lucas alternatively called it, the “Hand of the Devil,” he described regular visits to Miami to see their contact, to train in the Everglades, and a similar story as he later told the FBI about night meetings at a secluded beach just south of Ft. Lauderdale. Smith remarked he’d never heard of the cult. Further, Lucas and Toole apparently had told others at the time of doing Satanic things in South Florida. In 1996, Phil Mundy asked Frieda and Frank’s older sister Sarah Patterson if she knew whether Ottis had taken trips to Dade or Broward. Yes, she said. “They was talking about that they was having some worshipping thing, devil worshipping groups down in that area.” She said Lucas spoke about it too.

Did they kidnap or kill children while there? When the Hollywood detectives asked Lucas to speculate on why Toole at first blamed him for killing Adam, although it turned out Lucas was in jail in Maryland that day, he answered:

“Well, he could either get the years mixed up, ’cause we’ve picked up little kids, talked to them to get them into cars from playgrounds, we’ve picked them up along the streets.” He said their ages “ranged from seven and eight to ten” and were male and female. He said that was in California between 1980-82.

The detectives asked how they would lure them into their car.

“We’d tell ’em we had some candy or something in the car, and thought maybe they’d like some candy and get ’em over to the car and get them in the car and after we’d get ’em in the car we’d take and drive on out of town with ’em. Some of our victims we’d planned on kidnapping and we’d just end up killing ’em... You’d drive around town, you’d see a kid, you know, and we’d say need some money, you know, and so we’d just pull over and start talking to ’em, get them in the car and head on out of town.”

Although it was the oldest trick in the book, candy in his car was how Toole had first said he’d lured Adam. Offering money to Haack and Karbin might have gotten them, too.

The detectives asked Lucas if they’d found kids in shopping centers. “Oh yeah, we’ve picked ’em up out of shopping centers too... I mean, it ain’t just a few of them, there’s quite a few kids cross country, you figure me and Ottis have been in, ah, we’ve been in Canada, we’ve been in Alaska and we’ve been in Switzerland, we’ve been in Old Mexico, there’s a lot of places there we’ve had kids.”

Lest I go overboard on the credibility of Henry Lee Lucas, in September 1996, a week after Toole died, Lucas told an Associated Press reporter that about two months after the murder of Adam Walsh Toole had shown him the rest of his body, which Toole dug up from a shallow grave.

Lucas said Toole took him to the shopping mall where he said he abducted the child. “He said, ‘This is where I got the kid at... the kid I killed.’”

From the mall, Toole described to him that he’d driven to a “fishing area, it’s what he called it. He said he got scared and killed the kid and threw his head over a sort of ramp area, or something there where it’s at. Once he did that, he said, ‘C’mon, I want to show you the rest of it.’”

At that point, Lucas said, he and Toole left the mall and drove on a highway for 30-60 minutes until they got to a dirt road leading into an isolated area.

“We got to an old foundation in there, either a barn or a house. There was nothing there, just a foundation. There was an old oak tree or pine tree and that’s where the body was at.”

A Hollywood Police spokesman believed not a word of it, and here’s why it didn’t make sense: the head was discovered about a hundred and twenty-five miles north of Hollywood off the northbound side of the turnpike. Although Lucas’s story seems to fit Toole’s first story to the Hollywood detectives in 1983, it actually contradicts it. Toole had said he decapitated Adam off the dirt road, left the body there, then continued north only a few miles to where he dropped the head (and it was discovered). Lucas said Toole disposed of the head first.

If Toole did in fact show Lucas the Hollywood Mall and then leaving there they drove a highway for up to about an hour, it would seem that they were driving northbound, probably on the turnpike.

But even an hour of driving northbound on the turnpike would be far south of where the head was found. If Lucas is right about the order of disposal, Toole would have

needed to turn around on the turnpike (a divided, toll highway) and go south, back toward the mall, and at some point turned around again to go northbound. Toole's story to the detectives at least was more logical: after leaving where he dropped the head he continued northbound toward his home in Jacksonville.

Here is what Phil Ryan thought of Lucas's credibility, in quotes from an October 1983 AP story datelined Decatur, Texas, and published in *The Gadsden (Ala.) Times*:

“‘You can't go to the bank on everything he said. I've tried. I've fed him stuff that I know he didn't do,' and he admitted to it, Ryan said.

“‘When he saw my interest start to wane that's when he would start inventing things. He even admitted to some bank robberies when he thought I was interested in bank robberies. Anything other than being in a cell by himself.’”

Ryan added, “He has enjoyed the whole thing. For the first time in his life, Henry has something that someone else wanted—he had information.”

The Lucas-Toole national law enforcement conventions were held in Monroe, Louisiana, in 1983-4 because both men had confessed to the rape and murder of Kathy Whorton, a nineteen-year-old student at Northeast Louisiana University, on April 4, 1981 in that city, reported the *Palm Beach Post* in January 1984. The case against the two men later fell apart. But in March 2007, after Louisiana police used federal money to profile the DNA of semen and hair left on the victim's panties and clothes, a match for it was found on CODIS, the FBI's DNA database, and an arrest was made—of a man named Anthony Wilson.

## **32**

### [A Grilled Cheese Sandwich](#)

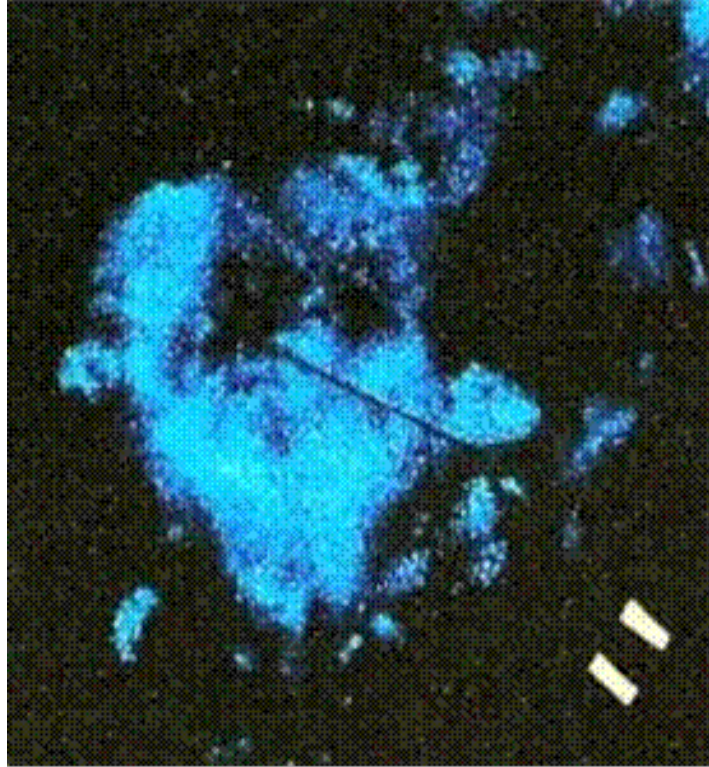
IT TOOK FDLE MORE THAN A MONTH to fulfill my request for their luminol photos of Toole's car. Just before I got them, Frank Sortini found a two-minute video promotion that Matthews and Standiford's publisher had posted on YouTube in advance of the book. In it was a still frame of the luminol-Shroud picture, although the narration didn't say so.

The clerk at the FDLE legal counsel's office who had seen the pictures had thought she'd recognized the shot I was looking for. I'd asked if it looked like a child's head.

“You need a little imagination,” she said.

Indeed.





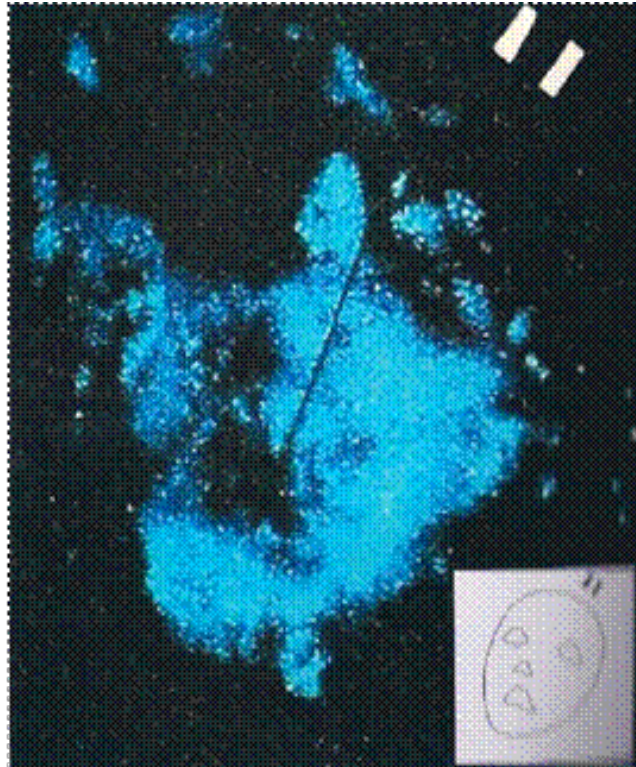
**Still frame from the promotional video for “Bringing Adam Home”**

Most of the luminol photos that FDLE sent were just electric-blue specks on a black background. This was the only one that was more than that. In his blog *The Daily Pulp* for *Broward-Palm Beach New Times*, Bob Norman broke the photo and wrote this:

A familiar boy’s face? Mouth twisted in an oval of pain? Battered lips?

Give it to Standiford, because that is some very creative writing. But is it really Adam, or is it the forensic equivalent of the Virgin Mary on a grilled cheese sandwich?

In March 2011, the book was released. On the *Today Show*, Matthews and John and Reve Walsh showed the image, which remarkably was rotated and reversed from what the promotional video had shown. In the book was a hand drawing of a face to help orient the reader:



**Scanned image from “Bringing Adam Home.” Matthews obtained the image as a public record from Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The book publisher added the oval, to orient. Note the two parallel bars this time in the upper right corner.**

Yes, now you could see a face. Re-read Matthews: “the outline of a familiar young boy’s face, a negative pressed into floorboard carpeting, eye sockets blackened blank cavities, mouth twisted in an oval of pain... and the cry that issued from his battered lips...”

Just to be literary here, the cry looked existential. It suggested Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*.

Or it could also be... nothing.

Even if you wanted to believe there is a facial impression, I personally had trouble seeing the face of Adam Walsh. But Matthews didn’t. He told ABC News *Nightline*:

“I have a blood transfer from Adam’s face onto the carpet—you can actually see his image. It’s as clear as the shroud of Turin, Veronica’s veil. It’s clear.”

Even more certain was Reve Walsh:

“To me, it was the one thing that a mother knows, is that this is their child, that this picture is their child. This is the piece of evidence that ties everything together for me and I can go to my grave knowing that not only that I did everything I could but that I found my answers in that photo.”

I was not familiar with “Veronica’s Veil,” so I looked it up on Wikipedia. It is a Catholic relic said to bear the likeness of Jesus’s face. The story goes, St. Veronica had encountered Jesus and used her veil to wipe sweat off his face, which left his image on the cloth. The veil is said to possess miraculous properties including an ability to quench

thirst, cure blindness, and sometimes even raise the dead. The story is commemorated by one of the Stations of the Cross.

At the moment Matthews first realized what he saw in the picture, he and Standiford wrote, “though having been raised as a Catholic, [Matthews] was more than familiar with similar images preserved by church fathers over the centuries. What he was looking at chilled him—but there was more to the feeling than that. From this image there emanated reassurance, and a strange kind of peace, and the blessed feeling that twenty-six years of effort had not gone in vain.”

Matthews was likening his discovery of what he said was Adam Walsh’s image in a photograph to two church relics believed to have the images of Jesus Christ.

The authors added, slightly deprecating, “Unless he was just finding images in clouds, that is.”

A *Miami Herald* book review concluded that whether or not readers believe that Matthews “solved” the case hardly matters since Toole is dead and “the Walshes have made peace with the version presented here.”

“But the fact remains that nobody was ever charged, much less convicted” of either the abduction or a murder.

Was it proper that the victims, the Walshes, got to define the official conclusion of the case? Reading Reve Walsh’s quote above, how are we supposed to feel? That if she truly believes she sees Adam in that picture then we too should accept that, because she has suffered so much?

Or is this an Emperor has no clothes moment? That the Walshes and Matthews through access to so much major media have been trying to sell something that any child can see: there is no child, certainly no Adam Walsh there?

Only later when I made an eight-by-ten photographic printout of the full image FDLE sent me did I realize this:

Matthews had cropped the photo in order to emphasize the part where it might be a face. But the full frame revealed another maybe more likely explanation.

First, though, it’s instructive to review where in his car Toole said he placed the head. In his first interview, he told Hoffman, Hickman, and Terry that after he severed it he wrapped the child’s clothes over it:

**Q:** You’re back in the car now and you got the kid’s head in the car...

**TOOLE:** Yea.

**Q:** Was that on the front seat?

**TOOLE:** Yea it was on the front seat.

When he got out of the car to dispose of the head:

**Q:** So you walked out of your car, came around, opened the passenger door and removed the head.

**TOOLE:** Yes.

Two days later, hours after the Hollywood detectives took Toole to the crime scenes, he had a different answer:

**Q:** Do you remember what part of your car you put the head back into?

**TOOLE:** I say I switched it different times. I had it in the back one time, on the floorboard and I ended up putting it in the front of the floorboard.

**Q:** So you laid it on the back floorboard one time and then you switched it to the front.

**TOOLE:** Yeah and I imagine I laid it on the seat too, of the car.

**Q:** Oh, you imagine or you did it, you know I wasn't there, you were.

**TOOLE:** Well I say I did lay his head on the front seat.

Toole also spoke of cleaning the car afterwards. From the first interview:

**TOOLE:** I threw the clothes away and wiped some of the—stopped and wiped some of the blood, some of the blood off from the seat where I had the blood all over the seat.

In the second interview, talking about when Toole returned to Jacksonville, he was asked how he cleaned the car.

**TOOLE:** Ah, I clean with 409 [the household cleaning product Formula 409?], ah, I coulda just took some ah...

**Q:** Steel wool?

**TOOLE:** Yeah, steel wool and ah, water and washed it all off of it.

**Q:** Did you use a hose or a bucket?

**TOOLE:** No, I wouldn't use a hose all the way into a car... I would use a bucket.

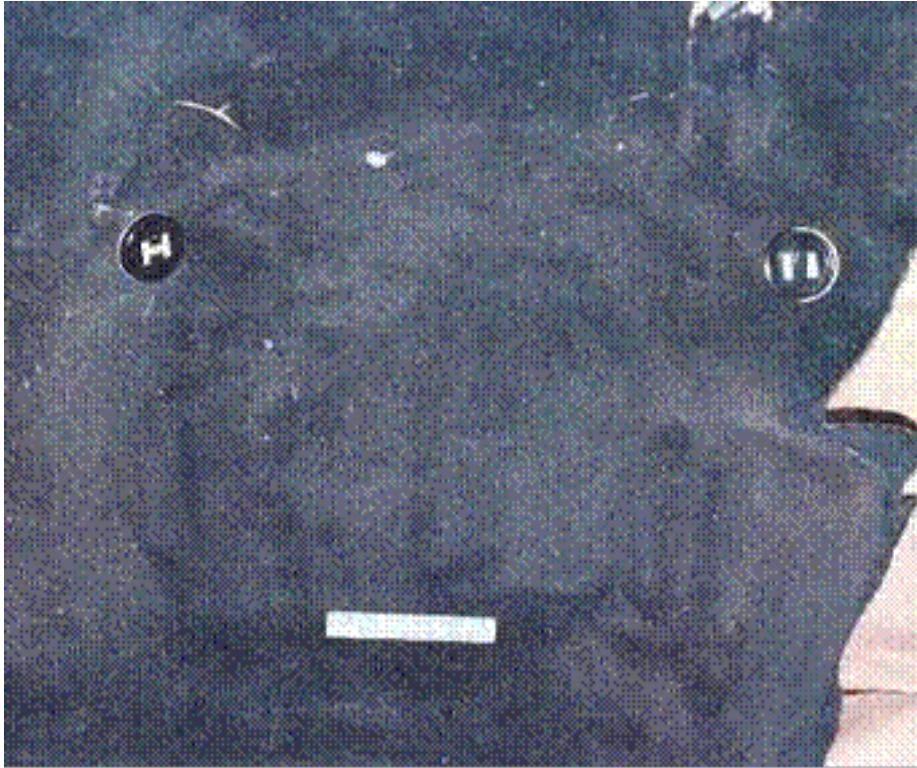
In its report, FDLE wrote that luminol is “a chemical presumptive test for trace amounts of blood.” Its test “gave positive indications on the left front and left rear interior floorboard carpets.” Other unspecified “chemical tests demonstrated the presence of a trace of bloodstaining on those carpets and padding. There was an insufficient amount of blood for further tests.” In a later memo, Hollywood Capt. Steve Davis, commander of the detective division, wrote, “The test could not specify if the blood was human or other.”

But luminol can detect blood that has been wiped off, washed, or even scoured, said Bob Foley, the retired Broward Sheriff's Office crime scene detective. And although FDLE found blood on the two floorboard carpets, they found not even presumptive blood on the front passenger seat or any other seat.

When I sent the “Shroud of Turin” photo to Foley, he thought it showed a lot of blood on the carpet, enough for further testing. I asked FDLE if I could interview the analysts who had worked the case but neither they nor the current heads of the crime lab would speak to me, or even answer questions I submitted.

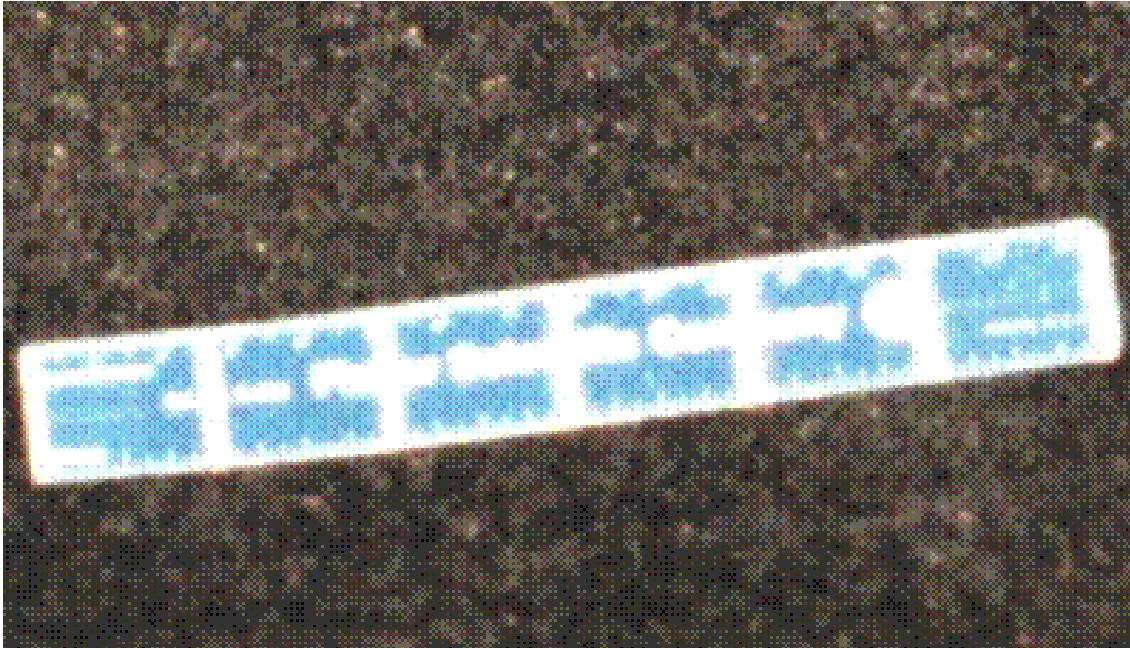
Pictures in the FDLE file are unlabeled but it appears that the carpets that were photographed, in both natural light and in darkness to show the blue glow of luminol, correspond to the left side front and back seats. The “Shroud of Turin” photo is from the rear seat area.

Here is an image in natural light of the rear left carpet. The “H” and the parallel lines are orienting markers. At bottom is a six-inch ruler, for scale.



**Carpet from the rear left seat area**

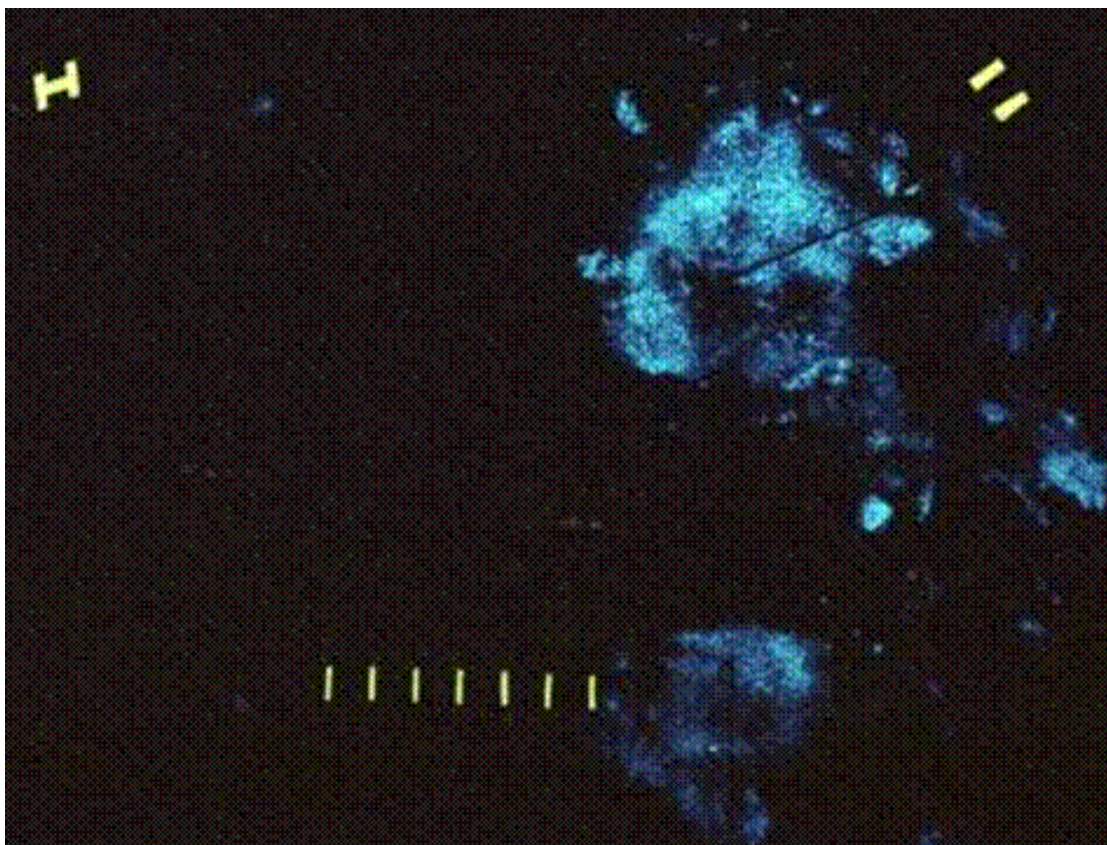
Here is a close up of the ruler, taken from another shot, showing more detail. I thought I could make out two words: Flagler (something) Company. (Just south of Jacksonville is Flagler County.):



**Close up of ruler**

Here, again, is the “Shroud of Turin” photo, except that this image shows all the luminol-blue the picture has. It’s oriented the same as the image above, in natural light. The thin lines glowing in the dark are the inch marks of the ruler.

So you trust me that it’s the same image, rotate it counterclockwise ninety degrees and you can see the face. You’ll also notice that Matthews or his publisher for reasons unexplained reversed the image from how FDLE had it. As well, notice that compared to the natural light photo the H is tilted similarly but the parallel lines point differently. The two photos were taken on different days.



**A less-cropped image of the luminol-enhanced picture Matthews said showed Adam Walsh's face. (Note the vertical lines corresponding to the lines in the ruler in the natural light photo.) Does it now look like a footprint? (FDLE public record photos)**

With the top-to-bottom orientation corresponding to how it looked in the car, suddenly the photo opened up for me. Luminol enhanced an impression of a single boot or shoeprint, heel and sole, just where you would expect it on a floorboard carpet. The missing part in between is the arch. (Matthews and Standiford wrote they'd seen two shoeprints in luminol elsewhere in the car, on the driver's floorboard. To me they looked like smudges.)

To force the abstraction to look like a face, or at least to eliminate another possibility, Matthews had cropped out the area that looked like a heel and rotated the orientation to its side.

I then used the glow-in-the-dark ruler as a scale: On my eight-by-ten print, from the first bar (zero inches) to the third (two inches) was very close to half an inch. So the scale was half an inch on the eight-by-ten to two inches in actuality. Or, scale image times four.

On the eight-by-ten, allowing for the possibility of smudging, the length from the bottom of the heel to the top of the sole was either  $3 \frac{3}{8}$  or  $3 \frac{3}{4}$  inches. Splitting the difference I called it three and a half. Times four is fourteen inches.

Width: on the eight-by-ten, at its greatest, the sole is  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. Times four is five inches. Fourteen-by-five. I measured the bottom of my athletic shoes. I wear a seven and a half, on the small end of men's shoes. They measured eleven-by- $4 \frac{3}{8}$ . I checked a Walmart for large footwear and found some size fourteens. I measured the bottoms at

about 13 1/2-by-4 3/4. Online, Walmart's heel-to-toe chart showed size fourteen as twelve inches.

So here's your choice: the luminol on the carpet of Toole's car looks like a transfer of the image of the head of Adam Walsh, like the Shroud of Turin—or a shoeprint.

To bolster their argument, Matthews and Standiford wrote that forensic evidence in the case of Caylee Anthony, the Orlando two-year-old whose mother Casey Anthony was charged with her murder, "would support Matthews's analysis of the images he had found on the carpets of Toole's car." They quoted an FBI crime scene analyst who identified, according to the authors, "a bodily fluids outline lifted from the trunk liner of Casey Anthony's car using essentially the same methodology." The FBI analyst had written, "If you look closely at this photo, there appears to be the outline or silhouette of a child in the fetal position." The authors: "Shortly thereafter, Casey Anthony was arrested and charged with the crime."

Months after their publication, a jury acquitted Casey Anthony of the murder, rejecting the prosecution's forensic evidence in the case.

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I'd anticipated that in the book there might be some significant new piece of evidence against Toole, but all we got was the Shroud picture and flawed reinterpretations of old stuff that didn't add up even close to guilt against Toole.

And back to the *Herald* reviewer's point: a jury, the real arbiter, never heard the case against Toole, to include Matthews's argument, or saw the Shroud picture. I've already speculated that prosecutors couldn't have filed the case without the autopsy report or Adam's dental records. Which begs the question, how come Joe Matthews, the retired detective who spent so many years on this case, who said for publication a couple of times that he thought he was the only person to have actually read all ten thousand pages in the case file, didn't notice those absences? And if on his own he didn't realize them, he saw the *Herald's* sidebar story "Another hitch: missing autopsy." I know that because in his book he mentioned the main story, although he and Standiford had it that "two new witnesses had come forward" to identify Dahmer when the story revealed four new witnesses on top of the first two.

In their closing pages, Matthews and Standiford seemed to call the *Herald* a sort of rogue news organization for three stories it ran critical of the police's closure of the case, including my and Smiley's. AP, Miami's Fox-TV affiliate WSVN, and blogger Bob Norman in *Broward-Palm Beach New Times* had also run doubting stories, but they didn't note those. As if like a scene in the 1931 movie *The Front Page*, the authors wrote, "When it comes to newspaper adjudications of controversial cases, as the cigar-chomping editor is quick to remind the cub reporter, 'Keep the trouble coming. Good news just doesn't sell.'"

Although naming no bylines, specifying Smiley's story on December 28, 2008, twelve days after the press conference, the authors wrote: "There was 'no new evidence' presented, the *Herald* story said, suggesting that either the reporter had not bothered to read the same evidence file that Joe Matthews and Chief Wagner had or he was simply longing for that 'magic wand' that Wagner referred to."



First, that story didn't have the exact quote the authors attributed to it. The phrase did appear as a subhead in Smiley's December 17 story, the day after the press conference. He wrote, "The case has been closed despite inconsistencies in Toole's waffling descriptions of the crime, his recanting of his confessions and without new or old evidence linking him to the murder." The same day, the *Sun Sentinel* had written similarly: police had closed the case "not because of any new evidence, death bed confessions or forensics pulled from a bloody crime scene." Instead "police simply took another look" at the file "and decided it was time." Also that day, *Sun Sentinel* television columnist Tom Jicha posted online, "Would somebody explain to me the purpose of the press conference Tuesday to announce the case is closed. It isn't as if this is an ongoing investigation... The only plausible explanation is that it was nothing more than a grandstand play for attention by the Hollywood police, who admittedly botched the case in the first place. Shame on them and shame on the media who gave them the attention they sought."

Back to the December 28 story, calling his quote at the press conference a concession, Smiley wrote Wagner said, "If you're looking for that magic wand or that hidden document that just appeared, it's not there."

"Instead, Wagner said a review of the file showed that 'a vast amount of circumstantial evidence' created probable cause enough to charge Toole with the crime—were he still alive."

So on the point of whether police had presented "no new evidence," Wagner indicated that was so.

So what were the authors kvetching about?

Also on December 28, *Herald* columnist Fred Grimm had written of the press conference, "It was like a miracle, conjured up with hardly anything in the way of new evidence." Matthews and Standiford averred that Grimm had ignored "the fact that 'old' evidence, even twenty-seven-year old evidence, becomes 'new' when it is finally given a context."

That is a stunning argument. The authors seemed to be mostly agreeing with what the *Sun Sentinel* wrote, disagreeing perhaps that the case was disposed of merely because it was nearing its shelf life expiration date, but adding that if you view old evidence with a new perspective, it's new. [Note to readers: don't try this at home with old milk in the fridge.] As they wrote pages later, the evidence was "what had been in front of [police investigators'] faces all those years."

But I agree: context is all.

Let's argue context.

Here's another agreement: Matthews says Toole knew facts only the killer could have known. Yes, that is the story—from a telescopic view. Zoom out and you can discover that Hoffman and Hickman that first night told and showed Toole almost the entire case, including pictures. Until then Toole had revealed of value bupkis.

Re-interviewed by Matthews, the Mayers and Steve Kindrick said things that inculpated Toole. True again. But expand your frame and see that their information contradicted what they'd told the detectives in 1983, thirteen or more years earlier.

In his book Matthews takes credit for solving the case. But in June 2010, Chief Wagner deposed in the public records suit that when in 2008 Matthews had given him his investigative report and he'd assigned Mark Smith to read it, "As I had anticipated"

Smith advised him that the report was “really nothing more than a regurgitation” of what police had already compiled “and had no supplemental value to the Adam Walsh investigation” and therefore “was never relied on in reaching the conclusion” to close the case. Although *Bringing Adam Home* was published nine months later in March 2011, that this is not in it, is anyone shocked, shocked? Did Matthews not see it? Unlikely; he was a codefendant in the suit—and a story about it made both the *Herald* and *Sun Sentinel* in January 2011.

Let’s take this further: in the same statement, Wagner deposed that in January 2008, after he was named Hollywood’s interim chief, he “communicated with John Walsh... and advised him of my intention” to clear the case and blame Toole.

At the press conference in December 2008, Wagner spoke that “prior to this year, I never actually had the opportunity to review the entire Adam Walsh investigation.” But earlier in his Hollywood career when he was in the homicide department he’d “admittedly realized, even years ago, that this investigation had flaws. This fact was confirmed when I recently had the opportunity to digest the entire investigative file. Nevertheless, in the first few months into my appointment as Police Chief, I committed as a priority to resolve and conclude this investigation.”

Wagner decided by January 2008 to close the case, but when did he actually read the whole case file? That is, did he read it before he “communicated” with John Walsh that month?

He didn’t read it “prior to this year,” he said, speaking in December 2008. He digested it “recently,” he added. “Nevertheless in the first few months into my appointment as Police Chief” he committed himself to conclude the case. Wagner was named chief on a permanent basis on March 10, 2008. He’d been interim chief since November 1, 2007.

Is the giveaway word Nevertheless? Speaking in December 2008 he said he’d read the whole file recently, nevertheless he’d already committed to closing the case by around the previous March?

Could Wagner have meant “recently” as eleven months earlier, in January but earlier in the month before the first Walsh communication? Doesn’t sound like it.

All that may explain the conflict between Matthews and Wagner. On April 30, 2008, the authors wrote, Matthews delivered his report to Wagner, who responded, “I’ll read every page.”

But Wagner deposed he wasn’t the least bit interested in it. “I indicated on at least one occasion to Joe Matthews that I had no genuine interest in reading his personal manuscript as the decision had already been made to exceptionally clear the Adam Walsh investigation.”

So Wagner didn’t need Matthews to tell him that all the old information in the file about Toole was new again if you just re-contextualized it and so they didn’t need anything that was actually new. Like the man who in December 2008 was preparing to leave the White House, Wagner was The Decider. And he’d already decided Toole was guilty—before he even read the whole file, it seems.

Most of the media, with the notable exceptions of the *Miami Herald* and others cited above, bought Wagner’s not-well-explained pronouncement. National media didn’t know the case as well as local media and was less inclined to mistrust a police chief standing with John Walsh, emotional on the dais. “We needed to know. Not knowing has been

torture,” Walsh said. But he also said, “We have believed for years that Ottis Toole killed Adam. I never had any doubt.” So what Walsh seemed to mean was that he desired official closure. What he apparently didn’t require was that the police present the public the evidence that had changed their mind.

At the press conference Walsh issued a printed statement that included a thanks to Matthews, “who worked this case tirelessly for 27 years and developed so much of the crucial evidence to close this case. From all of the evidence presented to us, we agree with the conclusion shared by the key investigators that it is clear and irrefutable that Ottis Toole was the abductor and killer of our son, Adam.”

But what was Matthews’s crucial evidence, which Smiley, Willis and I then assumed had not been developed by Hollywood? Meanwhile, Wagner said there was no new evidence.

When the press conference ended Hollywood released what it said was the full case file but Matthews’s report wasn’t in it. Smiley and I asked for it, as well as Mark Smith’s review of it, in public records requests to both Hollywood and the Broward State Attorney, since Chuck Morton acknowledged in a letter in the file that he’d received them both. Both offices replied that they had not saved either document. We wrote that in the *Herald*, then Willis took it upon himself to sue for them.

With Wagner’s deposition on the record, we can now assemble what he and Matthews each may have been thinking:

Both men wished to take primary credit for closing the case. At the press conference, while Walsh advanced Matthews, Wagner’s tribute was stingier: “Having analyzed and reviewed the Adam Walsh investigative file several times during the last year, I had the opportunity to meet retired Miami Beach homicide detective Joe Matthews, who has been involved in this case since the inception, and who had conducted an independent review and investigation of the case. Consistent with the opinions of investigators past and present, I agreed with the ultimate conclusion of this independent investigation, that Ottis Toole was the perpetrator of this crime.”

Two paths, same destination. But Matthews’s path was redundant, Wagner said when he was less charitable.

Almost seven months had passed between when Matthews gave his report to Wagner and the conference meeting at the state attorney’s office on November 20. To officially close the case, Wagner needed the state attorney’s approval. The authors wrote that Wagner called the meeting specifically to discuss Matthews’s report, and at it Matthews was a hit with his presentation, especially the Shroud picture.

“After everyone in the room had delivered their estimations of all that Matthews had presented, Wagner had his mandate, and it was unanimous. All agreed that the investigation of the homicide of Adam Walsh would—pending the final approval of Broward County state attorney Michael Satz—be ‘exceptionally cleared.’”

But if Wagner felt the way he did about Matthews and his report, why was Matthews even at the meeting?

Beginning in 1992, when Walsh had gone over Jack Hoffman’s head to the state attorney to get Hoffman to interview Dahmer in Wisconsin, Walsh had preferred dealing with the state attorney rather than Hollywood police. Had he solicited the two top men there, Chuck Morton and elected state attorney Michael Satz, to get Matthews a venue?

The meeting itself could not have not produced a mandate. The only person in the room whose opinion mattered was Morton because he had Satz's ear.

Apparently, at the meeting or just after, Morton asked Wagner to review for him Matthews's report. Within two weeks, on December 2, 2008 Wagner wrote to Morton that Mark Smith had done so, and attached it to his letter. Morton replied on December 9, "We have reviewed the additional evidence and materials" Matthews had presented "and have considered your critical comments concerning some of the conclusions Mr. Matthews has reached." It was the same letter that reported Satz agreed the case could be exceptionally closed.

When we first read those references, plus Walsh's and Wagner's comments at the press conference about Matthews, it sounded to us like Wagner and Morton had relied on Matthews's work. But in light (context) of Wagner's later deposition, Smith's comments were critical as in derogatory.

In the same response brief that included Wagner's deposition, Hollywood P.D. attorney Joel Cantor wrote that Matthews independently had merely reached the same conclusion as the official Hollywood investigation. "In reaching this conclusion, Joe Matthews relies on the investigative findings of the Hollywood Police Department rather than the Hollywood Police Department relying on any of the information contained in the manuscript to exceptionally clear the Adam Walsh investigation. There was simply no reliance on the contents of Joe Matthews's manuscript for anything related to the Police Department's investigation of the abduction and homicide of Adam Walsh, and therefore, this manuscript served no purpose to Chief Chadwick Wagner or to the members of his agency."

Surprisingly, Matthews's counsel in his response to the court on June 22, 2010 in part echoed Cantor:

"Matthews's manuscript was never used by a state agency or official in the transaction of official business or for an official state purpose. While Plaintiff alleges that the Police Department and State Attorney 'reviewed the report as part of their official investigation,' and that they closed their investigations because of 'conclusive evidence' provided by Matthews, these are conclusory allegations completely unsupported by any facts in the Complaint."

That seemed to contradict what Standiford and Matthews would months later publish in their book, that Matthews's presentation at the state attorney's office was the dealmaker. To parse the attorney's writing, Willis in his complaint may not have been able to support his allegations, at least until after the publication of *Bringing Adam Home*. Matthews wanted the reading public to think the authorities had used his work to close the case but when it came to letting his report be viewed as a public record he argued that it hadn't been used as part of official state business, or at least that Willis couldn't prove it.

Writing of the afterglow of the press conference, the authors dropped a dig on Wagner while covering it too: "And if anyone present chose to assume that it was Chad Wagner and his men who'd finally put two and two together, that was okay, too... Chad Wagner was a stand-up cop. Furthermore, John and Reve Walsh knew how this day had come to be."

Then they wrote that Matthews understood why Wagner hadn't explained the facts and logic in the case, specifically his: "Still, while neither Wagner nor anyone else

wanted any part of a trial by media on that day, one might speculate as to what the effect would have been had he filled a screen with the images of Ottis Toole's bloody footprints glowing on the floorboards of his Cadillac or the rendering of a silent scream from a young boy's severed head."

Yes, one might speculate how the media that day would have reacted to that.

One also had to wonder if Matthews still thought Wagner was a stand-up cop after his deposition.

Actually, until the deposition he was. Although both parties very well may have discarded or returned Matthews's report, Smith's analysis of it was an in-house police document so it was harder to accept that Hollywood hadn't saved that. Further, Wagner's letter to Morton that first mentioned Smith's report, as attached, was put in the public record but the attachment was conspicuously absent. Had Hollywood produced it on our demand, it sounds like it would have embarrassed Matthews, who as Walsh's friend Wagner may have wanted to avoid injuring. As it turned out, after Willis sued, Wagner was forced to embarrass him anyway when he needed to explain to the court in a sworn statement why he hadn't felt it necessary to keep Matthews's report.

Now that we've established a schism between Wagner and Matthews in regards to the value of Matthews's report and cleared up much confusion, let's return to the real question: who is right, Wagner, Matthews, or the original case detectives?

Or another way: suppose there had been a trial of Toole, or at this point even a mock trial. Which version would survive under brutal cross-examination?

Although Hollywood seriously messed up on Toole, Matthews says, you can trust them on their rejection of Dahmer. Why? Simple; the Dahmer facts conflict with the Toole facts.

As the authors wrote in response to Smiley's and my *Herald* story, "Joe Matthews had finally pieced together such a web of corroborating evidence against Ottis Toole, one that had been validated by Assistant Police Chief Mark Smith and others at HPD, Morton pointed out to reporters."

In a letter to Smiley dated March 25, 2009, in lieu of an interview which he and I had requested, Morton had written that "The material and reports in Hollywood Police Department's investigation of Toole contains substantial and documented investigative information that tracks Toole's whereabouts and his opportunity to have committed the crime. This was neatly and skillfully pointed out in an investigative file created by retired Detective Joe Matthews and presented for my review. Matthews's investigative file was also presented to the Hollywood Police Department and reviewed by Assistant Police Chief Mark Smith, who worked tirelessly on the Adam Walsh case." Morton continued that the facts of the case met the legal standard of probable cause.

But I don't think Morton's letter says what the authors claimed. It doesn't credit Matthews for having "finally pieced together" the web of evidence—it says only that Hollywood's file had substantial information about Toole's opportunity to commit the crime and that Matthews pointed it out. It also doesn't say that Smith had validated Matthews's report, only that he'd reviewed it.

The authors did accurately quote another part of Morton's letter they noted the *Herald* didn't include, a condescending dig at me:

“The delayed Dahmer identifications certainly add intrigue and mystery to Adam Walsh’s tragic death. They may form the basis of a writing of a book or a murder mystery novel, but they do not come close to supporting the filing of criminal charges.”

They also offered a theory that melded the new Dahmer witnesses with their theory of the case:

“A comparison of the mug shots of preppy-looking Dahmer—who by most accounts long eluded suspicion precisely because he appeared harmless—with those of Ottis Toole suggests the true identity of the frightening individual these new witnesses had actually seen that day in Sears.”

Yes, the Dahmer witnesses actually saw Toole, propose Matthews and Standiford. Then why didn’t they race to contact them themselves? Six more Toole witnesses would have sealed their theory. But notice they wrote “new witnesses.” I can only imagine Matthews trying to get Willis to say he really saw Toole.

Actually, before Willis had filed his suit against Matthews it was he who had pursued Matthews to talk but Matthews wouldn’t respond. Not only that, in a conference call on May 13, 2010 with Willis’s attorney Tom Julin (who in 1996 had won the release of the case file), Morton and Hollywood P.D. attorney Joel Cantor, Matthews indicated that Willis’s pursuit of him was a stalking.

The call had taken place after both Cantor and Morton had asked Matthews in writing, citing state public records law, to give them again a copy of his report so they could show it to Willis. During the call Matthews answered he didn’t have a copy either. In Willis’s complaint, filed June 1, 2010, Julin wrote that Matthews “asserted that he had destroyed all electronic copies of the report due to his fear that plaintiff would break into his office and steal the report.” One printed copy remained, however Matthews “claimed that he had given the copy of his report to his ‘co-author’ and that the co-author had taken it to Cuba and was still, at that time, in Cuba.

“Matthews asserted that he was reluctant to show the report to plaintiff due to concerns that plaintiff would make the report available to *The Miami Herald* or other media” but he agreed to ask his then unnamed co-author “when he was returning to the U.S. with the report and would contact Morton when he knew the report would be produced.”

But after that call “Matthews did not make the report available for inspection. Further efforts to obtain a copy from defendants have been futile.”

In the complaint, Julin also attached an April 14, 2010 letter he had written to Satz, Wagner, and Matthews citing that “I also discussed the Matthews report with Mr. Morton last week and he indicated that he had used the Matthews report in connection with his preparation of a memorandum regarding the Walsh investigation.” Regardless of whether it persuaded Satz to in effect bless Hollywood’s decision to close the case, Morton’s use of it in the course of official state business alone should have made it a public record.

I argue that Toole’s most valuable statements to the Hollywood detectives were his first ones. Matthews, who teaches police interrogation techniques, disagrees. Suspects “time and again” confess in stages, the authors wrote. At first they deny. Then they concede that they might know something. Then, maybe they were present. After a while they admit to the crime.

But this doesn't apply to Toole: he admitted his guilt at the start. The issue was whether his confession was real or false. When Toole failed to tell any unique facts that the killer would have known, the Hollywood detectives felt compelled to reveal to him, in stages, a little bit of the case, hoping it would prompt him to contribute something he knew that was real, then a little bit more. They went through the whole case that way but Toole never originated anything valuable. By doing this, Hollywood inadvertently poisoned the well for all interviewers who came after. As Texas Ranger Phil Ryan said about Lucas, every next detective who would interview him needed to know what he had already learned from the previous detective. And as Lucas admitted if not boasted, that was exactly how he came to know case facts he otherwise couldn't have known.

Writes Steven Drizin of the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University: "Interrogators often contaminate the confession by inadvertently leaking these details to the unknowing suspect through the use of leading or suggestive questions, by showing crime scene photos to the suspect, or even by taking a suspect to the crime scene."

Although false confessions are enigmatic and counter-intuitive, how common are they? The Innocence Project says on its website, "in about 25% of DNA exoneration cases, innocent defendants made incriminating statements, delivered outright confessions or pled guilty."

As forced false confessions are an obvious danger to justice, so are false confessions that are unforced. And the guys who rewrote the book on voluntary false confessions are Lucas and Toole.

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Two months after I submitted A.W.'s swab sample, his result came back. His mitochondrial DNA had twelve markers, or bases, Alastair Greenshields called them, compared with three in the reports for Reve Walsh and the found child, which were identical. Two of A.W.'s bases, 263G and 315.1C, matched those in the other reports, but those were "hot spots," as he'd explained, common to many results. The third base in the other reports, 16209C, less common, in did not show in A.W.'s report.

So although there were two bases that overlapped, A.W. had ten that were not in Reve's and the found child's, and they had one that was not in A.W.'s.

I had previously told Greenshields the results for Reve and the found child but he said he hadn't written them down. When I let him compare the results, he said it proved that A.W. was not a maternal relative of Reve.

A.W. was very disappointed when I told him. Frank Sortini asked if it diminished in my mind the chance of A.W. being Adam. I answered, if he's not Adam, how do we explain all the details he seemed to know about being friends with you? When I told Billy Capshaw, he reiterated that he thought A.W. had been a victim of Dahmer, but maybe he only thought he was Adam Walsh. Maybe he was another child who had survived the same torture at the same time.

That would be where for now I'd have to leave DNA matching and confirming whether or not A.W. was Adam Walsh. But I had doubts remaining about the trustworthiness of the 2003 test result.



**Billy Capshaw, left, and a man he recalls wore fatigues from the Israeli Army. Dahmer mailed the photo to him at his family home in Arkansas, and Billy thinks Dahmer also shot it. Photo courtesy Billy Capshaw.**

Billy Capshaw found this Polaroid photo in his deceased mother's possessions. At first he couldn't remember much about it; he blames PTSD for much of his memory loss of his Army days. He knew that the other man was in the Israeli Army; his fatigue shirt was the same color green as used by the U.S. Army but had a patch of the Israeli flag: two blue bars and the Star of David. He didn't speak English. He also recalled the man kissing him on the cheek.

The photo looked like it was taken in a barrack, but couldn't have been in Baumholder, Billy said. This barrack was relatively new; Baumholder's barracks had been built by the Nazis.

Later, Billy's older sister Debra George added more to the story: after Billy had returned home from the Army, in October 1981, in traumatized condition, the photo arrived in a letter addressed to him. Its sender was Jeff Dahmer. In the envelope was another picture, a three-shot of the two men plus Dahmer. Billy and Debra both remembered it but didn't know anymore where it was. Inside the envelope was a letter which also had been lost. Debra said she hadn't read it; Billy remembered it as threatening, and may have thrown it away. He speculated that the picture, above, survived because Jeff wasn't in it.

When the photos came, Debra recognized Dahmer. He had recently come to their house in Hot Springs, unannounced, looking for Billy.



Dahmer never got inside or saw Billy. When he arrived, Billy ran out the back door, unexplained, Debra said, leaving her to intercept the visitor before he climbed to the top of the steps leading to the house. With a handshake he introduced himself as Jeff Dahmer: "I was in the army with Billy." He said he was passing through and had decided to stop and talk to him, he just wanted to say hello.

From what Billy had already told the family, Debra knew who he was by name. "I told him, point-blank, Billy wasn't there, and he wasn't going to be back," she said. And although Debra is no more than five feet tall and Dahmer was a foot taller, she defiantly blocked his way to the door.

"He stared at me for a minute. I've never looked into a person's eyes like that. He was cold and had nothing in there. He was like a body walking with no soul." After a determined staring match, it was Dahmer who turned away.

She said Dahmer had a poorly-kept appearance. He wore an old shirt that hadn't been ironed, possibly a dull plaid, and jeans or khakis. "He was shabby-looking, like he just got out of bed," she said. His face had some beard stubble, and his "ruffled" dirty blonde hair had "grown out some" from a military cut.

She said that Billy's friends usually flirted with her, but "this guy did not."

Debra described his car as a beige or tan-colored station wagon, a number of years old. She remembered looking at his license plate but couldn't recall what state it was from, except that it wasn't Arkansas. Billy recalled that in the army, Jeff had told him that his father had given him a '71 or '72 Chevy station wagon.

From the top of the steps the family had a good view into any car parked below, and Debra said she looked into Dahmer's vehicle. In the back seat she saw a number of tools and rags on a sheet of plywood. "I was wondering what kind of work he did," she said.

Among the tools were two rusty saws and an axe that might have had a handle about two feet long.

That immediately caught my attention when she told me. In the electric meter room in the alley behind Sunshine Sub, where Dahmer had worked in Miami in the summer of 1981 when Adam disappeared, producers and crew from ABC *Primetime* and I had found an old lumberman's axe and sledgehammer both upright in a corner next to what looked like at least a hundred drops of spatter that climbed high up a wall. On site, our forensic crime scene analyst Jan Johnson determined that the drops were blood, although we could never say for sure it was human blood. What got us to look there was the July 1981 police report in which Dahmer said he'd found a dead homeless man in that alley, and had mentioned that the man had slept in the meter room. We'd wondered whether Dahmer, apparently homeless himself at the time, had killed the man so he could sleep in his cozy space. When we discovered the spatter, we speculated that Dahmer had used the axe to chop up a body. (At the time, we'd thought the blood might have been Adam's.)

Could it be the same axe? Debra remembered that when Dahmer came to Arkansas her infant was about two months old, as well as estimated that it was a month or two after Billy returned, so that would have been November or December 1981. Dahmer told Hollywood Police it was September 1981 when he left South Florida and returned home to Ohio. He said he didn't have a car while he was here, and if the station wagon was in fact owned by the Dahmer family, it made sense that he wouldn't have had access to it until he got home. It was long after 1981 when we saw the axe in the meter room, in

2007. It would seem, then, that it was not the same axe, although it remained intriguing that he was carrying one.

But recall one more piece of information Debra told me: Jeff said he was just passing through town. According to *A Father's Story*, by Lionel Dahmer, after Jeff returned from Miami he stayed with him in Ohio, but in the “winter of 1981” Lionel and his new wife decided they needed to send him to live with Lionel’s mother, near Milwaukee. By then, “Neither could we trust him with the car, even to use it for job interviews, since he had also gotten drunk on such occasions.”

Lionel doesn’t describe the car Jeff used. When the Dahmers sent him to Milwaukee, Lionel wrote, they took him to the bus station, so he didn’t drive the car to Wisconsin.

But maybe his grandmother had a car—maybe the station wagon Billy said Jeff said his father had saved for him. If so, Jeff may have had much less supervision there than at his father’s house.

Northeastern Ohio or southeastern Wisconsin, either way it was at least 600 miles south to Hot Springs. Was Dahmer on his way to somewhere beyond? Or returning from there?

Did he come back here, to South Florida? After Debra saw the axe, did he then leave it in the meter room where we found it?

Are there other Dahmer murders here around the end of 1981 and the beginning of 1982? Or even along his route, from Wisconsin or Ohio to Hot Springs, and then possibly to Miami?

Might he have even returned to Miami other times after that?

I asked Billy if he’d been expecting Dahmer to come to his home in Hot Springs. “Yeah,” he said. “I’ve been expecting him for 30 years now.” Even after the report of Dahmer’s murder, his thought of Jeff returning to see him has never gone away. Were they sure it was him, dead? He knows the thinking is irrational, but on the other hand, all these years later he still sleeps with lights on, fearful of being attacked in the dark.

“I’m shaking right now, in my hands,” Billy said as he told me the story. “It makes me quiver, makes me shake.”

Despite Debra’s warning to Jeff not to come back, he did return the next day, Billy said. That time he got as far as inside the front screen door but no further. At the time, Billy was at his father’s house. His mother later told him, “That ’ol boy came back to the house lookin’ for you, Billy. That one that done all that stuff to you.”

To Debra, I sent this photo, below, of what we found in the meter room.



**The sledgehammer and axe we found in the meter room in the alley behind Sunshine Sub. Photo courtesy Jan Johnson**

She said the axe could have been the same, the handle had the same shape. Although the one in the picture seemed longer, she added that the one she saw in Dahmer's car might have been partially underneath something. Also, the one in the photo looked older but then again, we'd taken the picture in 2007, so many years later.

Back to the contents of the photograph of Billy:

"That picture was sent to me for a reason," Billy said. "He didn't do that for no reason. Everything he did was for a reason. I know the picture is significant in some way." Likely, it was meant to intimidate him, he thought.

As he considered it more, he thought that the barrack was in Landstuhl, a regional U.S. Army hospital complex in Germany, in fact the largest of its kind outside of the States. When Dahmer had broken Billy's hip, he'd been taken there; it was close to Baumholder.

Landstuhl also served as a hub for soldiers transitioning to and from assignments, and its barracks were used for short stays, he said.

That all suggested to Billy that he'd just returned from a mission—somewhere he couldn't recall, and thought he never may have known because it was secret. Although Billy was wearing a short-sleeved undershirt, the black man is wearing a long-sleeve undershirt that looked like thermal wear, suggesting cold weather wherever they'd been.

Billy pointed out that in the photo, his left hand is sooty. He said that was gunpowder residue, from firing either an M-16 or M-60 rifle. It produces a burnt smell, "you smell like a bullet," he recalled. When the photo was snapped, he hadn't had yet washed it off.

Billy thought that to Jeff, the photo's significance may have been that the two men had their arms around their shoulders, buddy-style. Dahmer, who was extremely controlling, may have been jealous about that. To me, it seemed that the black man had initiated the pose and Billy had responded, a bit reluctantly. Billy's look is kind of aw-shucks.

Also about the photo, Billy's haircut confirmed what he'd told me: it was much too long to be standard military. As was Jeff's, he said.

That Jeff took the picture was consistent in that it was a Polaroid, and Jeff had a Polaroid camera in Germany, Billy said.

More gleanings: that the man was an Israeli black suggested to me he was Ethiopian. When I had visited Israel in 1982 I didn't remember seeing any blacks, but I later learned that the Israeli government had worked to rescue Ethiopians who claimed Jewish ancestry in a military mission called "Operation Moses." I asked a friend who had lived in Israel between 1985-88 if he remembered blacks there, and he said most of them were young Ethiopians, learning Hebrew and sometimes English too. There were also American blacks who claimed Jewish heritage, he said, but all of them obviously spoke English.

Said a 2010 *Jerusalem Post* story reviewing it, Operation Moses was a "clandestine" airlift, "a three-way collaboration between the Mossad, the CIA and Sudanese State Security" to "smuggle" about eight thousand Ethiopian Jews from Sudanese refugee camps who had arrived to escape a famine. They had begun coming in 1981, following other Ethiopians. The *Jerusalem Post* wrote that the trek was brutal and possibly four thousand Ethiopian Jews died of malnutrition along the way.

The operation was interrupted in January 1985 when Israeli premier Shimon Peres confirmed media reports about the airlift, and Arab leaders pressured Sudan to end it. But months later, Vice President George H.W. Bush secretly flew to Sudan and convinced the Sudanese president to let the U.S. complete the airlift. The CIA prepared a small airfield, then Ethiopian Jews who had already arrived in Israel and were working with the Israeli Mossad found the remaining Jews and drove them to where they "were rushed onto several US military C-130 Hercules aircraft, landing at the run-down airstrip in 20-minute intervals, flying them directly to Israel."

When Dahmer was arrested in Milwaukee in 1991, Billy was in the Garland County Jail in Hot Springs. (He'd pled to reckless endangerment for giving his truck keys to his friend's daughter, not yet driving age. At the time, Billy's PTSD had yet to be adequately treated, and he was drinking heavily in a bar. He said the girl told him she just wanted to listen to the radio; instead she drove the vehicle and killed someone in an accident.) In jail he said he was visited by military officers in civilian clothes and told that if media arrived to ask him about Dahmer, don't mention Israel. (The officers came to his house also, possibly first, Debra Capshaw remembered.) Billy said that at the time he didn't know what they were talking about.

But Billy now thinks his Army unit had some sort of military-intelligence role. He had told me about a visit to his room from two guys in suits with non-military haircuts who'd demonstrated survival techniques in extreme conditions. He assumes they were CIA or something like it. Dahmer acted like he was friends with them.

He'd also told me about a recurring nightmare of hearing live automatic weapons fire—not practice rounds, like might be common on a military base. He guessed it was a

repressed recollection of being in action, possibly with the man in the picture. Billy would have been a medic on the operation, he thought.

Billy had repeatedly mentioned to me, before his rediscovery of this photo, that he seemed to have been on a military mission somewhere, cowering. He recalled a drill sergeant he didn't know walking up and telling him, "Capshaw, I didn't think you were going to make it." He'd lost the understanding of what he'd meant. He'd thought that had happened after Dahmer's discharge, but now he thought otherwise.

That Jeff had apparently taken the photo implied to Billy that Jeff had been on the same mission.

After Billy and A.W. had spoken, out of my earshot, so Billy could decide for himself whether A.W. had really encountered Dahmer, A.W. told me he didn't want to talk to Billy again, he'd raked him over the coals in a way that revealed that Billy was military-intelligence. A.W. said he recognized the method of questioning because he'd been in the Israeli Defense Force.

Billy conceded that he had grilled him and that A.W. had passed his test, he did believe he had been a victim of Dahmer, although, again, he wasn't in a position to say whether or not he was Adam Walsh. But he'd never told me how he'd interviewed him. This time he said that he'd been trained how to respond if he was ever captured as a P.O.W. Although the training was defensive, he had to learn the controlling techniques of potential captors. To coerce information from a prisoner, he said, you ask questions rapid-fire so he doesn't ramble, which allows him time to invent false answers. He did that with A.W., who didn't like it, and he apologized to me for having done it but defended his decision, since it produced results, in his mind.

Billy said he'd gotten four extra weeks of basic training, in the States, for desert rescues. This was late 1979-early 1980, and on the international agenda around then were rescue attempts in Iran and sub-Saharan Africa. He said in his Baumholder unit, everyone, including Dahmer, had similar rescue and P.O.W. training. It was not a far reach to assume that Dahmer's abuse of Billy was a practicing on him of captors' techniques. He reminded me that Dahmer had repeatedly hit him with a steel pipe in the most painful places—joints, back, knees, Achilles tendons. Rape, too, is a coercive interrogation technique, to humiliate and break down a person.

Although Dahmer had killed at least his first victim before he signed up for the service, he may have learned advanced techniques of torture from the Army.

*THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE* IN APRIL 2011 told a stunning story at a morgue in Benghazi, Libya during its Arab Spring uprising:

On a day of fierce fighting, Emad al-Imam, a rebel opposing the army of Muammar el-Qaddafi, was late checking in with his family. When his father, sixty-five-year-old Miftah al-Imam, called his cellphone a man answered and laughed, "The owner of this phone is being burned" and then hung up. Terrified, Miftah went to hospitals looking for

his son and discovered pandemonium, wounded people everywhere. At one, a nurse offered to show him an unidentified body with a bullet hole in the side of his head.

“Miftah looked, and felt his stomach wrench. The face was a little fuller than Emad’s, but that could be from torture. He was certain this was his son.”

He kissed his forehead and said “May God have mercy on you.” Now unsteady on his feet, Miftah was driven home by a doctor. He told the news to his family, including his son’s wife and two children.

The sound of shrieking and sobbing filled the house. The neighbors heard and came to pay their condolences. For two hours, more friends and relatives arrived to comfort the bereaved family.

It was then that Emad staggered through the front door, into his own funeral.

Searching for similar incidents, I found these:

In May 2011 around Joplin, Missouri, tornadoes of extreme severity killed more than 125 people. Coroner Mark Bridges of Newton County told this story to his local newspaper, the *Neosho Daily News*:

One of the coroners let a funeral home have a guy who the mother, the brother and the dad had all identified. The body was released to a funeral home in Kansas, who later called me. They said ‘Mark, we’ve got a real problem here. The family is saying this is not their son or brother.’

In an Associated Press story, Bridges said the mistake had occurred in the chaos just after the storm hit. A federal emergency forensics team of up to seventy-five mortuary specialists quickly arrived and collected DNA samples, fingerprints, and looked for distinctive body marks.

After their arrival, officials took additional precautions, Bridges said. “That’s the reason we didn’t release anybody else until we at least had dental records.”

In July 2010 in Arizona, driving home in the evening after a day at Disneyland, an SUV blew a tire and rolled over. Inside were five friends who’d been to the same high school; a twenty-year-old man and a woman were killed, and another woman was left in critical condition with a brain injury, a collapsed lung and a broken back. The hospital identified its patient as Marlana Cantu, twenty-one, and the medical examiner identified its body as Abby Guerra, nineteen.

A week later, the identities of the two women were reversed.

Said a lifelong friend of Cantu to an Arizona television station, “We all went in [to the hospital room]. We were talking to Marlana, thinking it was Marlana. Even Abby’s parents went in there. Nobody knew.”

The same friend told the *Arizona Republic* that the girl in the hospital had her head shaved in advance of brain surgery, and her face was swollen and her eyes blackened. “You’re not looking for differences. It didn’t look like anyone I’d ever seen,” she said.

Because of a high caseload, the medical examiner didn’t do its autopsies immediately after the accident. They had Abby’s dental records, which showed she had

no wisdom teeth. The body did. Further, Abby had an appendectomy scar and was two inches shorter than Marlana.

The girls did look similar, reported ABC's *Good Morning America*. The show quoted Arthur Caplan, then of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Bioethics:

You find yourself thinking: How can this be? We have DNA testing. We have excellent dental records on many people. We have X-rays, all kinds of records kept on people. How can it be that we didn't identify someone a week later?

In April 2006, five persons, including four college students, were killed in Indiana when a tractor-trailer crossed a highway median and hit their van. One woman in the van survived but was in a coma. She was identified as Laura VanRyn, twenty-two.

The VanRyn family brought her to a rehabilitation center in Grand Rapids, Michigan where five weeks after the accident she began regaining consciousness. The Associated Press reported that the first to become suspicious about her identity was Laura's boyfriend. Then Laura's father got suspicious when she called him a pet name he didn't know. After he asked some questions he had her write her name.

She wrote Whitney Cerak.

Dental records confirmed that's who she was. Whitney was then eighteen. Laura VanRyn, as it turned out, had already been buried—under Whitney's name. Whitney's grandfather told the AP that her parents had declined to look at the body. "They wanted to remember her the way she was."

The AP reported that the two women, both blondes, looked remarkably alike. The woman in the coma—Whitney, as it turned out—had facial swelling, was in a neck brace, and had broken bones and cuts and bruises.

Here's what these cases, including the case of the found child identified as Adam, have in common:

The bodies were not carrying identifications on their person. Although the Arizona and Indiana women likely had ID in their purses, in both cases there were more than one female victims and likely more than one purse in the vehicle. In Missouri, the tornadoes killed people at home, where they were unlikely to be carrying ID in their pockets.

Each of the bodies was severely damaged. In the instance of the found child identified as Adam, it was decomposing and wet.

In Arizona, Indiana, Missouri, and Adam Walsh, medical examiners or coroners were trusted to make the right call. In the first three instances they could have used dental records to make positive IDs but didn't, not immediately. Although Cox did use dental records to identify Adam Walsh, he didn't call a forensic dental expert to interpret them.

In each instance family members and friends had apparently feared that their loved one was dead, which colored their assumptions that turned out to be wrong. In the Walsh case, in the overnight before family friend John Monahan went to the Vero Beach morgue, Hollywood detectives had said they had little or no doubt that the head was Adam's. Anyone in Monahan's situation, or the others, would have had expectations for what they were about to see.

But the largest thing these stories illustrate is that in questioned-body cases identifications even by closest family members and friends can be unreliable. In Libya, a

father misidentified someone else as his son. In Missouri the misidentification was by a father, mother, and brother. Even worse, in Arizona and Indiana, families and friends sat with live persons for a week and five weeks and didn't know. Had the Indiana girl not arisen from her coma, it's possible the misidentifications never would have been realized.

Lesson learned? When a body isn't carrying identification on its person—the same for someone severely disfigured by injury who has become incapable of communication—and there could be a mix-up with others who have suffered similar fates, the victim's own family members or closest friends are not reliable identifiers of that person. Better identifications can be made with forensic science methods, but they have to be applied.

In 1997, long before I had reason to question its identification, I had seen photos of the found child in Hollywood Police's crime scene albums but now I needed to see them again.

Was it possible the child looked unmistakably like Adam Walsh? As I tried to remember, I couldn't answer.

There was a complicating factor since 2001 regarding whether death photos were still available through public records requests. The state had passed a law prohibiting the public release of autopsy photos without a surviving family's consent. But the interpretation of the law was cloudy; it depended on what exactly was an autopsy photo, and who took it. I later learned that pictures similar to those that medical examiners take, but taken by police, were not exempt from release.

Given that it wasn't immediately clear to me who had taken the pictures I'd seen and wanted to see again, I guessed I'd have an easier time getting them elsewhere than the Hollywood Police. The Broward State Attorney also had them. Four months later they sent their reply: I couldn't see them because statutes prohibited the disclosure of criminal investigative photographs of persons who are sexual assault victims. "Available evidence has established that Adam Walsh was the victim of a sexual offense after he was abducted and before he was murdered," they wrote.

That was news to me, I wrote back. The only body remains in evidence was the child's head. Was there physical evidence showing sexual assault? Back in 1996, State Attorney's office investigator Carl Lord had told me that the Indian River medical examiner had found semen in the head, possibly in the neck area, and that the information had never been made public. But when I'd asked Jack Hoffman he said that was false information. I'd also asked Ron Wright: he said there was no evidence of it, and had there been any it would have washed out in the water. Regardless, he still thought the murder "was a sexual thing." Of course, there was no autopsy report finding that said the child had been sexually assaulted. Nor did Dr. Cox's notes have anything on that.

As for statements by Toole, as we've reviewed, in his first interview with Hoffman and Hickman he'd said Lucas had had sex with the head. But after Hoffman told him that Lucas was in jail on the day of the abduction, he asked Toole if he'd had sex with the head. Toole denied it.

I asked Ron Hickman if he knew that Adam had been sexually assaulted. "When did they make that up?" he asked.

At a meeting, Chuck Morton told me it was his decision to refuse me access to the pictures and defended it by showing me a copy of one of the vulgar letters under Toole's



purported signature that had been sent from Florida state prison in 1988 asserting that he had raped Adam.

I argued that two Broward Sheriff's Office investigators had quickly determined that another inmate, Gerard John Schaefer, had written those letters, that he was controlling Toole at the time, and that neither man had any additional information to offer in exchange for the money they demanded. Further, that was also John Walsh's opinion, in *Tears of Rage*.

Morton said the letter was evidence nonetheless but admitted that was all he had in support of his decision. Nor was there any physical evidence proving a sexual assault. I futilely argued that the letter alone failed to prove that "Available evidence has established that Adam Walsh was the victim of a sexual offense," and furthermore the state attorney hadn't believed it from 1988 to when Toole died in 1996 because they could have prosecuted him for rape. Morton tried to convince me that it was likely that a young child abducted by a stranger would be sexually violated. I responded that likelihood did not make it so.

At the same meeting I viewed the state attorney's copy of the Broward Medical Examiner's file, which in 1996 Phil Mundy had asked for in full. I wanted to know, in 1996 did the file have the Broward autopsy report narrative or Adam's dental records? Or mention they had consulted a forensic dentist?

It had none of that. But it did have more than a hundred pages the Medical Examiner's office hadn't shown me in December 2009. The additional pages were mostly investigative notes.

I showed Morton Dr. Wright's email response to Dr. Perper that no one in his office had written an autopsy report because it wasn't Broward's case. Looking together at the file, we determined that there was a report but it was significantly incomplete, as it was lacking its narrative summary of the internal and external examinations and autopsy findings, as well as the pathologist's signature.

I told Morton that Wright wouldn't speak to me, at least not recently, and asked if he would inquire to Wright why he didn't submit a full autopsy report or keep the dental records. Morton wrote me back: "Please direct any questions you have regarding the Medical Examiner to the Medical Examiner's Office."

So I went back to Hollywood Police. Would they give me the same answer as Morton? No, in April 2011, they allowed me access to the pictures, again. In fact they had been shot by a police crime scene detective, as shown in a report that the detective had written.

There were only twelve, only a few showed teeth, and none of those showed close-ups of the teeth. Also, they were gruesome. Decomposition was worst in the exposed wound areas of the neck and base of the jaw. But the child's skin had not dramatically changed color as the Broward M.E. had reported it had for Flo Ella Miller, found in a similar water drainage area four days after she was last heard from. Police had mistaken her for a black woman; she was white.

Did it look like the child in the baseball picture?

I couldn't say for sure.

John Monahan, too, on first glance wasn't certain it was Adam, according to John Walsh and Joe Matthews. In *Tears of Rage*, Walsh wrote that Monahan made his positive

ID only after he was shown the child's teeth. In *Bringing Adam Home*, Matthews recounted that Monahan "took one look at the face—he *could* be wrong, he told himself."

Did the child have any top front teeth?

Yes, the left central incisor, certainly. This photo, which I've enlarged and cropped, shows it protruding like a buck tooth. It seems to match Dr. Warren's description that it was in "almost all the way."



**Orientation is Right side - Left side. Hollywood Police Department**

About a month before he disappeared, in his "Missing" photo, Adam clearly had neither top central incisor. (In *Tears of Rage*, John Walsh wrote that it showed only one top front tooth missing, and that the photo had been taken a week before he disappeared.)

A week or two before the disappearance he still had neither top front tooth, just like in the photo, Frank Sortini told me. That was the last time he saw him, and he'd specifically noted it at the time. Frank, then age nine, said he remembered saying to himself, "I wouldn't smile if I had that gap. But he was a smiling little thing."

"A couple of days before" Adam disappeared Monahan last saw him, he told *The Miami Herald*. Monahan had also seen Adam smile at him, and noticed "his little teeth coming in." He was no more specific.

Last seen alive, as described in the Hollywood Police teletype, likely using information from his parents, Adam's top left central incisor had erupted.

The search for Adam went on for two weeks until when the child said to be him was discovered. Dr. Wright said that the child (Adam) had been dead for possibly all of those two weeks.



## Adam may have been dead since he disappeared; police need clues

### There'll be no party for Adam

Authorities here today said they believe Adam was dead for most of the 14 days he was missing. They said the tooth that erupted just before he disappeared was a sign of death. Police are looking for clues to help identify the child.



### Authorities hope autopsy on head will provide lead

Police here today said they believe Adam was dead for most of the 14 days he was missing. They said the tooth that erupted just before he disappeared was a sign of death. Police are looking for clues to help identify the child.



*Hollywood Sun-Tattler, August 12, 1981*

I asked a number of forensic dentists whether teeth keep growing after death. All said no.

If the found child is Adam, as the headline reads, at death his top left central incisor had growth after eruption of between a few days to four weeks. That makes these assumptions:

On the low side, Wright was correct that he was dead for the bulk of the fourteen days he was missing, and the tooth erupted just before Monahan last saw Adam, a couple of days before he disappeared.

On the high side, Wright was wrong and instead Adam was dead for very little of those two weeks he was missing, and the tooth erupted just after Frank Sortini last saw him and that was two weeks before he disappeared.

Just using the high estimate, four weeks after eruption could a top central incisor grow to as far in as what the crime scene photo shows? Or to as Dr. Warren put it, looking at his photo of the skull, in "almost all the way"?

I asked Dr. Charles Mandell, the Hollywood Police forensic dentist: "There's no way in hell."

Dr. Gregory Dickinson, the Sarasota forensic dentist and general practitioner, agreed.

I also asked Dr. Marcio Guelmann, professor and chair of the department of pediatric dentistry at the University of Florida College of Dentistry, in Gainesville. Looking at the crime scene photo he told me that the left central incisor was "significantly erupted."

"It's difficult to believe that the tooth would be erupted that far in such a short time," he said. "I'd be very surprised if the gap is just a month or so."

Had the found child's top right central incisor erupted? The crime scene photos didn't prove yes or no.

Adam's last-seen-alive description said "Missing right front tooth." If the found child's top right front tooth had erupted, that would further dispute its identification.

Of the found child, Cox wrote that its "upper right incisor is missing and an erupting tooth can be palpated in its place." What exactly did he mean by that? Had the permanent tooth erupted—or was it merely about to erupt?

Which was the key word, "missing" or "erupting"?

"Erupting," as Cox used the present tense, means the process of eruption. For a volcanic eruption, to note that it is erupting, does that colloquially mean that the volcano is rumbling and about to erupt, or that some lava has actually begun to flow?

To argue that the erupting tooth hadn't yet broken the surface, that Cox "palpated" it suggests it was only just about to break through, that it could be felt but not seen except possibly for a bulge underneath the gum line.

Autopsy photos, taken by Cox or Wright, likely would have answered this.

Here's a clue that the tooth had broken the surface:

Reviewing that *Miami Herald* quote, from January 1982, the last time Monahan said he'd seen Adam he'd noticed his "little teeth coming in." Again, the best last-seen-alive description of Adam had only his left top front tooth coming in. Was Monahan misspoken in his use of the plural? Or six months later, was he remembering something different, or changing his story?

For a moment, let's ride with John Monahan as he and the Hollywood chief of detectives drove up to Vero Beach on that dreadful morning. To see the remains, Monahan undoubtedly steeled himself.

Even if the police didn't tell him, Hollywood detectives had already seen the remains in the overnight hours before and were reporting they were all but sure that the head was Adam. Had Monahan failed to positively identify him, police would have been surprised.

Before Monahan arrived, he may have already convinced himself that the child was probably Adam.

At the morgue, Monahan requested that someone, likely Cox himself, open the child's lips. How long might he have looked inside the mouth? Death was literally in the air—in his report Cox wrote, "Extensive putrefaction with a foul-smelling odor is present." For anybody not used to the surroundings, it was a room to flee as soon as you could.

Might Monahan have seen a newly-erupting right central and confused it with having recently seen Adam's newly-erupting left central? In that instant he very well may not have recalled whether Adam's new tooth was his left or his right. Besides, he might have keyed in only on the newest tooth, not the mostly-in tooth next to it.

In similar stressful moments, the Libyan father and the Missouri family, who knew their loved ones better than Monahan knew Adam, had made mistakes, too.

And then after Cox's determination that the head was Adam, Monahan may never have doubted what he'd seen. It was Adam, that's what they said.

Or maybe, reliving it in his mind he did doubt it. As Joe Matthews wrote, Monahan had related that he'd told himself he could have been wrong.

On the morning after the ID, the *Herald* wrote that Monahan identified the child by “the stub of a new tooth,” that is, a single tooth. That would seem to have matched Adam, that he had a single tooth coming in, according to his last, best description.

But six months later Monahan told the *Herald* that he’d seen Adam’s “little teeth coming in,” plural.

Maybe one of the children he saw had little teeth coming in, plural. But it wasn’t Adam.

When she worked on the case as a crime scene technician, Marjorie Hanlon had seen the crime scene photos. I described for her the problems of the teeth comparison and the opinions of the forensic dentists including Dr. Mandell, whom she knew from Hollywood Police.

“You’re not going to convince me that it’s not Adam Walsh,” she said. But when I offered to show the pictures to her again, she didn’t want to see them. As a mother, she said, she knew.

She wasn’t saying that as a supporter of Hollywood’s case theory. She’d sat in on one of the interrogations of Toole and thought, “This guy is sick. This isn’t the guy who killed Adam Walsh.” For one thing, he didn’t know anything he wasn’t fed, and the detectives thought that, too, she said. Looking at Toole’s eyes “was like looking through glass. There was no soul there. A child would have looked at him and wouldn’t have gone with him.”

When Hollywood closed the case on Toole, she was shocked. “I think they did it out of charity for the Walshes.”

She also thought that Dahmer was a much better suspect.

But it wasn’t just my opinion that by looking at the face of the found child you couldn’t be sure it was Adam. At the morgue John Monahan wasn’t sure, either.

Now, let’s re-address the missing top lateral incisors. If the found child’s were gone at time of death, it would be another strike against the child being Adam.

First, had Adam lost his?

When he disappeared, Adam was six years, eight months old. Deciduous lateral incisors generally fall out sometime after the adult central incisors erupt, which is typically between ages 6-8. Adult top lateral incisors typically appear between ages 7-9.

Compare his baseball picture to an older shot of him, with all his top baby teeth.



**Left, the “Missing” picture. Right, Adam when he still had his baby top front teeth. In the two pictures, compare his left side top lateral incisor (and canine, next to it). Orientation in both pictures is Right side - Left side.**

The baseball picture shows two top teeth on each side. On Adam's left side, the tooth furthest from the center is a very identifiable canine, so next to it is the lateral incisor, both deciduous teeth. Matching the teeth with the older photo makes this more obvious. That means on the left side, Adam was missing only his central incisor.

But for the two teeth on the top right side of the baseball photo, as Dr. Mandell pointed out to me, the angle does not as easily allow for the same identification. The tooth closest to the center may be a lateral incisor or a canine, we can't be sure which. If it's a canine then Adam was missing not two but *three* top teeth in a row.

Here's the argument that Adam wasn't missing either of his top lateral incisors: the police last-seen-alive description speaks only to missing two front teeth. The Walshes said nothing to the news media or community searching for Adam about teeth other than the two in front. Had Adam had lost more than those, wouldn't he have alerted Mom, a.k.a. the Tooth Fairy?

Was the found child missing its top lateral incisors?

A forensic dental report or Dr. Wright's autopsy report or autopsy photographs would have told us. Alas. We do have Dr. Cox's report, but he didn't specify seeing any. He basically only counted the teeth he saw.

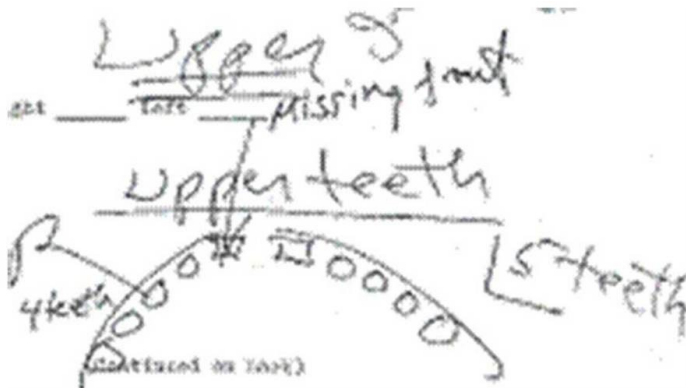
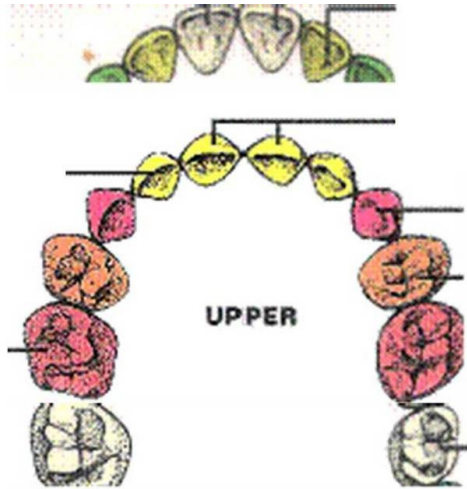
Up to this point I'd been relying on the C.A. Pound lab's picture of the top jaw. All of the dental professionals with whom I shared it agreed that it showed its laterals missing. But that picture was taken long after the skull's skin and gums had been cleaned.

Another crime scene picture showed gloved fingers holding open the child's mouth. The front teeth were harder to discern, but I thought the four furthest-back teeth on the right side looked the same as in the Pound lab photo.



**Left, C.A. Pound photo of the top jaw, reversed from previously shown. Right, enlarged close up of top teeth in crime scene photo, Hollywood Police. Orientation in both pictures is Right side - Left side.**

To label the teeth and reflect the mixed dentition shown in the Pound picture, I composed a dental chart. On each side are six teeth, with the adult central incisors meant to replace the primaries in the graphic beneath. From the top, then, are the central incisors, lateral incisors, canines, first deciduous molars, second deciduous molars, and first permanent molars (from the chart of permanent teeth).



The orientation of each graphic is Right side - Left side.

**Top:** From a dental chart of upper permanent teeth, the central (and lateral) incisors. The found child had a permanent upper left central incisor and an “erupting” upper right central incisor.

**Middle:** Composition of dental charts to show mixed dentition of primary and permanent upper teeth. From top (in either direction): primary central incisors, lateral incisors, canines, first deciduous molars, second deciduous molars. Beneath that, juxtaposed, the first permanent molars. Dental charts published in *A Visual Guide to Dental Care*, by Whittle Communications, in cooperation with the American Dental Hygienists’ Association.

**Bottom:** Dr. Cox’s drawing of the upper teeth, from the District Nineteen M.E. file. Note “Missing front,” indicating the right central incisor, which he wrote in his report had a palpable emerging adult tooth in its slot.

Look closely: in the Pound photo of the found child, the three molars on each side seem to match the molars on the dental chart. Look not only at the shape of the teeth but their juxtapositions and sizes. Also, the central incisors in the Pound photo match the chart’s adult central incisors. That makes four of Cox’s five teeth, on each side.

The chart also has canines and lateral incisors but the Pound photo doesn’t have them both. Which are missing? Viewing the chart, it seems obvious: the canines are present and the lateral incisors are missing. In the Pound picture there is a small space on

each side between the canines and the central incisors. The baby lateral incisors had been there, all the dentists I showed this to agreed.

I showed all of the pictures I had to Dr. Guelmann. He viewed the crime scene picture of the teeth in the top jaw completely differently than I. He thought that both lateral incisors were present.

Here was his reasoning: in the Pound photo, although he agreed that both laterals were gone, he thought they had loosened and fallen out long after the child's death. That was plausible because lateral incisors are single-root teeth, which are less anchored in the jaw than dual- or three-rooted teeth, and the photo had been taken in 1997, fifteen years after death. In argument against the possibility that they'd fallen out during storage, there is no documentation in the District 17 M.E. file that it happened. Then again, that file is missing a lot of documentation.

Also, the first permanent molars that showed on both sides in the Pound photo were still under the gum line, not yet erupted at time of death, he thought. As the two central incisors were revealed when the skull was cleaned, or at least, more of them than had expressed during the child's life, so were the first permanent molars. They typically erupt between ages 6-8.

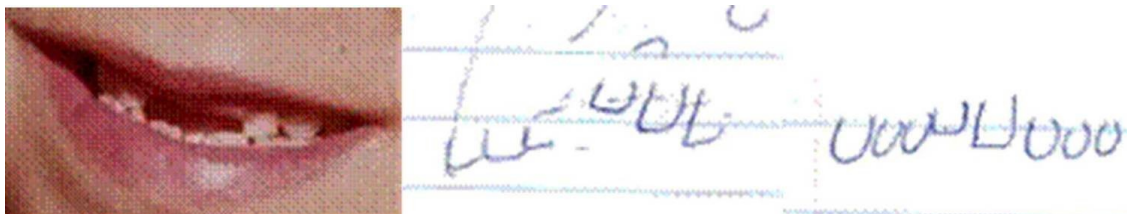
So here is how he saw the teeth in the crime scene picture, from bottom right to left:

Second deciduous molar; first deciduous molar; canine; lateral incisor; the space for the right central incisor; the left central incisor; lateral incisor; canine; first deciduous molar; second deciduous molar. On the bottom right, he thought that the gloved thumb was covering the space where the first permanent molar, exposed in the 1997 photo, was still under the gum line. We agreed that that the photo wasn't conclusive as to whether the right central incisor had erupted.

Remember, Cox counted five teeth on each side (including the space for the right central incisor). If the first permanent molars hadn't yet erupted, then Cox must have seen both lateral incisors.

Guelmann's analysis is very compelling. However, I found a few points in opposition that the laterals indeed may have been missing upon the discovery of the found child:

I looked again at my drawings of the pictures of the cleaned skull in the District 17 M.E. file, the processing date on the slides November 1983. When I drew from them, they looked to me as if both lateral incisors were present. However, I had also noticed and drawn in each sketch a small gap next to the central incisors—in one drawing next to the right, in the other next to the left.



**Left, Adam's "Missing" picture. Center and right, my drawings of the top teeth in the found child. The orientation of each picture is Right - Left.**

In the 2002 profile of John Walsh in *The New York Times Magazine*, I reviewed John Monahan's identification of the found child as Adam:



...his severed head was the only part of him ever recovered, the features so distorted that the family friend who first identified it was forced to do so by the pattern of missing baby teeth and the one new tooth that was emerging.

Can only two be a “pattern”? Merriam-Webster online defines “pattern” as “frequent or widespread incidence.” Is Walsh saying, as reported by *The New York Times*, that the found child had more than two missing baby teeth, and in a row, it would seem from what else we know? That not only its top central incisors had fallen out, but one or even both top lateral incisors, the next age-appropriate teeth to go?

Remember, looking at the baseball picture, although Dr. Mandell was certain that Adam had his top left lateral incisor, he said he couldn't be sure that he had his top right lateral incisor. So again, it's possible that Adam then had three missing top teeth in a row. Although the family didn't say that when they were looking for Adam, the *Times* reference may be that acknowledgment.

Here's another thought: since the found child was long ago identified as Adam, it's natural to think of the last photo of Adam and the pictures of the found child as the same person. Even for myself, doubting that's true, when considering the comparison of the teeth sometime I've had to catch myself. Perhaps, did Walsh do the same thing? In his mind, did he confuse or combine the look or description of Adam's teeth just before he disappeared with the look or description of the teeth in the found child? When he said that Monahan had identified the found child by a “pattern of missing baby teeth,” might he have been thinking it was Adam who showed that pattern, that he was missing one or both of his top lateral incisors in addition to his top central incisors?

This evidence and thinking raises three possibilities:

- *If “pattern” is just a word used here errantly, not to mean more than two, and neither Adam nor the found child (at the time of discovery) were missing their top laterals, there's no issue here.*
- *If Walsh is telling us something significant, even inadvertently, and by the Times's use of the word “pattern” Walsh did mean more than two, then the found child at time of death (or maybe Adam) was missing at least one more tooth in addition to the two centrals. If either the found child or Adam was missing one or both top laterals but the other wasn't, that's another unexamined identification problem.*
- *Both Adam and the found child had lost the same “pattern” of baby teeth, their centrals and likely both their laterals, as the 1997 C.A. Pound photo of the found child best illustrates. That would be matching but still leaves the problem of the found child's almost-in left central incisor, much further expressed than we would expect Adam's to be from his last photograph and last-seen-alive descriptions.*

One of the pediatric dentists I had earlier consulted told me that laterals typically fall out six months after the centrals erupt, but on the Internet I'd seen a father's photo of his smiling young son revealing all four top incisors gone. OMG, poor kid! When my nephew Adam's daughter Becca turned nine, I'd asked him about the progress of her top laterals. Once again checking his iPad photos, he said that one baby lateral had fallen out

about five months after the adult central on that side had erupted, and the other lateral had done the same in less than two months.

I also found a third, completely different interpretation of the teeth in the found child, not from a dentist but a dental assistant, who is quite insistent about this. She disagreed with Guelmann's analysis after I told and showed it to her:

Looking at both the Pound and the crime scene photos, she agreed that in the crime scene photo the left central incisor is present and the picture doesn't allow us to be sure about the right central. But she thinks the lateral incisors are missing, the second teeth on each side are canines, and the third teeth are premolars, which are adult teeth that typically erupt in children age 9-12. The fourth teeth are first permanent molars, and the fifth are second molars (deciduous or permanent).

The dental assistant therefore believes that the teeth in these photos show that the found child was significantly older than Adam Walsh.

Guelmann and other dentists I explained this to disagreed with her. If this discussion was being held at a trial, it would become a battle of experts and the dental assistant would not have the credentials to match up. But she makes a larger point, which Guelmann and the others agreed with: for children in the stage of mixed dentition, that is, who have some baby teeth but not yet all their adult teeth, some teeth can look the same.

And now, alas again, we lament the absence of Dr. Berger's charts of his patient, Adam. Pediatric dentists are instructed to note the changes in children's mouths at each appointment.

There was one last comparison that the crime scene pictures allowed for: the bottom teeth.



**Left, Hollywood Police crime scene photograph, cropped and enlarged. Right, Adam's "Missing" picture. Orientation of each is Right side - Left side.**

Looking at the front teeth in both photographs, the angles have some similarity, doctors Mandell and Guelmann noted. But, as Dr. Dickinson made the point, crowded teeth are common in children, who may later need orthodontia. In trying to make that comparison, another problem is the photographic angle. The crime scene picture was taken from the photographer's left and Adam's picture is from the right.

With only just one photo of Adam and one relevant crime scene photo, making much attempt at an angulation comparison seems iffy. Of course there are no autopsy photos, and recall, in my drawing of the slides at the Broward M.E.'s office, dated November 1983, three of the four bottom front teeth were already missing. As for dental X-rays, the files lack any for Adam. For the found child, a set was taken in District Nineteen but were long since disposed of, and there are none at the Broward M.E. The C.A. Pound lab

took a set, which I haven't seen, but they were made more than fifteen years post mortem.

Recently-erupted permanent teeth have scallops on the tooth top, which wear down after a while, I learned from pediatric dentists. In Adam's picture, this was most evident in his right central incisor. Looking at the equivalent tooth in the picture of the found child, Guelmann thought it might have a scallop; Dickinson did not. More telling might be the left lateral incisors; Adam's looks smooth, and the found child's may have a scallop or possibly a chip.

Also notice in the crime scene photo what looks like an interruption between the left lateral incisor and the canine. That is a fracture in the jaw, likely from being struck.

The real problem in all of this is that neither medical examiner consulted a forensic dentist. In order to make a positive identification or not, that person would have had access to the remains, X-rays, and Adam's dental records. All of that is no longer available; everything we're looking at is sort of secondhand stuff. Actually, we're doing kind of a forensic analysis of the forensic analysis—which is what the state attorney would be doing if the case were ever to be presented for prosecution.

Although I already had black-and-white photocopies of all Hollywood's crime scene photos of the remains and some of the Pound lab pictures, color prints would have been helpful. When I asked for them in 2014, both agencies denied me, saying that the law regarding their public release had changed.

In 2011 Florida enacted a new statute in the medical examiner's chapter, 406.136, which exempted from public release "photographs and video and audio recordings that depict or record the killing of a person."

The statute defines the term "killing of a person":

As used in this section, the term "killing of a person" means all acts or events that cause or otherwise relate to the death of any human being, including any related acts or events immediately preceding or subsequent to the acts or events that were the proximate cause of death.

What prompted the new law was a reaction to the release of a video of a death recorded by a Tampa-area police vehicle dashboard camera. But in their decisions to deny me pictures of abandoned remains, Hollywood Police and the University of Florida, representing its agency the Pound lab, said that they showed the "killing of a person."

Of course those remains, according to the medical examiner, had been dead for possibly two weeks before their discovery. When the Pound lab photographed them for forensic analysis, it was more than fifteen years post mortem. Since I had most of the photos anyway, I failed to see any action in them at all, much less of a killing.

Here was their apparent out: what the pictures showed could be included in "all acts or events that cause or otherwise relate to the death of any human being."

The city of Hollywood's legal advisor, Martha Perez, conceded that she had a broad interpretation of the law. It seemed to contradict a 2001 legal opinion by the Florida Attorney General: "It is well established that the Public Records Law is to be liberally construed in favor of open government, and exemptions from disclosure are to be narrowly construed so they are limited to their stated purpose."

Soon after the denials, watching local TV news I saw a South Florida area police-released video recorded from a surveillance camera in a convenience store showing two gunmen enter and shoot behind the main counter. Although the video never showed him, the cashier was killed. Did this video not show “all acts or events that cause or otherwise relate to the death of any human being”?

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In 1983, anticipating that Toole would be charged with killing Adam Walsh, the Public Defender in Florida’s Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, which included Indian River County, had asked a judge there to appoint them as his defense counsel. The judge did. Chief Assistant Public Defender Robin Frierson, who handled the office’s capital cases, became Toole’s lead attorney.

Frierson and the office investigator spent three days in Jacksonville interviewing Toole. “I’m almost positive Ottis Toole did not kill that kid,” he told me. “His story changed every day. I remember coming away that this was a winning case for the defense.” When he heard that Hollywood had closed the case, he said to himself, “Got the wrong guy, somebody else killed the kid.”

Frierson said he’d never seen Wright’s autopsy report or the dental records because Toole was never prosecuted for the crime. But yes, had there had been charges, Frierson would have noticed had those documents been absent or incomplete and demanded their production.

What was his opinion of Dr. Cox as a forensic pathologist?

“The quality of the M.E. office then was poor,” he said. “It was common to bring in another pathologist because they didn’t want to rely on Cox.” Often that was Dr. Wright, in Broward.

I explained to him the problems of Cox’s identification of the found child.

“Oh yeah, sounds like Cox. The office had no rigid protocols. The M.E. would frequently go out of his expertise to give opinions. It doesn’t surprise me. That’s what you got from the M.E. in the Nineteenth Circuit back in the ’80s.” It was a smaller-town place back then, he said.

He was surprised that neither Wright nor Cox had consulted a forensic dentist, or at least that nothing in the files showed it.

“It’s incredible that in a case like this they would not have called a forensic dentist. That’s the only way to ID a decomposed body like that. You’ve got no fingerprints—the case is based on dental records.” It would have taken only an hour to do so, he said.

Frierson, now in private practice in western North Carolina, said he knew Wright well and had even since hired him on cases. He said Wright was the best forensic pathologist he knew and called him “meticulous” and “brilliant.” I’d heard that from others, too.

Here’s what Wright told the *Miami Herald* on the day of the ID for publication the next morning, about the killer: “This person isn’t sick. This person is a nasty animal that needs to be eradicated from the earth. Assuming that this is the first such killing, there will be more. These kinds of people don’t quit.”

People in the street interviewed by the newspapers were thinking the same thing, that the child's murderer was a serial killer, even if the term hadn't yet become common. (Online searches of the *Miami Herald* and *Miami News* show their use of the phrase began in 1984.) That the found child was not Adam spoke to the even-greater danger South Florida was then in.

Although I have never found John Walsh talking about viewing his child's remains at the Broward morgue, I did find this, in the August 2000 issue of the magazine *Cigar Aficionado* (an online printout was in the Broward M.E. file) about meeting Dr. Wright in his office on a late night "back then":

I asked Dr. Wright how he could do what he did. He had these four girls in the cooler; they were runaways—nobody knew who they were, he was trying to find their parents—and they had been tortured, probably by a pimp. They were Jane Does. And I asked him how he could look at these little girls who had their breasts cut off.

There were a few more details in *Tears of Rage*. At the morgue, where Walsh wrote he'd gone to one night after the identification, Wright told him the girls were 13-16 years old, although in a later chapter he wrote that he asked Wright, "How do you perform autopsies on twelve-year-old girls who have been tortured by drug dealers and pimps, who've been disemboweled and had their nipples cut off?"

Although it sounded like Walsh was writing that in 1981 there was an active local serial killer of teenage girls, he was probably referring to 1975-76 when Dade and Broward had at least fourteen murders of young, attractive white girls and women aged 14-27. None, however, were runaways and none were reported as prostitutes. Two though had been sexually mutilated and two others were unidentified as of 1976. One had been seen last at Hollywood Mall, and ten had been found in or next to remote canals.

As Deputy Chief Dade County Medical Examiner then, Wright had worked some of those cases. In an August 28, 1975 story, the Associated Press quoted him that he thought five of the murders were by the same assailant: He "is the same kind of killer as 'Jack the Ripper' and I believe he is rapidly accumulating a number of victims."

In another AP story the next day Wright said, "The medical examiner's office has a certain responsibility to the public to warn the people of dangers in the environment. This guy is a danger in the environment."

In the shopping centers where the two mutilated women had last been seen, their cars had been found with flat or slashed tires. Police had theorized that the killer had done that then offered to help when they returned.

"I want all young women in Dade and Broward Counties to know what I told my wife. If you're shopping and find something wrong with your car, run screaming in the other direction."

Apparently only one of the fourteen murders has ever been solved. If the series of killings didn't end in January 1976, no news reports since have linked any more. In 1984 when Greg Smith interviewed Lucas he showed him pictures of two of the victims but he said he didn't recognize them. In 1989, Smith asked Ted Bundy the day before he was executed if he had done the two 1975 mutilation murders. No, he said.

I checked timelines for our serial killers. Dahmer was fifteen, still in high school in Ohio. Lucas had been in a Michigan prison from 1971 to August 22, 1975. For his whereabouts during the rest of 1975 there are multiple versions, confused, says Dr. Joel Norris in his book *Henry Lee Lucas: The Shocking True Story of America's Most Notorious Serial Killer*, because Lucas told different stories at different times.

Lucas told Max Call, in *Hand of Death*, that he worked at a mushroom farm in Pennsylvania, which is where he met Toole. Norris wrote that they spent their spare time cruising states around the region, robbing rural stores and service stations and killing when necessary—similar to what they confessed to doing in the Florida Panhandle. They also picked up “hitchhikers, vagrants, women with car trouble... all potential victims, and most of them were killed by Henry or Ottis,” Norris wrote. That sounded similar to the 1981 Haack and Karbin murders and maybe the Little River Canal woman, and as well the 1975 serial murders in Miami.

However, Lucas also said he first met Toole in 1979 in Jacksonville outside a mission where he was trying to get a meal. He repeated that to an AP reporter in September 1996 when he said that Toole had shown him the body of Adam Walsh.

For Toole the only date in 1975 I could confirm was June 2, when he was arrested in Jacksonville for loitering. None of the murders matched that date.

Even if Lucas and Toole weren't together for most of 1975, assuming there was in fact such a cult as the Hand of Death, was it possible that other members were responsible, possibly including Toole?

There are also multiple versions of how Lucas and Toole joined the cult. Lucas told the FBI in 1984 that he met his connection in 1978 when he and his brother-in-law were in Maryland, stuck in traffic approaching a bridge. Norris wrote that Lucas said he was with Toole at the time. In another version, Lucas said that in 1979 when he got to Jacksonville Toole solicited him to become a member because he was making a lot of money from it. When Toole took him to the cult's meeting place in the Everglades, Toole's handler told him, according to Norris, “Ottis here's been doin' work for me for years.”

Toole told the FBI in 1984 that he first entered the cult in about 1964 in Jacksonville. He was sixteen, a vagrant, drinking and doing drugs, and a man he knew only as Bill approached him then took him to the Everglades for his initiation. After that, the cult would contact him by “mysterious” postcards mailed to his home telling him to go at a stated time to a place, usually like a truck stop, where he'd sit in a certain seat and wait. Someone would say the password “Hands” then take him elsewhere. He wasn't sure if Lucas had made a connection independent of his.

Lucas told the FBI that cult meetings in the Everglades were held once a year in June or July, and the last one he attended was in 1981. Could it have corresponded with the end of May murders of Haack and Karbin and the Little River Canal woman?

Wrote Norris, Lucas said at the training camp “they saw children, freshly delivered from the kidnappers' cars... some of the children were from upstanding families where they were loved and cared for until the moment a parent turned his or her back at a shopping mall or a department store.”

Teenage girls were also targets, for so-called snuff films (then rumored to exist) that tortured and killed their actor-wannabe participants. Lucas quoted Toole, “Let's make sure they're already dopers. That way we can take 'em with a shot of heroin or morphine.

We'll tell 'em there's more where that came from and by the time they're on camera it'll be too late."

Toole told the FBI that no one ever asked him to kidnap or deliver anyone. When he kidnapped and killed Adam Walsh, he said, it was on his own.

Lucas said that the campsite was so large that there were a hundred people present at any given time during their seven weeks of training. People came and went so often that he may have seen a thousand people there.

Did the Everglades have secret training camps like that? Yes.

After its 1961 Bay of Pigs debacle the Kennedy administration set up JM/WAVE, "the largest CIA field station in the world at the height of the Cold War and the dark heart of a thousand cloak-and-dagger conspiracies aimed at the communist menace to the south," wrote *Miami New Times* in 1997.

As part of its spy-era history tour of South Florida, the magazine entered Everglades National Park to "the mangrove mazes of the coastal Everglades. Down at the end of the park's main road, at the Flamingo marina, the Agency kept a small number of Boston Whalers moored. Arriving from safe houses in Homestead or Miami and accompanied by a case officer, trainees would load the boats with gear (guns and other obvious military hardware were concealed in duffel bags) and roar off, bound for the watery hinterlands west of Cape Sable. There—in a part of South Florida that real smugglers have always found hospitable—they would practice boat handling, emergency outboard repairs, map reading, and navigating at night by dead reckoning or radio direction-finder. Taking advantage of their isolation, they often would also run live-fire exercises with automatic weapons."

There is a statement on the record in the Walsh file about Toole going to Miami in around 1976.

In 1996, fishing for information, Phil Mundy had asked Toole's niece Sarah Patterson (Frank and Frieda Powell's older sister) if Ottis had ever mentioned a man named Larry Waldo, who had come up in the investigation but was ultimately dropped. Patterson didn't know any last names but responded, "Whenever he used to go up to Miami he would always tell me I am going to see Larry." She didn't know much more, except that Ottis had first mentioned that name around the time Patterson had first gotten married, in 1976.

A.W. had told me that when he was tortured in Miami Beach, Dahmer and Toole had a boss who was present. Without getting into it—I have never been able to confirm this, except that the man has a federal criminal record and was separately alleged to have led a pedophile ring elsewhere that kidnapped children and adolescents—A.W. said his name is Larry, his surname not Waldo.

Back to the *Cigar Aficionado* interview, to the question of how Wright could autopsy such innocent victims, Walsh said he'd answered, "'Because I put evil people in jail. I am the guy who comes up with the evidence.' He said he believed that great evil walks on this planet, and that he saw it firsthand on a continual basis."

In his book, Walsh quoted Wright:

I'm not a deeply religious man, John. At least not in the traditional sense. But there is something that I've come to learn firsthand over the past fifteen years, and it is this. I believe that there is such a thing as true goodness in this world.

And also, that there is true evil.

People who don't believe that the Devil walks this earth have not seen the things I've seen... But I also know that if there is one thing about the Creator—whatever that higher power is—it's that we as human beings are given the choice between doing good and doing evil. Because I'm equally certain that there are people who are good.

Wright told Walsh that during the two weeks of the search, he'd impressed him as “one of the ones who has the ability to do good.”

At night when I'm called in here, when I do these autopsies, and when I'm called on to testify as an expert witness at trial, I love it when my testimony helps put someone who deserves it onto death row, or behind bars. Because I do believe that I'm on the side of the good—and that there are others who are on the side of evil.

And that's how I deal with it, John. Because that's my mission. And that's what I know.

In an interview in *Success* magazine in January 2010, Walsh added, “That conversation with Dr. Wright was my come-to-Jesus moment.” The story said it had occurred “the day he went to claim Adam's remains at the morgue.” However, it also said that was the first time he met Wright in person. In his book Walsh wrote he'd met him before at the Hollywood police department.

In 1980, the year before Adam went missing, *The Empire Strikes Back*, the first *Star Wars* sequel, was released. Adam was a huge fan—“he had every *Star Wars* toy ever made,” Walsh wrote in his book. *Empire* introduced the wizened, oracular Yoda who trains the young protégé Luke Skywalker to learn the ways of The Force and become a Jedi Master while inspiring him to battle and crush the evil Galactic Empire.

After his encounter with Ronald Wright, John Walsh went on to become a sort of Skywalker.

Since the day of Adam's abduction, Walsh has played out much of his life in the public theater.

He has let others call him a hero, a weighted word. From the back cover of the paperback edition of his book:

*Tears of Rage* is the story of a true American hero: a man who challenged the system in the name of his son.

It also appears on the website of *America's Most Wanted*: “A hero to law enforcement, John has been honored numerous times by many local, state and federal agencies.” Others have used it too. Just before the U.S. Senate voted on a bill named the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, Walsh appeared on Bill O'Reilly's



Fox News show and together they prodded its passage. Afterwards, O'Reilly wrote online that he wanted to congratulate the senators who guided the bill "along with John Walsh, who is a true American hero."

What is a hero? Merriam-Webster.com defines it as "a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities"; "one who shows great courage"; and "an object of extreme admiration and devotion." To be heroic is to be "supremely noble or self-sacrificing."

What is being noble? "Possessing, characterized by, or arising from superiority of mind or character or of ideals and morals."

Returning to Walsh's back cover:

This is the heartbreaking chronicle of John Walsh's transformation from grieving father to full-time activist—and the infuriating conspiracy of events that have kept America's No. 1 crime-fighter from obtaining justice and closure for himself and his family. From the day Adam disappeared from a mall in Hollywood, Florida, John Walsh faced a local police department better equipped to track stolen cars than missing children—and a criminal justice system that would work against him in unimaginable ways.

As his title suggests, Walsh's personal reaction included the passive tears of sadness and the rage of action. His subtitle tells us the progress between the two: "From Grieving Father to Crusader for Justice."

It also gives us another word to look up, justice: "The impartial adjustment of conflicting claims."

Justice in our modern system is solicited through institutions that are impartial. But resolution can also be obtained by being a vigilante: "A member of a volunteer committee organized to suppress and punish crime summarily (as when the processes of law are viewed as inadequate); a self-appointed doer of justice."

Vigilantism is a strong (if not the prime) theme of Hollywood movie Westerns. From a movie-watcher's perspective the Wild West was immature and its sheriffs and courts sparse. Although Walsh did not become a vigilante in its usual sense by tracking down and punishing Adam's abductor himself, he did complain that the criminal justice system was inadequate. And as vigilantes work outside of the institutional system so did he, although his manner was to influence it by getting new legislation passed to help locate missing children and punish sex offenders, and by hosting a TV crime show (for the benefit and with the cooperation of law enforcement) that helps find violent criminal fugitives.

Like Westerns, vigilantism is the theme of another form of low theater in which law enforcement is portrayed as inadequate: professional wrestling, famously considered by the French philosopher Roland Barthes, who wrote about semiotics, the theory of signs and symbolism. In his 1957 book *Mythologies*, he deconstructed staged wrestling's archetypes.

He boiled down its story line: "What is thus displayed for the public is the great spectacle of Suffering, Defeat, and Justice." Employing clear-cut costuming and casting, wrestlers represent the battle of Good versus Evil. Good guy wrestlers play by the rules

and Evil wrestlers cheat. Evil wrestlers' tactics give them advantages; since violence (or at least a play of it) is involved, Good guys suffer and are defeated.

Barthes wrote:

The ancient myths of public Suffering and Humiliation: the cross and the pillory. It is as if a wrestler is crucified in broad daylight and in the sight of all. I have heard it said of a wrestler stretched on the ground: 'He is dead, little Jesus, there on the cross,' and these ironic words revealed the hidden roots of a spectacle which enacts the exact gestures of the most ancient purifications.

But here the Jesus analogy would seem to end. When the Good guy rises he comes to realize what the crowd has known all along: since the Evil opponent through his actions has changed the rules, for the Good Guy to continue (religiously?) following the original rules is to in effect tie his own hands. Notice that the crowd never shouts at him to turn the other cheek. Instead, invoking Goodness, they plead with him to employ some of his enemy's tactics. If he doesn't, they may turn on him and shame him as weak, a wimp, inadequate, dense, or even too highly principled—which in the crowd's mind might be worse than being a bad guy.

Answering the crowd, now both fighters are fighting dirty. Barthes:

If the villain—who is of course a coward—takes refuge behind the ropes... he is inexorably pursued there and caught, and the crowd is jubilant at seeing the rules broken for the sake of a deserved punishment...

No one can doubt that wrestling holds the power of transmutation which is common to the Spectacle and to Religious Worship. In the ring, and even in the depths of their voluntary ignomy, wrestlers remain gods because they are, for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils the form of Justice which is at last intelligible.

"Suffering, Defeat, and Justice." Consider this 1992 headline of an interview with Walsh in *South Florida* magazine: *Broward County's John Walsh turns tragedy into triumph on "America's Most Wanted."*

And as *The New York Times* quoted Walsh after the 2008 Hollywood P.D. press conference, "it's not about closure; it's about justice."

Walsh's public persona has similarities to a professional wrestler in the ring. In 1994, a *Palm Beach Post* reporter described Walsh as a man who "walks like a man who is always ready for impact. And the impact always comes." A *TV Guide* reporter in 1989 noted Walsh's lowbrow language in describing the suspects his show was trying to locate: "Criminals, creeps, dirtbags, sons-of-bitches, nuts. Walsh has an endless store of names for America's miscreants."

Like professional wrestling, *America's Most Wanted* also is low theater. Here are two early reviews, starting with Greg Dawson, the TV critic of the *Orlando Sentinel*:

If John Walsh weren't John Walsh, if he were Geraldo Rivera, the temptation would be overwhelming to snicker at the raw sensationalism and dime-store melodrama of *America's Most Wanted*.

‘Only Geraldo could keep a straight face while dishing up this lurid stew,’ you would say. ‘Talk about your grade-B re-enactments of unspeakable crimes! Talk about your Dragnet rhetoric! Talk about your lowest common denominator!’

But it’s not Geraldo Rivera talking, it’s John Walsh, so you listen, because John Walsh has lifetime immunity against cynics who question motives.

*Miami Herald* entertainment writer Ryan Murphy, interestingly later the producer of TV serieses *Nip/Tuck*, *Glee*, *American Horror Story*, and the true crime series *American Crime Story*, all on Fox networks, wrote:

“*America’s Most Wanted* is the type of television program you don’t want to watch in the dark. Even with the lights on, it’s unbearably scary.”

Illustrating the show’s “violent voyeurism,” Murphy described four minutes that were “painful to watch... The screen freezes with the girl’s mouth agape in terror as the show’s host tells us the girl was beaten senseless and raped repeatedly.”

He quoted *Herald* TV critic Steve Sonsky:

Like most of what Fox tries to do, the show panders to the basest and narrowest instincts of television viewers. The idea is to scare you, to intimidate you, to lure viewers in with violent and prurient television. Then they try to sugarcoat it by telling you they’re doing it to apprehend criminals.

You can maybe discern that I am not a wrestling fan. But channel surfing it’s hard to avoid the sight of two bulky men thuggishly brawling. Although I know that one has been cast and scripted to be sympathetic, neither seems that way to me. But that’s because I never know the back story. And I’m not interested in listening to the overwrought announcer.

In a battle where both men are fighting outside of the rules, why does the audience remain sympathetic to the Good Guy? Because he’s established that his heart is in the right place? Because they’ve seen that the other guy is so much worse and must be defeated? Because his victory will attain justice? Or simply because he’s carrying or wearing our colors?

In May 2011, when I was writing this, American military special forces killed Osama bin Laden in an overnight raid on his secretly-kept home in Pakistan. Afterwards, those in the team of killers were honored in America as heroes; after all, they had displayed “great courage.” But a debate followed: was it not a provocation to Pakistan, an ally, where America was not allowed to have operations on the ground, that the American military conducted a raid without telling Pakistani leaders until after it happened? Pakistanis certainly thought so.

And bearing in mind the sometimes-thin line between military and police actions, rather than assassinate him as an act of war, should we maybe have captured him and put him on trial? Ultimately, the difference between the two styles of actions is that police are constrained by stricter rules. Should police significantly violate them, they risk a court’s dismissal of their otherwise strong evidence.

Among Americans there was little if any public dissension that getting bin Laden was a great good. Reflecting Barthes, in the 9/11 atrocities Americans suffered and were defeated, but by killing Al Qaeda's mastermind bin Laden we got long-delayed justice.

We didn't employ stricter police-style action, it follows, because bin Laden and Al Qaeda had broken or changed the rules. Like the Good Guy in the ring, it took us a knockdown and perhaps the crowd to realize that.

So then, what are the New Rules? Are there in fact any rules at all?

The answer is unclear. In the meantime, the participants get to make up the rules (or lack of them) as they go. Out the window is either side's strict adherence to an otherwise universally agreed-upon impartial effective rules-making or -keeping institution—the Geneva Conventions, criminal courts, or the wrestling referee (although since wrestling is a scripted play, paradoxically it is highly-rules bound, only that is unseen by the crowd.) What ensues is some form of chaos: “a state of utter confusion.”

So in retaliating against bad guys, in wrestling or against people we call terrorists, we acknowledge willfully borrowing some of the perceived tactics of our enemies that violate our rules or at least the spirit of them. However, we justify it because the bad guy is Evil. For instance, bin Laden caused thousands of deaths of our civilians. *Our* hearts were and remain in the right place.

Besides, *he* started it.

And here's the rabbit hole we've just disappeared into: by invoking the context of the clash of Good and Evil, we've justified moments of chaos, the absence of anyone following rules.

In the U.S., the word *realpolitik* brings to mind Henry Kissinger. It means, roughly, political pragmatism—in furtherance of a higher good, to choose temporary blindness to ideological principles. A recent example might be the CIA's use of waterboarding, a technique of torture in apparent violation of the Geneva Conventions, to extract knowledge from terrorists that might keep American civilians safe. *Realpolitik* is also defined as power politics, the law of the strong. The world often works in unattractive ways, I can almost hear Kissinger say, and in difficult moments pragmatists hold their noses and often their pens from paper and bravely plunge ahead to do the dirty (and likely secret) work that someone must do.

Fairly or not, allow me to call this the Henry Kissinger dilemma: When we suspend our ideology and borrow tactics alien to our proudest morals in the name of a higher good (or our God), at what point do we resemble our enemy?

Again, for a moment let's lose the back story. We've just channel-surfed a show where two combatants are using similar dirty tactics to fight. At a glance, how do we recognize the sympathetic character?

The message of professional wrestling is Good Guys get a pass. But outside of the staged ring, how many passes do you get? America is said to be the place for second chances. Or is it three strikes and you're out? Or nine, like a cat? Or can you have “lifetime immunity” as the columnist suggested John Walsh had (“against cynics who question motives”)? If so, what incentive is there for further good behavior?

It also has been said that we are a country of laws, not of men. But if some men are allowed some limited or unlimited number of passes to suspend the laws (or rules) at will,

then the laws or rules are not being applied universally. What good are they then? Are we to be a country of men, not of laws?

When Good Guys react to Bad Guys by taking occasional (even if rare) liberties to violate or suspend rules, they have lost their precious predictability as Good Guys, who stick to the rules. Perhaps all they have remaining then is the label Good Guy, which they might tend to emphasize or exploit. You may start as a Good Guy but despite what you insist you probably don't have life immunity.

In the arenas of professional wrestling, crowds clamor for Good Guys to make the pragmatic choice: victory objectively without honor rather than possibly honorable defeat. ("Honor": "consistent with an untarnished reputation"; "characterized by integrity") In fact, this is a classic example of the tragic lose-lose moment: a decision either way will produce a loss.

At these moments our choices define us.

The far harder choice is self-discipline and resistance to the lust of the cheering or jeering crowd. Consider the Civil Rights protests in the American South, which also played out in the public theater. Reacting to the demands of whites (who sometimes gathered in crowds that were mobs), pragmatic police chiefs ordered dispersal of nonviolent black protesters by arrests, nightsticks, police dogs, and water spray from fire hoses. In pursuit of what they believed was a higher Good the police crossed the line into Evil, if only for those moments (which, for people who only saw them in those moments, defined them). Instead they made heroes of their opponents, also in pursuit of what they believed was a higher Good, who through their self-discipline endured the brunt of those police actions without resisting. In Barthes's terms, they suffered, were defeated, and in an eventual reversal it was they who attained justice.

At the 2008 Hollywood Police press conference when John Walsh said that he had gotten justice, was it comparable to the impartial justice the Civil Rights protesters got?

As it turns out, soon after Chad Wagner became Hollywood police chief he'd told Walsh he planned to close the case and blame Toole. Apparently, Wagner read the full case file only after that. In effect, Wagner didn't complete the case investigation, he merely declared its termination.

Again, justice is "the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims." As Wagner had placed himself in the position here of arbiter, unusual in itself, was he impartial? Apparently before he'd considered all the facts he'd sought out Walsh (as the victim) *ex parte* and told him his decision.

The national press didn't know the case's back story well and accepted what was staged. Much of the local press, however, left puzzled at what they'd seen just happen. Twenty-five years of police and state attorney's office policy that Toole hadn't been involved had just been reversed—on no new evidence. To them the decision felt like something other than justice.

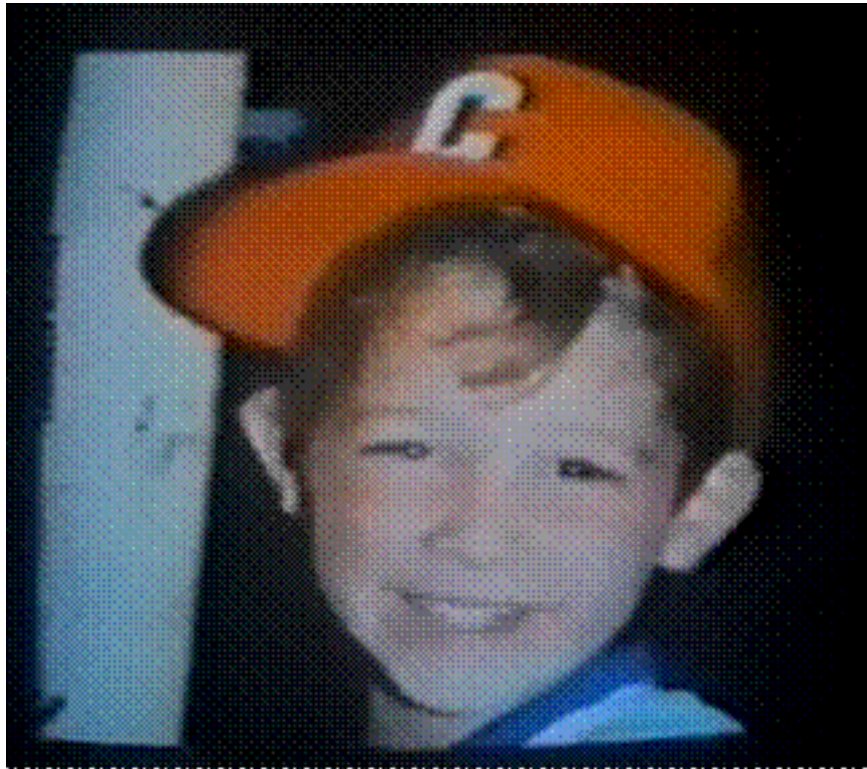
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The most striking identifier about Adam in his "Missing" picture was that he was missing his two front teeth. I could never understand how John Walsh never got that right; in his book and on his show's website, his narrative allowed Adam only one tooth missing. *Bringing Adam Home*, which carried Walsh's strongest endorsement, ducked the

issue entirely: the “Missing” poster “featured a photograph taken only a week before—a gap-toothed little boy in a baseball cap.”

For what it’s worth, there is a dramatic version of the story—NBC’s TV movie *Adam*, which premiered later in the same day in 1983 when Ottis Toole first said something vague about killing the child. Watching it on YouTube, I looked for whether it showed or told of one or two missing teeth.

The boy playing Adam is only in the first scenes, and the camera never shows us his teeth. Nor does Walsh’s character when he describes Adam even mention them. But when the Walshes go on *Good Morning America* there is a shot of the “Missing” picture—re-created with the child actor’s face.



**The “Missing” picture of Adam Walsh, as shown in a promotion shot for the dramatic version of the story, the 1983 TV movie “Adam.” Notice the actor (John Boston) playing Adam has no teeth missing at all. Image from YouTube.**

He has no teeth missing.

How much control did Walsh have over the script?

“There’s not one word that they (the Walshes) didn’t approve,” show producer Linda Otto told the *Sun-Tattler* in a story that ran days before the movie aired. Both John and Reve had been hired as production consultants, she said. John was on location during filming.

I also wanted to know, when someone from the police (in actuality) called Walsh in New York in the pre-dawn to tell him that a child’s head had been found, did he say that the child had front teeth issues? Because later on *Good Morning America*, with the “Missing” picture on screen, Walsh said his child had one missing tooth. That wasn’t exactly what the poster said—missing one top tooth with second tooth coming in.

The film doesn't address it. The character playing Hollywood detective Jim Gibbons tells Walsh over the phone: "The remains of a young boy have been found in a canal in Vero Beach. The Indian River Sheriff's department needs to make a positive identification."

Gibbons's character then recommends that neither the Walshes nor their family members go to make the identification. (In his book Walsh writes, "The request was for someone close to us, a friend. A family member would have been ideal, but was judged, ultimately, to be unwise.")

"Can you provide dental records for Adam?"

Walsh: "Somebody will get them to you."

Just after midnight, *Sun-Tattler* night city editor Ken Bowling heard the news that a head was found. In a column days later, he wrote that at first "we didn't know it was Adam. But, through the morning as the clues came in—one that the head found in the canal had a tooth missing in the same place as Adam—we knew the search had ended."

If police told that to a newspaper, would they have also told Walsh?

In 1982 Walsh told ABC's *20/20*, over video of the *GMA* appearance, "I knew in my heart, I was convinced it was Adam's remains from the description."

It sounds like, then, the police officer did tell Walsh that the found child had a missing tooth—a single tooth. The Hollywood officers who had first viewed the head in Indian River County were near certain it was Adam. Although in the movie Gibbons's character prefaces his call by saying, "This is not a positive, do you understand? This is not a positive," apparently in real life the police information at some point that early morning or later came across to Walsh as being nearly a positive ID.

Thinking that, in the panic and horror of the moment, and worse still, about to go on national television, Walsh described Adam as having a single missing tooth—and dropped the qualifier on the poster that he also had another tooth coming in.

Two other points: Although the film shows us a glimpse of a canal scene where the head was found—we never see the remains—it doesn't show us the morgue or the identification. We never see Monahan looking over or near the body or anything about the dental match. All we see is Walsh taking the phone call with the terrible news. Reve is there too although she wasn't in real life. Actually, *Sun-Tattler* reporter Charlie Brennan was there, but he's never shown. (Nor was Jimmy Campbell ever mentioned, and certainly not that the Walshes had asked him to leave their house two weeks before the child vanished, or that he said he'd had an affair with Reve for years.)

Also, had anybody at the *Sun-Tattler* or any other news organization around town ever looked closely enough at Adam in his "Missing" picture and resolved that he had two teeth missing, or asked the Walshes how recent the shot was, maybe the night city editor and all the editors elsewhere would have questioned the initial reports of "a [single] tooth missing in the same place as Adam."

- *Did Dr. Cox know or expect that Dr. Wright would do the autopsy before he announced his positive identification?*

If Cox knew before, he should have merely made notes and observations and offered them to Wright so he could make the conclusions. Had he, a cascade of problems might have been averted. But the answer is unclear.

Here's my best timeline of that morning:

At 9:15 A.M. Cox called the Broward M.E.'s office and spoke to Dr. Garvin, whose handwritten notes in the Broward M.E. file briefly describe the remains, where they were found, and the teeth.

At 11 A.M., John Monahan and the dental records arrived at the Vero Beach morgue.

"Shortly after noon on August 11, 1981," Cox wrote in the report of his examination, "I spoke with Dr. Ron Wright, Broward County Medical Examiner, who agreed to accept and complete the examination on the decapitated head of Adam Walsh."

But by then, Cox had already announced his positive ID.

As well, the cover page of the Broward autopsy report reads that Cox made the ID and the next line says that he and Wright agreed that Wright would also examine the head.

Recall again Cox's quote to me: "I tried to get rid of that head as soon as possible. I put it in a bucket of ice and sent it down to Ronald Wright."

Cox certainly didn't want to do the autopsy, and maybe anticipated the whole time that Wright would do it. Robin Frierson had told me District Nineteen often relied on Wright in complicated cases. But maybe because Cox hadn't actually reached Wright that morning it created some confusion in Cox's mind or something else. And maybe after speaking to Cox Wright realized that the identification could be problematic because it was done too quickly and without expert assistance.

- *The morning after the head was found, what was the rush to declare a positive ID?*

*Sun-Tattler* reporter Charlie Brennan wrote that he expected the ID wouldn't be made until long after the Walshes arrived home. That was one of the justifications, he thought, for the Walshes not canceling their TV appearance.

Hollywood Police had pushed forward the ID attempt. At the scene, the Indian River Sheriff's deputies and the Hollywood detectives had reported that by sight they thought it was Adam. Before midnight, Joe Matthews wrote, Hollywood's brass pretty much concluded the same. When Hollywood's supervisor of detectives, Lieutenant Hynds, arrived with the dental records and Monahan, who gave his nod, Cox must have perceived overwhelming pressure to declare on the spot the positive ID. So maybe we should ease off blaming him.

But given that the head was decomposing and had skin slippage and therefore might not have looked like the child when he was alive, a dental ID was more important than a visual ID, especially from someone other than the suspected parents.

- *After the remains got to Broward, did Ron Wright or the Walshes never realize Cox's misidentification?*

The found child arrived in Broward at 2:15 that afternoon. The Walshes didn't get home from New York until late that night, so let's start with Wright. Here are points why he should have recognized the mistake:

Wright ran a big-city medical examination office and Cox was a smaller-town practitioner without the same experience who often sent him referrals (likely with some sort of fee arrangement). Should we think that in this case, arguably the most famous of Wright's career, he didn't closely examine everything Cox did?



Second, Wright had worked on cases that required dental matching. Bob Foley told me that Wright regularly relied on either of two Miami-area forensic dentists available: Dr. Richard Souviron, who worked with him on the Ted Bundy bite mark evidence, and Dr. Bill Silver. Souviron was the chief forensic odontologist for the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner's Office and Silver its deputy chief, as they both remain. (In 1981, however, Silver was not yet practicing forensic dentistry.)

(A website called Forensic Dentistry Online links to a 2009 textbook titled "Dental Autopsy," written by Silver and Souviron. Among the advice the book offers is to "Preserve the chain of custody for critical evidence; keep unimpeachable records.")

Third, Wright certainly should have known, as Cox conceded to me, that visual identifications of questioned bodies by friends or family can be problematic.

Fourth, there is evidence that on the day of the ID Wright received copies of the dental records twice: first from Cox when he sent the head, as Cox told me, then from Adam's dentist Dr. Berger when he arrived at the Broward M.E. at Wright's request, according to Jack Hoffman's report in the Hollywood Police file.

8-11-81, 1240 hours

I.D. Techn R. Young took possession of the human head which had been identified as that of ADAM WALSH and was flown by helicopter to the Broward County Medical Examiner's office. At 1415 hours the human head was given to Investigator D.P. Hughes of the Broward County Medical Examiner's office.

Dr. Wright of the Broward County Medical Examiner's office conducted the post mortum/<sup>Exam</sup>of ADAM WALSHES head. Dr. Berger who was ADAM's dentist was requested by Dr. Wright to respond to the examiner's office with ADAM's dental charts. Dr. Berger arrived at the medical examiner's office, a positive identification was also made by use of the dental records. The human head was positively identified as ADAM WALSH

From Jack Hoffman's written police report

TENTATIVE I.D. MADE BY MONAHAN  
HEAD FLOWN TO BROWARD COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE (D.P. HUGHES)  
DR. BERGER (ADAM'S DENTIST) DENTAL CHARTS BROUGHT TO M.E.  
POSITIVE I.D. BY DR. WRIGHT 8-11-81

4373

From a page of Jack Hoffman's notes in the Hollywood Police file. (4373 is the page number.)

Notice in the handwritten notes that Monahan's ID was tentative and Wright had made his own positive ID.

So on August 11 it seems that Wright had the dental records. What he didn't have yet was Cox's preliminary autopsy report, which Cox sent him in a letter dated the next day, August 12.

Also, although there's no telling when Wright got it, in his file was a flyer copy of Adam's "Missing" photo which he could have compared to the expressed top front teeth in the found child. The flyer's written description of Adam's top teeth contradicted the photo and was itself confusing, prompting the question, How old was the photo? That might not have been able to be answered on August 11 because the Walshes were still in transit from New York.

- *Did the Walshes view the remains?*

I asked that earlier. On August 11, the *Miami News* had reported that the Walshes were to make their own identification after they arrived home from New York, but there was no follow-up on whether that happened. In all of John Walsh's media interviews I've read or seen, he has never talked about seeing the remains. Nor did he write about it in *Tears of Rage* although he did say there that late one night, alone, he went to the morgue to see Dr. Wright after he'd gotten the remains.

Did Reve view the remains? In the book, John quotes her:

I would always get information in bits and pieces. John never used to tell me much about the case. If there was something that I had to know, he'd usually wait to let me know. And even then, only if he absolutely had to. I guess it was all part of his protectiveness.

In his book's first pages, describing Monahan's arrival at the Indian River morgue, Walsh professed desiring ignorance of some of this part of the story: "For some time I did not know about what happened next. I was later told some of it because I asked to be told. I did not want to know all of it, and still do not."

Here's the best reason why to think the Walshes didn't see the remains: by the time they got home from New York the autopsy had been done. Wright "made incisions and opened the head," said D.P. Hughes, chief of operations for the Broward M.E. in 1981, to Dr. Perper, who wrote me. After that, any parents might not have wanted to see their child's body. Recall the Indiana misidentification case; according to Whitney Cerak's grandfather, Whitney's parents had declined to view the girl in the morgue who they were told was Whitney: "They wanted to remember her the way she was." They'd relied on the coroner's ID.

- *But did the Walshes view the photographs?*

Wright's standard procedure, Bob Foley said, was to take photographs at the outset of the autopsy. Might he have shown them to the Walshes, or just John?

The Walshes might have had their own questions about the ID. As Walsh wrote in his book, Monahan at first glance was unsure of the child's identification. Might the Walshes (or just John) have asked Wright for an explanation of how the dental ID was made?

Or maybe not. Or maybe Walsh looked at the photos just for an instant so he could think to himself that he'd never need to see them again. Maybe in that moment Walsh

didn't question the ID because after two weeks he'd thought it was most likely that Adam was dead.

Here's the circumstantial argument that Wright did realize the misidentification: the documents that went missing or were never created.

When I told Foley that the files were missing autopsy photos, Wright's autopsy report narrative, Adam's pediatric dental records, and there was no forensic dental report, he said, "That's ridiculous. That's a lot of mistakes." I told him that in answering my query about the missing narrative report Wright had said he didn't write it because it was District Nineteen's case, although he had done the autopsy.

"That's stupid," he said.

- *If Wright realized the child was not Adam, why would he have let the misidentification stand?*

I have no direct information that Wright did realize Cox's identification of the found child was wrong. But with that caveat, let's speculate what-if and hypothesize that he did. As should be obvious by now, Wright was a blunt take-charge guy with a strong sense of duty and his own morality and correctness—not unlike John Walsh. As the state of Vermont's deputy chief medical examiner from 1973-74 and next the same for Dade County, he personally took responsibility for terminating life support for brain-dead patients by ordering hospitals to pull the plug.

"I'm not playing God. I pronounce people dead all the time and nobody gets very excited about it," he told *Tropic Magazine* in the *Miami Herald* in 1977—in fact the reporter was Carl Hiaasen, later the novelist. "This is just one way in which people are dead. They just happen to have an artificially maintained heartbeat and respiration, but they're dead just the same."

Aside from Wright's belief that he was right, he did it, Hiaasen wrote, because there were no state laws at the time prohibiting him:

Wright is making legal history by ignoring lawyers and judges and taking death into his own hands when no one else will.

In 1979, Wright was central in another hugely contentious story in Miami. Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance agent and former Marine driving with a suspended license died after he led four white and Hispanic Dade County policemen on a high speed motorcycle chase through residential streets. In their report, the officers wrote that a crash had caused the man's injuries. The case became a racial flashpoint and the judge moved the trial out of the area, to Tampa. Dade County State Attorney Janet Reno, later U.S. Attorney General, made immunity deals with defendants who testified that McDuffie had slowed down to surrender; stopped, officers then pulled off his helmet and beat his head with nightsticks and a flashlight, then used a police car to run over his motorcycle to make it appear like he'd crashed. Testifying about his autopsy, Wright said that the victim had the worst head wounds he'd ever seen in his career. Still, the Tampa jury acquitted the remaining officers, and Miami erupted in three days of riots in which eighteen people died and \$100 million of property damage was caused, reported the *Miami Herald*.

Yet to Jack Anderson's magazine in 1982, Wright defended the officers' actions. They "killed the guy... but it wasn't homicide or murder. It was justifiable. They didn't pull their guns out and shoot him. They hit him until he stopped" resisting arrest.

We earlier discussed instances of lose-lose choices. Hypothetically, if Wright realized that Cox's ID was wrong, that would be another. Here's a grab bag of explanations why someone in those circumstances might have chosen not to publicly dispute the ID:

**Public credence.** Exposure of a misidentification would be a disaster for the local law enforcement and medical examination systems at a moment they were most struggling to appear to be protecting the public.

**Public panic.** If the found child was identified as someone other than Adam, within the space of two weeks there would have been two locally-reported murders or kidnappings of children approximately six years old just as school was soon to resume for the fall. A single incident had already panicked parents; their fear of more killings would have been confirmed. Further, the local economy of Hollywood and South Florida, more so than today, was dependent on winter season visitors. Publicity like that would scare away tourists.

**Brotherhood.** As I've already speculated, might a medical examiner have covered for a fellow medical examiner he often worked with? Had Wright blown the whistle, surely Cox's medical examination career would have been damaged or worse.

And maybe it would bring them Adam, alive, after all. Although Cox was wrong, once he'd cast the die with his positive ID perhaps there were inadvertent advantages. In the two weeks of the search they'd gotten no word from Adam's abductor and possibly killer and no especially good leads to where they were. Who knows, the abductor might have been getting pleasure that he was manipulating a family, law enforcement, and the media. If Adam was still alive and with him but everyone else thought he was dead, it might confound him. With the search over, maybe he'd have no further satisfaction of keeping the child and would release him, maybe even to show up the system. Maybe doing it this way might mean that any next child victim might not be snatched and killed. And if there was to be a happy story of Adam's return, the medical examiner's silence could be then explained and his courage justified.

Even if it wasn't a good chance, or that explanation was wrong, Adam was still out there, maybe alive, so why not do everything you could? The down side was that the manic search for him would end, but it had to end sometime anyway.

But if this is something like what happened, and Wright had told John (and Reve), maybe that's how he got them to agree to stay quiet, at least for a while.

And then, it might follow, despite Cox's earlier reliance merely on a visual ID and a single filling that to him seemed to match Adam's dental records, Wright, like Cox, didn't consult a forensic dentist, and didn't write or at least file his autopsy report narrative. As for copies of Adam's pediatric dental records that were handled in order by Hollywood Police, the District Nineteen M.E., and Wright's office, all I can say for sure is they're not in any of those files. Those absences made it harder for any outsider to discover or even suspect that the found child was not Adam Walsh.

And then, to continue the hypothetical, maybe because hope springs eternal or simply from inertia, after all this time the misidentification never got walked back. Maybe the right moment never arose. Meanwhile, no more child murders were connected

with this one. Partly inspired by Wright, the Walshes became crusaders to change how law enforcement agencies handled missing children cases and in doing so they made Adam's name and photo famous and John got a television series that helped fight crime. The case went officially unsolved for twenty-seven years until Hollywood police, lobbied by Joe Matthews if not also the Walshes, employed "exceptional clearance" and announced that Toole killed Adam despite no new evidence.

Case closed—which was convenient because the Broward State Attorney could never have prosecuted Toole or any other suspect for Adam's murder. Without the autopsy report or the dental records they couldn't have proved at trial that Adam was dead.

The flaw was, state law required that after closure all the case files had to be opened on public request. The most important files were at the two medical examiners' offices. After David Smiley and I put in the *Herald* in its own sidebar story that the autopsy report and dental records were missing from all the public files, one might have guessed that someone would inquire of us or maybe dispute our account to our editors. No one did—not Wright, the current Broward M.E. Dr. Perper, the Walshes, nor Hollywood Police or the Broward State Attorney. In their book, Matthews and Les Standiford also had a chance. They mentioned the Dahmer part of the *Herald* story but left out the part about the missing documents.

Maybe absolutely none of the above speculation is true, and neither Wright nor the Walshes ever doubted that the child wasn't Adam.

But if it is true and even only just Wright realized the truth, those actions misled the public, protected incompetence, and left a horribly brutalized child never to be correctly named or investigated for his own murder or his family informed. Not to mention that if A.W. is Adam, it revoked from him his true identity.

And if it is true and the Walshes (or just John) know, a burning question: have they (or just he) lived for all these years with private hope that someday they might again see their son Adam?

- *Do the Walshes (or just John) know about A.W.?*

I think the likely answer is yes.

A.W. said he'd written twice to John Walsh at *America's Most Wanted* and also wrote private messages to him on his Facebook pages. [Of course, A.W. used his legal name.] He got no responses, but would people at the show have taken authority to intercept and dispose of letters and messages like that, as if mail to them from people claiming to be Adam Walsh are all that common?

A.W. also said he'd spoken by phone to Det. Steve Sparkman at Hollywood Police, then in March 2011 met with him at the department. [Again, A.W. used his legal name.] Did Sparkman keep that to himself? Did someone tell Chief Wagner? Would Wagner have told Walsh? Did Wagner authorize the meeting?

- *Do the Walshes know that A.W. is Adam?*

Of course I can't answer that. But let me offer an analogy:

In June 2000, seven-year-old Robbie Romero vanished from his Santa Fe, New Mexico neighborhood. He was never heard from again nor was his body ever found. But in September 2011, his mother Evelyn Romero was approached by family friends who

knew a nineteen-year-old named Robert Terrezas who also used the name Robert Romero and couldn't remember much of his early childhood.

Terrezas didn't claim that he was the missing boy Robbie but agreed to meet Evelyn. She saw a resemblance: "I think it looks a lot like him," she told the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. "He has all the characteristics of Robbie—the ears, the light skin. And he looked at all the pictures of Robbie, and he was just amazed. He doesn't really know what to think, either."

Romero asked Santa Fe Police to speak to Terrezas. He told them his family was from Mexico and he grew up in Utah. He consented to give them a DNA swab, which they sent to the state police lab for processing and comparison to results from the Romero family. Police also called the FBI.

Police also interviewed Terrezas's mother, who vouched for Robert as her son. She couldn't provide a birth certificate but said a recent head injury might explain his memory loss.

Two days later the police announced its lab result: Terrezas was not Robbie Romero.

At first glance I thought this was a bad example for A.W. Then I realized this:

The odds were deeply against Robert Terrezas being Robbie Romero. He had no corroboration; all he had was his sometimes use of that surname, a past he claimed he'd forgotten, and similar features and age.

Yet on that flimsy evidence, Evelyn Romero wanted to meet him. He passed her first-glance test. She called the police, who came quickly enough and took a DNA sample that the state police lab processed as a rush. Even before the result was ready, the story attracted national television attention. NBC's *Dateline* and ABC's *Good Morning America* arrived, in case the result was positive.

Unlike Robbie Romero, the body of Adam Walsh had been declared found. But once you realize that misidentification, and partial corroborations by Frank Sortini and Billy Capshaw, the argument for A.W. is much stronger than Terrezas's.

The week after A.W. met with Sparkman I wrote the detective an email that I knew about their meeting, and about Frank and Billy. Keeping it brief, I didn't mention the misidentification but I'd also asked at the same time to view Hollywood's crime scene photos—and previously I'd asked for and gotten from them copies of the latent fingerprints taken from Adam's bedroom. Had Sparkman called me back, as he'd promised in his reply, I would have told him more. In 2014, I made a public records request for a summary report of the meeting. Hollywood Police responded, "There is no written summary in regards to this meeting."

How much does a DNA test cost? Local Florida law enforcement agencies can ask FDLE to do it and they won't charge them.

So why didn't Hollywood take a swab? It wasn't worth their Q-tip? And back to the Walshes, could Hollywood really not have told them of their meeting? And if they did know of it, it was their opinion that police shouldn't give him a test?

Even if there was half of a half of a half of a one-percent chance that A.W. was really Adam Walsh?

It doesn't make sense to me, either.

•

In May 1995, when reporter Jay Grelen published his three-day series in the *Mobile Press Register* titled *Adam Walsh: Myth and Mystery*, he suggested that John Walsh had in effect owned the Adam Walsh story and had taken opportunities to scrub or purge a number of facts he didn't like:

This is what you have heard about the short life and gruesome death of Adam Walsh. His mother leaves him alone for a few moments at the mall and a stranger grabs him, terrorizing an all-American family and igniting a national panic.

That's the popular story of the famous unsolved kidnapping. But a three-month investigation by the *Mobile Press Register* found that the popular story may not be true.

Facts about the case never justified the hysteria that every little American child, every little Adam Walsh, was in constant danger of being stolen away.

A stranger? Police can't say for sure.

A mother gone for only a few minutes? Police doubt it.

An all-American family? A court deposition disputes it.

After a while, Grelen wrote, "the truth of the Adam Walsh story was giving way to the legend...The nation knows the sanitized version of Adam's kidnapping, as told in countless news stories and in the 1983 made-for-television movie 'Adam.'"

But by far, Grelen's largest contribution to the story was his newspaper's public records lawsuit that asked a judge to open Hollywood Police's Walsh case file. Local South Florida media soon joined the suit as co-plaintiffs, the Walshes angrily opposed it, and in February 1996, the media won.

I was in the courtroom when the judge ruled. Had he decided otherwise I never would have spent more time on the story.

When Grelen had offered John Walsh his investigative help, fresh eyes for a moribund case, he anticipated that Walsh would appreciate it. Instead, Walsh wouldn't speak to him despite Grelen's repeated requests and even after he showed up in person at Walsh's Washington TV studio on a taping day.

Over the years, Walsh has spoken to many reporters and interviewers who have relied upon him to tell Adam's story. But those who have tried to dig into it themselves have realized another side of him.

He wrote in *Tears of Rage*: "Over the years, I had learned a lot about the press, both about its power and about how low it could stoop." First had come *Tropic* reporters in 1981. One had interviewed his friend Les Davies, who recalled for Walsh: "She was saying, 'Now we've heard all the rumors, you know, about the drug retribution and all.'"

In its story *Tropic* mentioned some of the rumors, which they said a Hollywood lieutenant and captain had told them, but labeled them "nebulous." The cops' conclusion was, "This is a family with no skeletons in its closet"—an unintentional pun.

"On top of everything else that had happened to us, that kind of innuendo pained and infuriated me," Walsh wrote.

Walsh wrote that in 1983 there was "another slew of stories that dragged us through the mud... So from experience, I thought I knew full well what the press was capable of. Or thought I did."

In July 1983, just before a two-year statute of limitations would have ended, the Walshes had sued Sears and Hollywood Mall for negligence and wrongful death. The *Herald* quoted their attorney, W. Sam Holland, saying that his clients were “seeking substantial damages for their horrible pain and suffering.” The *Sun-Sentinel* quoted from the suit: “Sears and Hollywood Mall were aware of the fact that potential child molesters, perverts, and other sick, demented people were frequenting the toy department at the Sears store and at other retail stores in the shopping center where children congregated.” The complaint added that the Walshes should be compensated by the store and mall because of their “gross and callous disregard for the safety of Adam J. Walsh.”

Wrote *Sun-Tattler* columnist Gary Robbins after the filing: “During the last few days I’ve tried to convince myself John and Reve Walsh aren’t being opportunistic in suing Sears Roebuck for negligence in the death of their son, Adam.” Robbins recounted their work since on child-related issues, but “[a]ll of this benevolence, however, failed to sway me when I weighed it against the timing of the suit and the nature of the charges against Sears... A last-minute suit might suggest the Walshes now feel they can win a large settlement, due to the recent favorable publicity they received from the filming of a TV movie about Adam’s abduction” which would air the following October.

Walsh wrote in *Tears of Rage*, “We weren’t trying to get the money for ourselves... the whole idea was to use the lawsuit award to make sure that the [Adam Walsh Outreach] Center [for Missing Children] would be able to keep on running, and also to finance the push for more legislation on children’s issues.”

Months later, *Fort Lauderdale News* columnist Gary Stein wrote: “I wonder if Walsh felt that all the sympathy, all the appreciation, all the public opinion that has been so heavily supportive of his cause would have any effect on his negligence suit against Sears.”

When attorneys for Sears and Hollywood Mall learned that Hollywood Police had let the Walshes’ attorney browse their investigative file, the defense attorneys asked the judge for equal access. When the judge ruled yes, they discovered a number of things the attorneys thought relevant that the Walshes hadn’t brought out and the press had not yet reported: to start, police had considered Jimmy Campbell the prime suspect in Adam’s disappearance.

Campbell had told detectives Jack Hoffman and Ron Hickman on August 7, 1981 that he’d been living in the Walshes’ home for the previous four years during which time he’d had a long affair with Reve “which has been going on up until the kidnapping of Adam Walsh,” Hoffman wrote in his report. Although John and Reve had asked him to leave the house and he’d done so reluctantly about two weeks before the abduction, Campbell had stopped by that morning after John had gone to work and spent almost an hour there with Reve and Adam and had breakfast.

Reve, in her first sit-down interview with Hoffman and Hickman, on August 18, 1981, denied having any affair, Hoffman wrote in his report. But then he added, “After further questioning Reve admitted to having an affair with James Campbell... According to Reve she indicated that her relationship with James Campbell was not a serious one, and had been one that had been going on for approximately three years.”

Reve also told the detectives that evening that Campbell had come to her house on the morning of the abduction within a half-hour after John left for work, had breakfast, and stayed no more than an hour.



When the defense attorneys deposed Reve in September 1983, reported the *Fort Lauderdale News*, they didn't ask her about an affair but did ask, "Didn't Jim Campbell come over your house that morning?"

"No," she responded.

"He did not?"

"Not to my recollection."

"He didn't come over and have breakfast at your home?"

"No."

In October 1983 the defense attorneys deposed John Walsh and asked, "On the date of the incident, were you aware that Mr. Campbell had been having an intimate sexual relationship with your wife?"

"No. No, sir," Walsh answered. Later he added, "I've never found that out," reported the *Miami Herald*.

However, Campbell had already deposed, the *Herald* also reported, that he and John had discussed it about six months after the abduction.

"What do the Walshes have to hide, what is the real truth?" asked Richard Gordon, the attorney for Sears, quoted by the *Sun-Tattler* after the depositions were made public in November. "They don't want us to find out something." Sam Holland responded to the *Sun-Sentinel* that his clients had nothing to hide and the opposing attorneys were trying to damage the Walshes' names with allegations of an affair. "It's an unmitigated lie. This is a smear tactic by America's family store—Sears." The *Sun-Tattler* reported that Holland called Campbell a "liar."

But in 1997, in *Tears of Rage*, Walsh conceded the reality of the affair. When detectives had questioned Reve they'd urged her to tell John about it; she didn't, he wrote, but "In the end, someone else finally told me. Not Reve." Although Walsh was unclear exactly when that was, note the tense he used two paragraphs later: "The important thing was that our little boy was definitely missing, probably kidnapped, and maybe dead."

Note also that Reve admitted the affair to police on August 18, a week after the head was found.

Also, in narrating what had happened at his home on the morning of the abduction, Walsh accepted a version closest to Campbell's: "Without waking [Adam], I gave him a kiss good-bye. A couple of hours after I left, Jimmy Campbell stopped by for a cup of coffee."

Walsh blamed the news media for the exposure of the affair. "It isn't anyone else's business. It was private. It became an issue later because the press made it an issue." But as the *Sun-Tattler* reported, quoting a University of Miami law professor who specialized in privacy rights, "When you enter litigation, you open up every aspect of your life relevant to that litigation." Broward's chief judge, John Ferris, concurred: "If an issue is germane and relevant to the case, the right to privacy gives way." And in denying the Walshes' motion to keep the depositions out of public view, Judge J. Cail Lee ruled, "This is a death case. The nature of those relationships certainly bear on this case. The entire lifestyle of a family... is part of the essence of the trial."

Weeks later, after the Walshes dropped the lawsuit, Hoffman and Hickman re-interviewed Reve and she reversed herself again on Campbell's appearance at her home on the day of the abduction. She said that she was "sitting on my kitchen floor, dressing

Adam and James Campbell put his head in the door” and asked if she was going to renew her driver’s license that day. After that, he “turned around and left.”

In January 1995, when Grelen first faxed an interview request to *America’s Most Wanted*, Walsh wrote: “Something about it just didn’t feel right to me.” He’d asked his assistant, “What do you think this guy *really* wants?” As Grelen asked again, “I kept ignoring him.”

When Grelen’s stories appeared, Walsh wrote, “my instincts were proved correct... He reported that I had refused to talk to him, as if I had something to hide.”

John Monahan had refused his requests as well. “It’s still too painful for me,” Grelen quoted him, although he’d let *Tropic* interview him in 1981. “Neither you nor the police are going to find the killer. I won’t do it.”

A month after Grelen’s stories ran, with his newspaper’s lawsuit filed, Monahan lashed out. To the *Miami Herald* he called Grelen a “renegade reporter” and a “schmuck.” And then he had the chutzpah to suggest that the solving of the case be left to Walsh:

Do you think at this juncture after 14 years that any further publicity will help in any way? It will only damage. Who has a better capacity to find someone than John Walsh of *America’s Most Wanted*?

Monahan had his own reasons to be upset at Grelen. He’d first reported that his son Michael had once been a suspect in the murder, and as well that John Monahan himself was linked to a suspected Miami drug smuggler.

In addition to being a friend of the Walsh family like his father, Michael Monahan was also a close friend of Jimmy Campbell. But in 1990, Michael had been convicted in federal court in Tampa along with three others of extortion to collect a \$40,000 debt on a loan from a man who was found shot dead after he’d gone to police. A codefendant was the son of a reputed captain in the Lucchese crime family of New York, who lived in Hollywood.

In 1981, three days after Adam’s abduction, in the Broward County city of Oakland Park there was an argument over a skateboard. Michael was carrying it, another young man claimed it was his and took it from Michael, then ran into the office of the skateboard park and locked the door. Minutes later, Michael returned with a machete and began hacking at it.

“He was outside the door telling me if I didn’t open the door that he was going to cut me up,” Grelen quoted the other young man telling an Oakland Park policeman. Soon, he saw the blade coming through the door. “I was in fear for my life. I thought he was going to kill me. He was enraged, like he was under the influence or something. You just don’t get that mad over a skateboard.”

Monahan took back his skateboard and left. That evening, Oakland Park police confiscated his machete and later had the Broward Medical Examiner test it to see if it matched the cuts in the neck of the found child. The result wasn’t conclusive.

In November 1981, three months after John Monahan identified Adam, he arrived at another morgue, in the Rocky Mountains, Grelen reported. A private turbojet had crashed carrying seven bound from Opa-locka airport in Dade. All had been killed and body parts

were scattered, even in trees. One victim was Monahan's twenty-three years younger fiancée.

Another was Allen Rivenbark, who at the time of his death six federal and state law enforcement agencies were investigating for suspected drug smuggling, money laundering, and harboring fugitives, the *Denver Post* reported in January 1982. The story said that Rivenbark owned a secluded mountain ranch thirty miles from Vail which was suspected of being a "hideout" for East Coast mobsters as well as a distribution point for drug trafficking in Colorado resort areas. The seven crash victims were all headed there. Rivenbark was also the jet's owner and part-owner of a coffee plantation in Colombia, Grelen reported.

The *Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune* had it too, a UPI story published November 22, 1981: *Airplane in Colorado Crash Was Being Watched by DEA*. The story said the plane "was under surveillance by officers monitoring a cocaine smuggling operation, a federal agent said."

Said Wayne Valentine, chief of the DEA's Denver office, "It is a very likely possibility the plane was carrying cocaine" from South America to the United States.

At the crash site investigators had found thirty handguns—one holstered to a victim's leg—and \$50-60,000 in cash in the fresh snow, Grelen wrote.

He quoted Bill Bachman, the chief investigator in 1981 for the sheriff's office of Eagle County, Colo., that when Monahan arrived, "He had a bodyguard with him that was a gorilla." Monahan claimed and identified six of the bodies, excluding only a man with a Japanese name who was thought to be Rivenbark's bodyguard.

"He made arrangements for dental records. He kind of took charge of the whole situation. That was kind of unusual," said Bachman.

Bachman added that as he investigated the crash, he received death threats by telephone.

Walsh wrote that he'd told his attorneys he'd heard Grelen was planning a book, "and I figured it would feature the famous John Walsh Mob Connection." He also wrote that Hollywood Chief Richard Witt told him that Grelen and Dan Christensen, then working for the *Daily Business Review*, "were 'obsessed' with a conspiracy theory—that I was a 'bad guy' and that someone had killed Adam to retaliate against me."

At a meeting with Hollywood police including Witt, Walsh wrote that he said:

I want to know what you're going to do about this. I want you to tell the newspapers, clearly and for the record, that I have never had any associations with the Mafia, that I've never had my legs broken. I'm not a drug lord and don't have any drug-related associations. And that—and who would know better than the Hollywood police—that John Walsh and his family have nothing to hide. Nothing.

Just before the judge ruled, Witt told the press: "John Walsh is looking for some kind of unequivocal statement that says neither he nor his wife had any part in the death of their son. I don't know why they want that. But they are emotionally upset by certain members of the media pursuing a poor man's Oliver Stone-style plot."

At the suit's initial hearing, Walsh wrote, "what I really wanted to get across to everyone was one simple thing: that I wasn't trying to keep the case file closed to hide

some horrible, dark secret. My wife and I, as I had always said, had nothing to hide. The reason—the only reason—that we were fighting so hard against the *Press Register* was because we were trying to keep Adam’s case from being lost.”

When Witt told Walsh of his decision to duplicate the case file on microfilm and sell copies because the police had so many requests to see it, Walsh said he told him, “You’re giving it up on a capital murder case. And you are denying my family justice.” He also quoted his attorney George Terwilliger: “Since when do police put files on microfilm for scumbag journalists?”

“Now you know what happened to the other reporters,” Grelen quoted Rex Conrad, the attorney who had defended Hollywood Mall against the Walshes. Grelen quoted another attorney in the case, unnamed, “Something has stopped efforts to really get this from the beginning.”

Walsh wrote that he was concerned that some of the original evidence might not have made it into the case file. He said Joe Matthews told him he’d submitted polygraph charts of when he’d cleared both Walsh and Campbell, but he knew they weren’t placed in the file as evidence.

Who knew what else might get lost or even removed? How would anyone ever know?

Grelen didn’t get the whole story. He apparently never visited the Broward Medical Examiner’s office. And although he wrote he’d gazed intently at Adam’s “Missing” picture, he called him “snaggletoothed.”

I looked that up too on Merriam-Webster.com. For a child, it’s “a tooth that sticks out, is uneven, or is broken.” That’s not what the picture showed.

I asked him. By then he was a columnist in Little Rock for the *Arkansas Democrat and Gazette*. By email he wrote back: “I don’t know about the dictionary definition, but where I come from, snaggle-tooth means you’re missing some teeth, usually the front ones.”

I had a little trouble buying that completely. A mouth with a snaggletooth could have some teeth missing but its main event is one tooth badly sticking out. I did a Google image search of “snaggletooth” and found some embarrassingly asymmetrical kids’ mouths, like one with four front top baby teeth gone and only one adult central incisor in—and that one, completely, and one that had a single adult central incisor, diagonally broken. Note to those kids: don’t let these pictures be seen by college admissions offices.

But what could fit the dictionary’s definition of snaggletoothed is the Hollywood Police crime scene picture of the found child that I called bucktoothed. Was it possible that Hollywood let Grelen see that picture and he just didn’t want to tell me? When he wrote that Adam in his “Missing” picture was snaggletoothed, did that suggest his confusion as to whether the bucktoothed/snaggletoothed picture of the found child matched Adam Walsh? He hadn’t challenged the police on the identification, and who knows, maybe never even questioned the identification to himself, so instead did he force the word snaggletoothed onto the “Missing” picture, to which it didn’t fit?

This would be an illustration of cognitive dissonance, which a financial writer, James Montier, eloquently defines as “the mental conflict that people experience when they are presented with evidence that their beliefs or assumptions are wrong.” In cognitive

dissonance situations, people at least initially tune out the evidence and hold to their previous beliefs or what passes for the previously established truth.

When Grelen wrote in 1995, he didn't have benefit of the full file, including Cox's preliminary autopsy report. But years later I did because of Grelen and the willingness of the *Mobile Press Register* to initiate a public records lawsuit.

Walsh called the suit "the most frightening thing of all [that] had happened." He mocked the newspaper as "that great champion of the First Amendment." He said that if the file didn't remain confidential, the case might be impossible to ever solve.

The suit relied on Florida's "Sunshine laws," enacted in the 1960s to provide for open government, which include statutes allowing the public to see all police criminal investigation files except in limited circumstances when cases are still open and actively investigated.

Since open homicide cases can be investigated for years, police had made a practice of claiming they were still active, and therefore restricted public access to them. The legal issue was in the meaning of the word "active."

Florida Statutes 119.071(2)(c)1, 119.011(3)(d) and 119.011(3)(d)2 read that although "active criminal investigative information" acquired by any state or local law enforcement agency is exempt from public disclosure, the word "active" is defined as "related to an ongoing investigation which is continuing with a reasonable, good faith anticipation of securing an arrest or prosecution in the foreseeable future."

In his order opening the Walsh records to the public, Broward Circuit Judge Leroy H. Moe wrote that "more than 14 years had elapsed from the date of the crime, the investigation had been dormant for many years before it was reactivated, and no arrest or prosecution had been initiated despite reinvestigation of the case by a crack detective and his cold case squad..."

"Although this may be the first order by a Florida court requiring a law enforcement agency to open its files to the public concerning an unsolved murder, the order was necessitated by the fundamental proposition that the Public Records Law is to be construed in favor of 'open government to the extent possible to preserve our basic freedom, without undermining significant governmental functions,'" he wrote, quoting a 1985 Florida case.

"The time clearly had come to allow the public and the press to review this file. Public access to an investigative file holds out the hope that widespread dissemination of information about the case will turn up new leads that could not be found in any other manner. The Fourth District Court of Appeal [of Florida] specifically observed in *Barfield v. Fort Lauderdale Police Department*, a 1994 case] that the public and the press have a legitimate and important interest in reviewing police files."

ONCE DAVID SMILEY AND I HAD REALIZED THAT A DNA COMPARISON between the found child and a swab from Reve Walsh had been done, we made a public records request to Hollywood Police and eventually got a four-page report they hadn't

previously made public—despite the police’s claim that in 2008 they had put on CD a copy of the entire public record file. The report was addressed to Mark Smith as well as Dr. George Duncan, the head of the DNA lab at the Broward Sheriff’s Office. Later, when I made a similar public records request to the BSO to see if they had anything else, I got another copy of the same four-page document.

The tests had been done in 2003 by a lab in Northern Virginia, Bode Technology, which specializes in extracting DNA data from unidentified bones. Among other projects, they had been employed to determine identities from fragments of bodies of those killed in the 9/11 incidents. Those tests had been mitochondrial. Although cell nuclei offer much more unique DNA results, they are hard to get from degraded cells; mitochondria is easier to extract because cells have more of it. Again, mitochondrial’s downside is that its results are less conclusive: you share the same profile with your mother, your mother’s mother, and your siblings from your mother, and so on. (What keeps us all from having the same mitochondrial profile are single mutations that occur on average every thirty-five generations.) So while mitochondrial comparisons can exclude suspects from crime scene evidence, they’re not conclusive enough to make definitive matches. Rather, mitochondrial’s main forensic value is to definitively exclude remains from maternal-line family members, or other remains. When comparison mitochondrial profiles are identical, it doesn’t mean they definitively match, it means they can’t be excluded from being matches.

To review, in its four-page report, Bode had written that its mitochondrial profile of the found child “matches” Mrs. Walsh’s. It next concluded that the found child “is consistent with being a maternal relative (e.g. a son) of Reve Walsh. These results support the identification of these remains as Adam Walsh.”

Without knowing the limitations of mitochondrial comparisons, you would think (as Smiley did when he first read that line) that the lab was saying that the head was Adam, while leaving for itself just a bit of wiggle room.

In the report, a small chart showed the results from samples from the found child—two teeth removed from the mandible, then ground—and an oral swab taken by Hollywood police from Reve Walsh with her signed consent. Both showed the same three nucleotide polymorphisms, or sequence variants: 16209C, 263G, and 315.1C. I’d had A.W.’s mitochondrial DNA tested earlier in 2011 at another lab, and his results included 263G and 315.1C—common variants among those of European origins—but he had 16209T, not C, and ten other bases that Bode didn’t report in their samples of the found child and Reve.

Facing these results, it also didn’t look likely that A.W. was Adam. Billy Capshaw had long said to me, it was possible he wasn’t—Billy couldn’t have an opinion either way—although he did feel sure that A.W. was a victim of Dahmer. But then how could I explain what A.W. had recalled for Frank Sortini and I about being close T-ball friends with Frank? And then there was the matter of the front teeth differences between the photos of the found child and the baseball picture of Adam. And the autopsy report and dental records absent from all the files.

So my question became, when the DNA results say one thing but other evidence contradicts it, how much should we rely on the DNA results?

“Television has taught us that DNA never lies. Foolproof and irrefutable, neutral and reliable, DNA is science,” wrote Laura LaFay in a Richmond magazine called *Style*

*Weekly* in 2005. “As such, it cannot be faked, rigged, altered, improperly influenced or bribed.... DNA delivers truth. Therefore, anything contradicting what DNA tells us must be a lie. In a court of law... this belief is almost impossible to overcome.”

She quoted a Richmond defense attorney, David Baugh: “If you put God on the witness stand and God’s testimony conflicted with the DNA evidence, everyone would automatically say, ‘Why is God lying like this?’”

But LaFay’s story was about the fallibility of forensic DNA. Police crime labs all over the country, including the Virginia State Police’s, had been found to have submitted inaccurate forensic results in murder cases. Even the Bode lab in 2005 had lost a \$7 million contract with the Illinois State Police for producing a significant number of false negatives when examining rape kits to determine the presence of offender semen.

“Recent gaffes by crime labs across the country are raising new doubts about the science of gathering and analyzing DNA,” LaFay wrote.

In the courtroom there was a CSI-effect, referring to the popular TV programs that show crimes solved with the use of forensic science, that “may make jurors more inclined to convict because they falsely portray forensic evidence as unambiguous and certain,” wrote Edward Ungvarsky, a trial attorney for the District of Columbia public defender, in a Powerpoint he presented in 2005. Polling prospective jurors, his office found that they saw DNA as the most reliable forensic science.

“[T]he emerging ‘technological tyranny’ borne of our obsessive desire for certainty and rectitude is deeply problematic,” Ungvarsky and a co-author wrote in their review of a forensic science book, published in the journal *Law, Probability & Risk* in 2009.

To begin with, the technologies are not as infallible as they seem, as evidenced by reports of malfeasance, contamination, misinterpretation, fundamentally incorrect scientific assumptions and inaccurate or misleading match statistics. The imperfections of DNA and fingerprint evidence, while in themselves not a reason to abandon the forensic use of such evidence, are particularly dangerous precisely because of their perceived infallibility.

I had never seen a DNA lab file but I guessed it would have more than four pages. But Hollywood and BSO didn’t have it. And since Adam’s case had never gone to court, prosecutors had never needed to show it in discovery.

Was it a public record? Or would Bode consider it private and proprietary to its client? Whoever that was. I doubted that Hollywood or BSO had spent public money for it.

I’d put off calling Bode. Talking to George Duncan in September 2011, he confirmed that he’d never seen the full lab file. Nor was he sure who had paid Bode, but it wasn’t BSO or Hollywood. He thought there was a pool of national money for such things—it sounded to me like from the U.S. Department of Justice.

But Duncan said he was friends with Bode’s lab director and suggested I call him and say it was okay with him that Bode send me its full file.

When I reached the lab director, he checked then told me BSO wasn’t actually the client, it was Hollywood Police. So I made yet another public records request to them, they quickly approved the request, and in the postal mail from Bode I got a CD copy of a 343-page file.

Its first pages told me that Bode had billed \$4,500 for the test to NCMEC, initials I recognized as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The agency had been created by act of Congress in 1984 after John and Reve Walsh lobbied for it. The Walshes merged the Adam Walsh Center, which they'd started in 1981, into the larger organization. In 2011 the Walshes remained involved; Reve was on its board of directors. Although it is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, it works "in partnership" with the DOJ, its website says. One of its congressional mandates is to "Provide forensic technical assistance and consultation to law enforcement and other agencies in the identification of unidentified deceased children through facial reconstruction of skeletal remains and similar techniques." The language was written before the use of forensic DNA became common.

Duncan had told me previously he had suggested the testing after the Walshes had asked to bury the skull. From the Broward M.E. file, that was in 2002. He'd denied that his purpose was to check the found child's identification as Adam; rather, he said that if the skull was gone he wanted to have a DNA profile in case any other suspected remains were ever discovered. More recently he said that he and Bode had reasoned that besides the inherent difficulty extracting nuclear DNA from a twenty-plus year old skull, any suspected remains that might be discovered in the future would present the same problem. The answer was mitochondrial testing, and in case Bode wasn't able to get even those results from the remains, they'd asked Reve Walsh to provide an oral swab sample. Then, at least, they'd have the maternal parent to compare against any new, suspected, remains.

But a page of an analyst's typed notes of a 2003 phone conversation with Duncan contradicted what he'd told me: "It had been Mr. Duncan's idea to obtain mtDNA [mitochondrial DNA] from the skull to reinforce identification and to have an mtDNA profile on file in case a body is found."

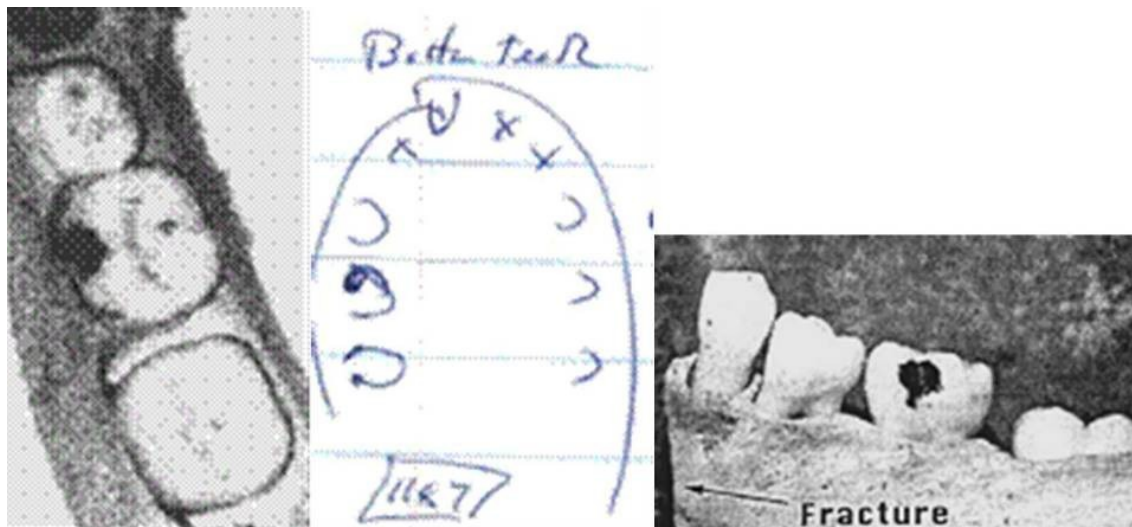
So when I'd first realized in the Broward M.E. files that a DNA test existed, I had been right after all—it had been done because at least someone didn't trust the medical examiner's identification as the last word. From this perspective, it seemed the test wasn't the Walshes' idea but they had gone along with it. Remember also that the test made news only when I briefly mentioned it in the 2010 *Miami Herald* story; the authorities had never announced it had been done. But in 2003, why would Hollywood police have released a story that DNA had confirmed the found child's identification as Adam? No one in the public or media had ever questioned that.

The file was mostly charts and graphs, so I had to learn how to understand them. At least I had some basic background about mitochondrial DNA from the year before, when I'd gotten A.W.'s sample tested.

But before I get to that...

Bode had extracted and ground the two teeth, but first they photographed two pieces of the mandible from three angles—the top and both sides. This gave me my first photo of the chewing side of the lower left molar with the filling—when I'd seen a slide of it at the Broward M.E. I'd had to draw it. A photo of the buccal side proved it was the same set of teeth as the C.A. Pound lab had photographed in 1997.

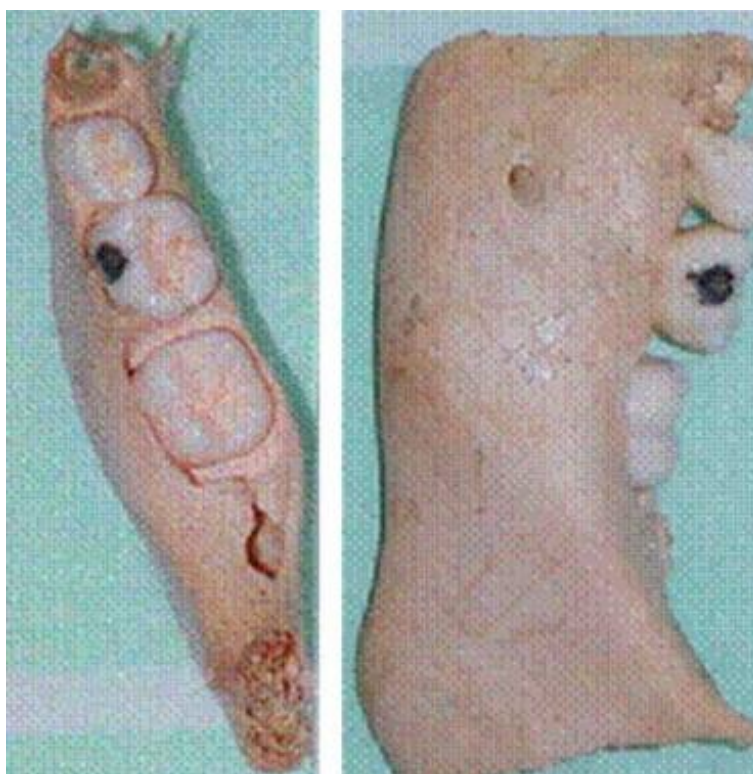




**Left, Bode's 2003 occlusal side photograph of the three molars on the lower left side of the found child. Middle, my drawing of the bottom teeth from the slide I saw at the Broward Medical Examiner's Office. The orientation is Left side - Right side. Right, C.A. Pound lab's buccal side view, 1997.**

In Bode's CD were black-and-white photocopies of the pictures. The photo of the occlusal view of the left part of the mandible seemed to indicate there was in fact a filling on the top side of the middle of three molars.

On my request, Bode agreed to email me JPEGs of all their photos of the mandible, and I received these, in color:



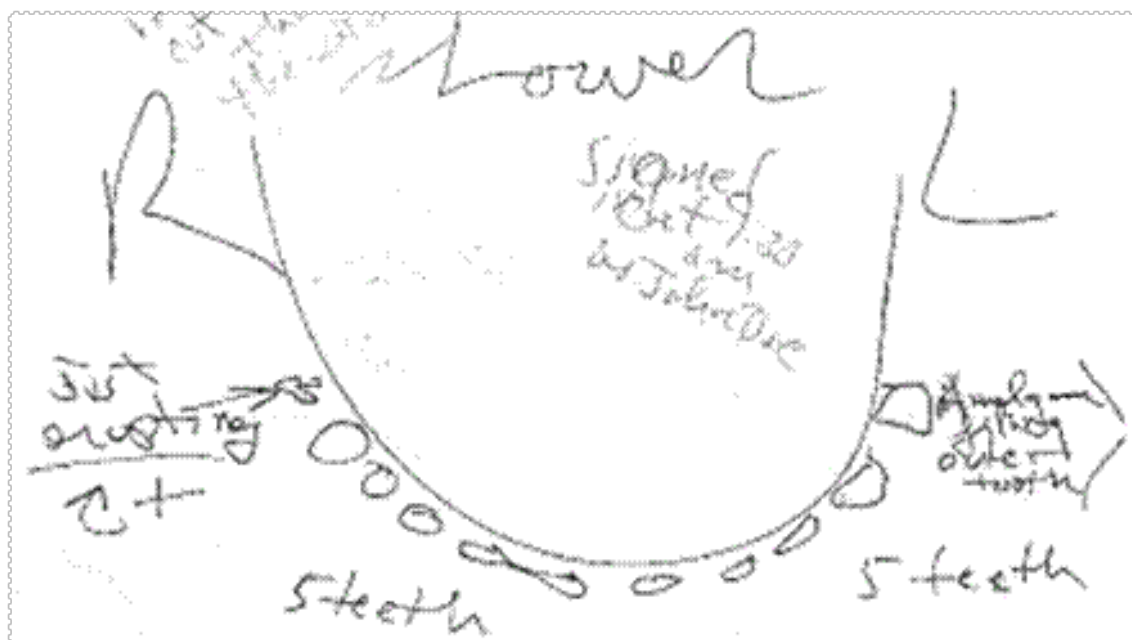
**Left, the JPEG of the same photo, above. Until I saw this, I'd thought the filling in the next-to-last tooth was two-sided, on the chewing and the buccal sides. Right, Bode's buccal view of the same. Notice that it matches C.A. Pound's 1997 buccal side view, also that the tooth on the far left of the Pound photo has fallen out. The Bode photos show where.**

What had appeared to me in the slides at the Broward Medical Examiner's office and in Bode's scan of a black-and-white photocopy was shot down by the JPEG. The filling is only on the buccal side—it isn't a two-sided filling. I had made a mistake because until now I hadn't had access to a good photo. What looked like a filling on the top side actually showed the buccal-side filling. The problem was, the photo angle had been oblique. Even in the thumbnail of Bode's JPEG, in my email message, it had looked like it was a top-side filling.

So that meant Cox in his preliminary autopsy report *had* accurately represented a single-sided filling. But there was still the issue of which tooth had the filling.

To review in a new light:

Cox wrote that on the lower jaw, "all ten teeth are present, five on each side. An apparent amalgam dental filling is noted on the buccal side of the last lower left molar." Later he wrote that Adam's dental records "reveal an amalgam filling on the buccal side of the last lower left deciduous molar, corresponding to the finding in the decapitated head." Further, in drawings in his notes, in the file, he sketched five teeth on the lower left side and jotted next to the fifth tooth that there was a filling.



**Dr. Cox's drawing of the lower teeth. Note on left side, "Amalgam filling over tooth."**

Translation: given that the child had "all" five teeth on the lower left side, the last lower left molar is the second deciduous. Adam's dental record, he reports (although we

don't have our own copy of this), shows a corresponding filling in the "last lower left deciduous molar," which is the same, the second deciduous.

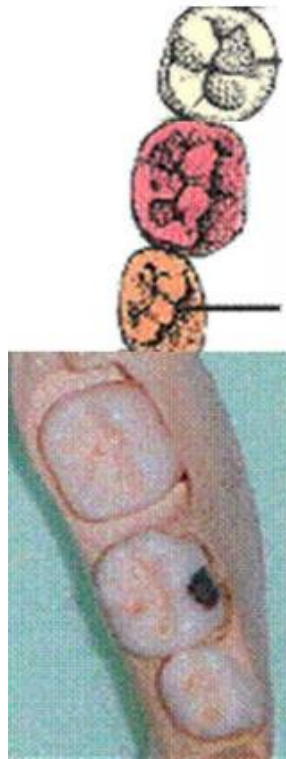
Okay. But I had seen the Broward M.E. slide photo showing three molars on that side. That could have been explained by the possibility that the third molar—the first permanent—at death was still under the gum line, it hadn't yet expressed, but when all the soft tissue was removed from the skull, it was revealed.

For the *Herald*, David Smiley and I asked Cox about it. He gave us a stunning, bizarre answer: although the filling was in the last lower left molar, it was the *third* molar. Not only was that wrong but it was inconsistent with what he had written and drawn. That would mean he had seen six teeth on the lower left side.

There was some other confusion about it too. The Indian River radiologist who examined the X-rays of the head wrote in his report that the filling was in the first deciduous molar.

And by the way, when I told Cox that I had seen a filling on the occlusal side he'd agreed with me, there was a filling on the occlusal side but he hadn't written that. I now wondered if Cox, at eighty-five when we spoke to him, had been sharp enough to do the interview.

Bode's photos, compared to a dental chart, resolved the conflict:



**Top, drawings from a published dental chart, lower left side: the bottom two teeth are (from bottom) the first deciduous molar and the second deciduous molar. Above that, from a chart of permanent teeth, the lower left first permanent molar. Below, the Bode photo (reversed from above) of the lower left side. Notice that the three teeth in Bode's photo match the dental chart drawings. Charts published in *A Visual Guide to Dental Care*.**

The filling was in the second deciduous molar. The third tooth was the first permanent molar. Not only did the shapes of the teeth match the dental charts, the juxtaposition of the two deciduous teeth also matched. I showed this to my personal dentists, Joe Gorfien and Henry Jacobsohn, who agreed.

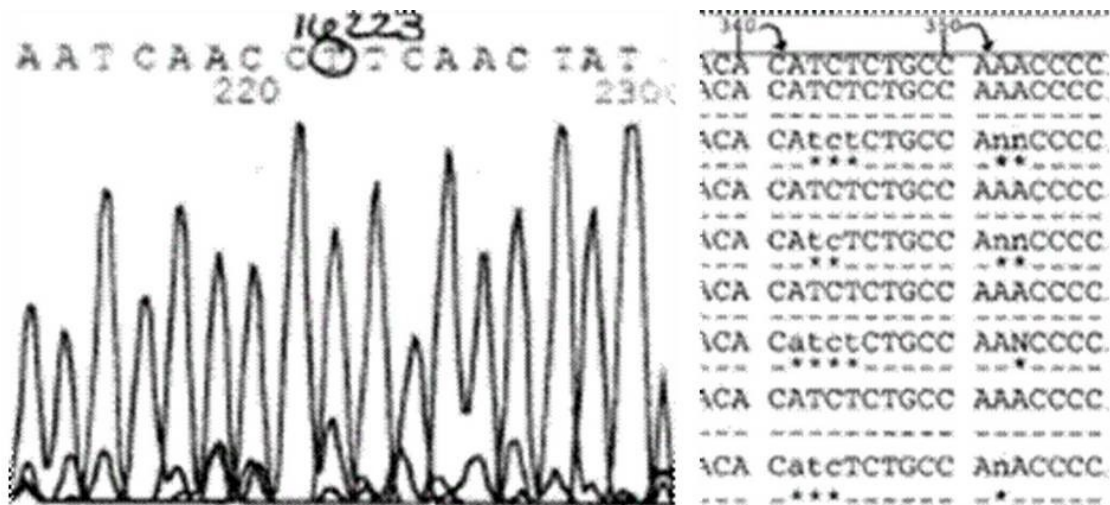
A remaining side issue was whether the first permanent molar had expressed by the time of death, or if it was still under the gum line. Bode's view of the reverse of the buccal side suggested it may have been underneath. I'll call it, for better or worse, a scum line that remained on the deciduous teeth that may have indicated where the gums had been. Visually, it was possible that the first permanent molar hadn't approached that height. The radiologist, we now realize, had made the wrong call, the filling wasn't in the first deciduous molar. But by saying first deciduous, he clearly saw another molar next to it. Since the filling was actually in the second deciduous, that would mean he saw the first permanent.

Again, Adam's dental records are missing from all the files so we can't verify what Cox wrote about them. I add here that Cox didn't write that the buccal filling was the only dental work shown on the charts, and we don't have dates of dental visits. But let's say the buccal filling was the only permanent dental work ever done in Adam's mouth, and the found child had a filling in that same spot, and none other. As I asked before, how definitive a match would that be?

Not especially. As I wrote earlier, buccal-side lower molars are common places for children's fillings—often caused by keeping candy or bubble gum against the cheek.

•

Returning to the report's DNA section, Bode explained its procedures: after receiving the mandible of the found child, using a chisel they pulled two molars from its right side—the side that didn't have the filling. The first tooth broke, leaving in the jaw its root structure, which they had to ground with a drill then collect its powder. They called that Evidence sample 01A1. The remainder of the first tooth was labeled 01A2. Although the second tooth came out cleanly its crown cracked—that became 01B1. They ground the latter two samples separately in a Waring blender, chemically extracted their DNA, and copied (“amplified”) the hypervariable regions. Next an automated sequencing machine read the order of the nucleotide bases (about eight hundred), creating peak-and-valley graphs, and compared them to the Cambridge Reference Sequence. An analyst then examined the raw data.



From the Bode lab file, examples of raw data graphs and charts of DNA trials. Left, for an Evidence batch positive control, the automatic sequencing machine has called a polymorphism (a nucleotide base variance from the Cambridge Reference Sequence), 16223T, in Hypervariable Region 1. (The CRS has 16223C.) Right, for a trial of Evidence samples of the teeth, in Hypervariable Region 2, the top line is the CRS (340C, 341A...); each of the lines beneath are samples containing ground teeth from the found child, but notice the results are not identical. Asterisks indicate variances from the CRS: some because the automatic sequencer made a call of a polymorphism, others because it made no call at all, for lack of clear data. In the latter instances, lab analysts examined the peak-and-valley graphs then sometimes manually filled in a letter on the charts, which may or may not indicate a polymorphism.

Along with the upper case letters A, T, C, and G, representing the four DNA nucleotides (adenine, thymine, cytosine, guanine), note in the chart above there is also an N and lower case letters a, t, c, g, or n. I asked Susan Bach, Bode’s Technical Services Manager/Senior DNA Analyst, about all that. She explained, the N’s (No data) and lower case letters represented nucleotide base calls the automated sequencing machine didn’t make. The analyst, using her experience, looked at the graphs and made manual calls—those were the lower case letters. There was a subtle difference between upper case N’s and lower case n’s but the presence of either indicated that neither the machine nor the analyst had made an ATCG call.

In the four-page report mailed to the police agencies was a single-page chart titled “Summary of Mitochondrial DNA Results” which told precisely this amount of information: the two samples “01 Teeth from Mandible” and “02 Reve Walsh” had the same three polymorphisms (nucleotide base variances from the CRS)—16209C, 263G, and 315.1C. The narrative added that since the two profiles matched, the child was “consistent with being a maternal relative (e.g. a son) of Reve Walsh. These results support the identification of these remains as Adam Walsh.”

Bach explained that for summary purposes the three teeth samples had been lumped together as “01 Teeth from Mandible.”

As I had expected, the lab report had more detail—four pages of summary charts titled “Mitochondrial DNA Final Sequence Analysis” and its supporting raw data.

In these charts, “01 Teeth from Mandible” had two additional variances from the CRS, 202N and 203N, which may indicate polymorphisms or not. Mrs. Walsh’s samples reported 202A and 203G, which matched the CRS. At the very least these were ambiguities unmentioned in the letter sent to the police.

Also unmentioned in the police letter was anything about control trials. DNA labs design their experiments with both positive and negative controls (processed in separate containers, often test tubes) placed in batches with evidence samples, Bach explained. Inside the file a “load chart” grid showed each container’s position. Positive controls contain substances known to have DNA, and therefore, after testing, are expected to show DNA results; Bode purchases such substances from a supplier. Negative controls contain substances known not to have DNA, such as sterile water, and therefore should produce no DNA results. “Reagent blank” controls contain the chemical solution added to get DNA results, however the solution itself (the blank) contains no DNA and should also show no DNA results.

From the lab report, here’s some protocol for how these tests were done:

Along with their controls, the “Evidence” (“01 Teeth from Mandible”) and the “Reference” (“02 Reve Walsh,” actually a swab sample from her cheek) were tested on separate dates.

As already noted, the Evidence batch had three teeth samples: in the first trial (indicated by the suffix “.1”) the lab labeled them 01A1.1, 01A2.1, and 01B1.1.

For the purposes of the controls the lab reduced the three teeth samples to two: the “1” series controlled for 01A1, and the “2” series for 01A2 and 01B1. Therefore, negative controls were labeled N1.1 and N2.1. Reagent blank controls were labeled RB1.1 and RB2.1. A single positive control was labeled Pos.1.

Got all that? In its Final Sequence Analysis charts (shown in the lab report only), Bode reported polymorphisms in controls N1.1, N2.1, and RB2.1. Both N1.1 and RB2.1 showed 263G and 315.1C, and N2.1 showed 315.1C—which matched polymorphisms reported in the teeth. As well, RB2.1 listed nine other variances from the CRS, most of which were N’s (although none was 16209C, the remaining polymorphism reported in the teeth).

**2M03-074**  
**Mitochondrial DNA**  
**Final Sequence Analysis**

May 27, 2003

Analyst: Faith A. Love

Submittor: Broward County, FL

**EVIDENCE:**

	PS 1	PS 2	PS 3	PS 4
RB1.2	NO RESULT	16262-16376	NO RESULT	NO RESULT
		REVERSE ONLY		
		16295 C-T*		
		16362 T-C*		
		Several N's		
		*unconfirmed		

	PS 1	PS 2	PS 3	PS 4
RB2.1	16063-16218	16217-16375	161-236 REVERSE ONLY	177-350
	16223 C-T*	16223 C+T	Several N's	263 A-G
	Multiple N's	16224 N		315.1 C
		16239 N		Multiple N's
	*unconfirmed	16295 C+T		
		16300 N		
		16303 N		
		16353 N		
		16362 T+C		
		16390 G+A*		
		*unconfirmed		

**One of the four summary pages from Bode's lab report. This page shows results for reagent blank control trial RB2.1 (from the first set of Evidence trials) and RB1.2 (from the second set, run two weeks later). Reagent blanks are similar to negative controls in that they are expected to contain no DNA and therefore testing should show no positive results. That results were reported suggests inadvertent contamination at some step(s) of the lab process.**

In her lab notes after the first Evidence trial, analyst Faith A. Love (FAL) acknowledged that the two negative and one reagent blank controls gave "results consistent with the samples. Because of multiple controls giving results," she planned to rerun Evidence trials in three of the four "primer sets," representing most of the two hypervariable regions tested.

Case Number: 21003-074 Date: 5/20/03 Analyst: FAA

Notes: PS2 will be re-amplified due to RB2.1 giving a mixed result where components of each mixture position are consistent with the samples.

PS3 will be re-amplified due to RB2.1 giving partial, low-level results consistent with the samples.

PS4 will be re-amplified due to N1.1, RB2.1 and N2.1 giving results consistent with the samples. Because of multiple controls giving results, new primers will be used for re-amplification.

**Notes from the lab report written after the first batch of Evidence trials. PS (Primer Set) 2, 3, and 4 are overlapping sections of Hypervariable Regions 1 and 2. Notice in notes for PS4, “Because of multiple controls giving results...”**

For her second Evidence trial batch, Love used the suffix “.2” Therefore, as another load chart grid showed, the teeth were labeled 01A1.2, 01A2.2, and 01B1.2; negative controls were N1.2 and N2.2; reagent blank controls were RB1.2 and RB2.2; and the single positive control was Pos1.2.

Results for RB1.2 and RB2.2 were on the Final Sequence Analysis charts. RB1.2 had two variances from the CRS (both previously reported among the nine variances in RB2.1, in the first trial) along with “several N’s.” RB2.2 showed 263G and 315.1C (which had shown up in the first trial in N1.1, N2.1, RB2.1, as well as in the “teeth from mandible” and the positive control) and also 199C (not seen before) and “multiple N’s.”

In her notes after the second trial, analyst Love wrote that the data from RB2.2 in Primer Set 4 was “poor,” therefore she didn’t report any PS4 data for the teeth samples 01A2 and 01B1 (which the “2” series controlled). In the remaining primer sets for RB2.2, no results were reported.

In a written response to me, Bach, who reviewed the file eight years later at my request but hadn’t worked on it, defended analyst Love’s decisions. She said that all three of the teeth samples (01A1, 01A2, 01B1) had “great sequence.” 01A1, she wrote, had “clean controls—no problem reporting this data out. But for mito data we like to confirm the data with at least one other sample.”

01A2 and 01B1, she wrote, had a “problematic RB2, but data all = 01A1, as was expected,” or in other words, all three teeth samples produced the same results.

Elaborating on Love’s notes, Bach explained that they didn’t report out 01A2 and 01B1 because the RB2 data in PS4 matched the teeth samples. But they did report out data for 01A2 and 01B in the remaining primer sets because “the data for RB2 didn’t match the samples.”

When we see data in the controls, like the RB2 in this case, we re-extract the samples. However, since these were teeth and were consumed, there’s nothing left—so we’re stuck with what we have... and we either don’t report anything, or report what we can, even if that means no reporting data for certain PS or samples. In this case, the data obtained from RB2 didn’t match 01A2 & 01B1 in all 4 regions (PS1-4), indicating that it’s not from the analyst or the samples.



And since the data for 01A2 & 01B1 was the same as 01A1, they reported the parts of 01A2 & 01B1 that they could.

Basically, despite the problems with RB2, all samples gave the same reproducible mtDNA [mitochondrial DNA] profile. The data for all 3 samples was combined to report out –01 [Teeth from Mandible].

In conversation with Bach, I pointed out they had additional teeth they could have used. She answered that clients often dislike having all their evidence destroyed in testing. But even had the lab crushed another tooth or two, there were still more including other teeth that Broward hadn't even sent them. Also, nowhere in the file was there a mention that the client was ever asked.

Also, what was that about the analyst's DNA? In other notes to the file Love handwrote, "The mtDNA profile of the teeth (01) is consistent with the mtDNA sequence of the analyst who processed the samples (FAL)."

Did I read that right, Ms. Love's personal mitochondrial DNA profile matched what she reported from the found child—which also matched Reve Walsh? Yes, Bach told me. I could conceive of two possible reasons for that, and neither was reassuring: either Ms. Love had inadvertently contaminated the samples with her own DNA, or she was a possible relative on Reve Walsh's maternal line—same as the found child.

Recognizing the dilemma, Love wrote that "to illustrate that the DNA taken from item 01 was authentic," she had another Bode analyst process the lab testing for the Reference sample swab from Mrs. Walsh. She also did a sex-chromosome test on the 01A2 tooth sample that showed "a partial male profile not consistent with the profile of FAL." Elsewhere in the file a page showed how the test was set up, to include controls, although its raw results weren't enclosed.

How weird was it, I asked Bach, that the analyst could be in a lineage of people who could be a maternal relative of the person or people she was testing? Bach said she didn't know but added, "certain sequences are very common."

Considering that, why didn't the lab do further testing? Also in the file, in typed notes of a phone conversation Love had with Hollywood Police Sergeant Scott Pardon three months after the lab had mailed its final report, she wrote, "I asked him if STR results would be helpful, because we are confident that we could report at least a partial STR profile from the extracts we generated from the teeth." STR, Single Tandem Repeats, is a form of nuclear DNA testing. "He said that wouldn't be necessary, all of the additional testing will be mtDNA."

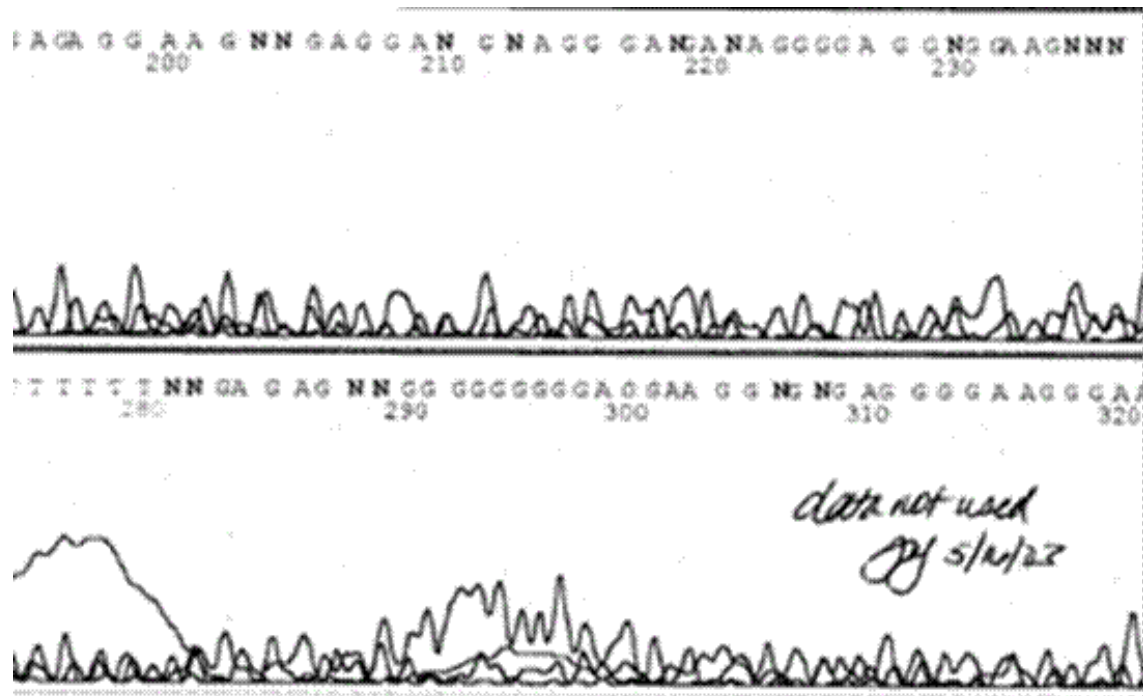
For the "Reference" tests ("02 Reve Walsh"), instead of dividing the regions into four primer sets the lab accomplished the same by measuring Hypervariable Regions 1 and 2. The lab ran one trial each for HVR1 and HVR2, which it labeled with suffixes ".1" and ".2" (a different designation system than it used for the Evidence tests). Swab samples were called 02A(1)1.1 and 02A(1)1.2; positive controls were Pos.1 and Pos.2; negative controls (two sets) were N1.1, N2.1, N1.2, and N2.2; and reagent blank controls were RB3.1 and RB3.2.

For the positive controls (containing a lab supply substance known to contain DNA data), the Final Sequence Analysis charts reported the Reference gave similar results as the Evidence. (Although both Reference and Evidence had two positive control trials, they were reported out in the charts in each instance as a single result.) Both showed the

same ten polymorphisms, however the Evidence positive control also reported 16220N, no data, while the Reference positive control also reported 16023N, no data. (Compared to the Evidence RB2.1 trial, which showed eleven polymorphisms, four results overlapped with the positive controls.)

Here were some other observations I made from the lab report:

- For both Evidence batches, the Final Sequence Analysis charts reported results of only some of the negative and reagent blank controls. For the Reference batch, the Final Sequence Analysis charts reported no results of negative and reagent blank controls.
- For the first Evidence batch (with the “.1” suffix), the lab reported raw data in peak-and-valley graphs for all the samples and controls. For the second Evidence batch (“.2” suffix) it reported graphs for the controls but not for the samples.
- In both Evidence batches, some of the graphs for controls had handwritten notes that read “data not used” or “data not analyzed.” For those, no raw charts were run. The data on those graphs looked, even to my eye, like garbage. Unlike other charts without those notations, these were full of long strings of repeated single letters and N’s, and the peaks and valleys didn’t look as good.



**Raw data graph for control RB1.1, from the first Evidence batch. Notice the long strings of G’s as well as a number of N’s. Nor do the peaks and valleys look good. An analyst’s handwriting says that the data wasn’t used, and RB1.1 isn’t reported on the Final Sequence Analysis charts.**

- Although Susan Bach had admitted problems with the controls in the “2” series (associated with tooth samples 01A2 and 01B1), she insisted that the controls in the

*“1” series were “clean,” therefore the lab could report out the results for the 01A1 tooth sample.*

But none of the “1” series controls, in both Evidence batch runs, seemed very clean to me. RB1.1 (graph, above) and N1.2 both were marked that their data wasn’t used, nor did their graphs look good; RB1.2 and N1.1 both were reported in the Final Sequence Analysis charts each showing two polymorphisms (N1.1’s were also reported in the Teeth from mandible).

Despite problems with the controls, she’d written, what mattered was that the samples had given the same profile.

But had they?

- *Before posting results in the report as final, a second analyst must separately review the data and the two must come to a consensus. For the first Evidence batch, an analyst whose initials are TMJ gave the second opinion.*

Here was their consensus, as reported in “01 Teeth from Mandible” in the Final Sequence Analysis charts: the three polymorphisms called by the automated sequencer (16209C, 263G, 315.1C), and N’s at 202 and 203.

But looking at the raw data to compare their calls, you could see many differences. Regarding nucleotide bases in the Evidence samples (Teeth from Mandible) that the automated sequencer hadn’t called, Love did not change its calls at 16023N, 16220N, 16378N, 16387N, 87N, 88N, 121N, 122N, 247N, 351N, and 352N. In addition, she manually called another seventeen bases as lower case n’s.

TMJ disagreed with not changing all those extra N’s, and did so, to lower case atcg letters. TMJ did, however, leave one call as an N that Love had changed, 16386N. As for lower case n’s, TMJ manually called a total of just three.

- *Both analysts also reviewed the Reference batch trial (the swab from Mrs. Walsh), and here there was far less disagreement. The automated sequencer made calls of N’s at only seven nucleotide bases; for six, both analysts manually wrote in the same lower case atcg letters. TMJ’s chart included a seventh base that didn’t show up on Love’s chart, also filled in as a lower case letter.*

Did this mean the calls for the Reference samples were more reliable? Although none of the negative and reagent blank controls for the Reference samples were reported on the Final Sequence Analysis chart, their graphs were in the file—and handwritten on all of them was “data not analyzed.” They looked as bad as the others marked similarly.

Okay, reader, like you, after all this I was confused and needed help. Here was my cognitive dissonance: if the negative and reagent blank control trial results were not supposed to show any DNA—but most of them did (and for the rest, the data just looked bad)—but Bode was saying to slough it off, the tooth and swab sample sequences were good, were they right?

I went back to Jack Remus, who told me, “You can’t report any results if controls are wrong. You can’t trust what you’ve got. Maybe something is wrong with the samples—they’ve degraded, possibly.”

Remus wasn’t an expert on mitochondrial DNA, so I searched to find those who were. I began by asking Broward public defender Howard Finkelstein, whose office recently had co-counseled a successful exoneration case with the Innocence Project of Florida. He referred me to Seth Miller, its Executive Director, in Tallahassee, who

referred me to Dr. Julie Heinig of DNA Diagnostics Center, in Fairfield, Ohio, one of the largest private DNA labs in the U.S. Earlier in 2011, Miller and Heinig had worked together on another case to exonerate Derrick Williams, who'd served eighteen years of a life sentence for rape and kidnapping, a conviction based largely on eyewitness identification. Heinig was able to extract DNA from a shirt in evidence that had been worn and discarded by the rapist; Williams's DNA profile didn't match it. After Heinig defended her findings at a court hearing, a Florida judge released Williams from prison.

At DNA Diagnostics Center, Heinig had me speak to Kathy Gantzer, the lab's "forensics spokesperson," who explained that although DNA science is good, analysis of results is subjective. In 2007, for the lab website, Heinig had written similarly: "Because not every DNA profile is straightforward, there may be many interpretations." Gantzer added that their lab spends a lot of time reviewing casework done by other labs. Swab samples, she said, like the one taken from Reve Walsh, should provide a full profile. But samples gathered forensically, such as old bones found outdoors in the elements, can produce results with a lot of missing data. And that's where lab analysis enters—and can be challenged, especially in court.

Miller had told me the same: "Different analysts may interpret differently. It doesn't mean the first lab is wrong. Different labs may make a different call. Somebody may look at the results and see anomalies," which using different interpretation protocols might recommend that the samples be retested.

On the other hand, Miller said, while representing clients who profess their innocence, independent labs "confirm our clients' guilt all the time."

Finkelstein said juries can hear that the chance of a defendant matching crime scene evidence is "one in seventeen gazillion." That applies to nuclear DNA, not mitochondrial. (Heinig wrote one in forty quadrillion. In a 1999 South Florida murder case reported in the *Miami Herald*, a Bode analyst had testified in court also in the one-in-multiple quadrillions.) "That's one reason this is very dangerous." But, he added, "DNA has no more weight legally than witness statements." Gantzer quoted for me an attorney who lectures around the country: "DNA is just one piece of evidence. The rest of the case has to make sense."

In a 2007 article in the legal journal *Jurimetrics*, Israeli authors Boaz Sangero and Mordechai Halpert wrote:

If we do not want to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the mistaken convictions of innocent persons, we must not convict on the basis of any single piece of evidence. This is because of possibility of error inherent in all evidence and the tremendous importance of the presence or absence of all additional evidence.

As we have shown, an extremely high degree of accuracy is required for evidence, on its own, to convict a person. If we convict when there is only a single piece of evidence, we will make an error in most of these cases.

The authors quoted a report from the National Research Council's Committee on DNA Forensic Science: "Laboratory errors happen, even in the best laboratories and even when the analyst is certain that every protection against error was taken." The authors

added, “We should not accept a conviction based solely on a DNA test—for, in most cases, there is a very tangible danger that this will be a wrongful conviction.”

Errors in the lab can occur in a number of ways. One is in computer sequencing. “Published mtDNA sequence data are prone to contain errors, mainly due to misinterpretation of sequence raw data (phantom mutations) and due to the introduction of clerical errors during data transcriptions,” wrote two authors including Walther Parson of the Institute of Legal Medicine, Innsbruck Medical University, in the journal *Forensic Science International: Genetics* in 2007. They added, “mtDNA typing seems to be more prone to human error than other forensic DNA analysis.” In the journal *BMC Genomics* in 2009, Parson and other authors added, “laboratory-, sequencing-, and analysis errors led to wrong [mitochondrial] base-calls.”

In 2003, geneticist Peter Forster of the University of Cambridge wrote similarly in an article in *Annals of Human Genetics*. As the science magazine *Nature* reported it, “More than half of all published studies of human mitochondrial DNA sequences contain mistakes.”

Laboratory contamination can also affect results. Writing in 2006 in an article entitled “‘Tarnish on the Gold Standard’: Understanding Recent Problems in Forensic DNA Testing,” which appeared in *The Champion*, published by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, William C. Thompson observed problems at other labs similar to what I suspected in the Bode report: “documented multiple instances in which (blank) control samples were positive for DNA” and an “instance in which an analyst’s DNA contaminated samples,” among other lab mistakes, which resulted in conclusions that were wrong.

Upon noticing such problems, labs typically throw out the results of that test and start over. However, the same processes that cause detectable errors in some cases can cause undetectable errors in others. If DNA from a suspect is accidentally transferred into a ‘blank’ control sample, it is obvious that something is wrong; if the suspect’s DNA is accidentally transferred into an evidentiary sample, the error is not obvious because there is another explanation—i.e., that the suspect is the source of the evidentiary DNA. Errors that incriminate a suspect are unlikely to be detected as errors; they are likely to be treated as incriminating evidence.

Referring to negative and reagent blank trials that produce positive DNA results, Thompson wrote, “If that happened to a control sample, it could also have happened to other samples, so the analyst must throw out the whole test and start over.”

He added:

The presence of DNA in an extraction blank can be embarrassing for an analyst because contamination is often the result of sloppy laboratory technique. Having to redo the analysis can also lead to uncomfortable questions about why the analyst needed two or more tries to get the test right.

So what is a DNA analyst to do if problems (such as positive results in blank control samples) occur too often? For an analyst who thinks that the test results are right anyway, it must be very tempting just to hide the problem...

Analysts who know that no one will ever check or challenge their conclusions tend to become sloppy, to cut corners, and to shade their findings in ways they find convenient.

In the Bode test, no one apparently checked or challenged their conclusion. The findings were never introduced in court, and neither Hollywood Police nor George Duncan had ever received the full lab file before Hollywood approved my request to see it. Even then I was unclear whether they'd gotten copies for themselves.

Thompson urged criminal defense attorneys, when handling a case involving DNA evidence, "to fight relentlessly for full disclosure of the underlying laboratory records and for appointment of an independent expert to help review those records."

An online training course for DNA analysts created by the National Forensic Science Technology Center, developed for the National Institute of Justice and the President's DNA Initiative, explains how contamination can enter lab samples:

Investigators and laboratory staff can deposit their own DNA during collection, handling, and analysis of samples. One of the most common sample contamination events is the transfer of DNA from an individual who comes into contact with the evidence. The most probable means of depositing DNA from investigators and laboratory staff onto a sample is from sloughed skin cells and saliva spray. Individuals handling evidence should avoid talking or sneezing over evidence, and gloves should be worn so that sloughing of cells onto the evidence is prevented.

In addition, says the course, contamination can come even from supposedly sterile plastic ware and pipettes. "Contamination can happen during any step of the process." And despite laboratory procedures to guard against it, "It is not always possible to prevent contamination."

Only a few labs in North America test forensic mitochondrial DNA, Kathy Gantzer said, and her lab wasn't one of them. They referred inquiries for that to the Paleo-DNA Laboratory at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She suggested I call there and speak to Stephen Fratpietro.

Fratpietro, the lab's Technical Manager-Forensic Analyst, said he works with ancient fossils as well as forensic cases. When I first described the Bode report I didn't say it was the Adam Walsh case, although I did say the tests had been done in 2003.

"It sounds like a big mess," he said. In the negative and reagent blank control trials reported in the Final Sequence Analysis charts he thought there was "random contamination." And since in each of those trials the lab had gotten different results, "It sounds like the results weren't interpretable," he said. But "they just decided to write a report anyway."

Bode's Susan Bach had told me that labs can tolerate contamination up to a "threshold" level. Fratpietro agreed it's okay if labs report contaminated negative or reagent blank controls in one or two trials, "but they should be blank the next time," he said.

“If the negative controls are constantly coming up positive, there’s probably an issue” with the reagents, the lab environment, or the analysts, he said. “Your blanks should be blank, and your negatives should be negative.”

I asked about the negative and reagent blank control trials that had garbage-y looking ATCG and N data, which Bode didn’t report in the Final Sequence Analysis, then later I sent him Bode’s full report, including those pages. He called that data “unreadable,” and said those trials showed unresolved nucleotides, possibly not human, possibly from a plant or bacteria source.

“Negative controls are a measure of your environment,” he said. “They’re getting contamination from somewhere” they couldn’t document. Because “DNA floats around, while you’re working,” the DNA in the tests was either “authentic to the samples, or something else.”

I asked, Should there have been any DNA in the negative and reagent blank controls, as measured by the ATCG letter data in the peak-and-valley charts? He answered, in order to believe the authenticity of the DNA measured in the samples, in the controls there should be no DNA, nothing. In a later email, he elaborated:

In the end, negative and blank controls should be just that, NEGATIVE and BLANK... If a positive control does not produce expected results and negative controls come up positive, then any sample results should be in question until the above criteria has been achieved.

On the phone he added that had this case gone to court, the lab wouldn’t have been able to defend its results, “they would have been ripped apart.”

But these results had never been brought to court, nor apparently were intended for it. Had they gone to court back around 2003, Fratpietro said that mitochondrial technology was then new and not well understood by lawyers, who might not have done well cross-examining the lab analyst. Almost a decade later lawyers better understand it. So in 2012 we were applying a different standard.

Fratpietro said there was an additional step in the mitochondrial DNA process I wasn’t aware of, just after the extraction and amplification of DNA: gel electrophoresis, which he described as a “visual check if DNA is present/absent.” He wrote:

When their negative controls showed DNA in the gel photo, the next step they took was to sequence out this DNA and get a profile. I can tell you from experience that sometimes sequencing out negative controls does not yield a clean sequence or anything readable as the DNA product is not of good quality like the samples would be. But, their negatives should not have any DNA in them, so in that case the negative controls were not ‘clean’ if any DNA is detected.

From the data, it seems that the lab is overlooking a problem with the environment where this analysis was performed and hence not concerned that it may be affecting their sample results.

It sounded to me like the analysts had realized that their environment was contaminated but within it were still trying to locate the sample results. I made an

analogy that it was like being in a forest with the task of finding a certain individual tree. Fratpietro thought that was a good analogy. I added, but within that DNA forest of contamination, another analyst might not make the same call. He agreed, adding that the environment should have been free of that contamination, so choices wouldn't have had to be made.

Contamination can occur very easily, he said, especially with forensic bones, which can be contaminated before they arrive at the lab. The lab can sterilize the surface and then drill inside the bone, however that doesn't work with teeth, which are crushed whole. A note in Bode's case file said they had used bleach-soaked wipes on the outer surfaces of the teeth.

Inside the lab, blank controls are easy to contaminate, he said. "Once you open a tube, you're opening it to contamination. If a single cell of DNA gets in there, it will contaminate." But since 2003, a lot of contamination issues have been resolved, he said. His lab purchases consumables guaranteed DNA-free, maintains sterile lab rooms, and requires analysts working in them to wear full body suits made of Tyvek.

About the analyst's personal DNA matching both the evidence and reference samples, I asked him the "how weird" question. "Extremely weird," he said, adding the caveat that there's "always a random chance it could happen."

Before I'd sent Fratpietro the lab report I revealed to him that the case was about Adam Walsh, that I had other evidence of a misidentification of the found child, and that someone had contacted me who insists he is Adam Walsh. I told him I'd tested his mitochondrial DNA and it hadn't matched Mrs. Walsh's 2003 results.

I asked, considering the problems in Bode's Evidence trial batches, should I discard Mrs. Walsh's results, and therefore its comparison to A.W.? (I didn't tell him his legal name.)

Reference samples are usually good, Fratpietro said. But in the Final Sequence Analysis report the lab had only shown results from its positive control, while the raw data from the six negative and reagent blank controls were unreadable and those tests weren't rerun. Therefore, he said, since the lab had never gotten clean results for those controls, the Reference sample results "can also fairly be disputed."

For the Reference batch I found the gel photo and a checklist page, titled Product Gel, which showed results TMJ reported: the samples and positive controls all had positive results for DNA, and the negative and reagent blank controls all had negative results, it said.

So Bode was saying the Reference batch control results were clean. Fratpietro wrote, "I think what they are saying, is that since sequencing the DNA band (shown in the gel picture) in the negative controls didn't result in a good readable profile, that DNA (whatever the source) was not a significant contribution to possible contamination of the samples."

I asked him, was this evidence of a dispute among analysts—he and TMJ?

Yes, he wrote back. "It isn't clear to me what they did to fix the problem of contamination or find out the source. Any sample results used in the same run as these contaminated negatives are questionable."

Faith Love had written in the Bode lab file that the test's purpose, in part, was to verify the identification of the found child as Adam. There was no conflicting



information in the file suggesting it wasn't him. William C. Thompson, the DNA forensic testing critic, used a phrase for when lab analysts allow case information to influence their test's conclusion: "examiner bias".

Forensic scientist Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, who had run the crime lab for the medical examiner's office in Harris County, Texas, which includes Houston, said she'd seen examiner bias in action. In 2009 she told *60 Minutes II* that "analysts can feel pressured to be 'cops in lab coats'—trying to make the science match the police department's case," the show wrote in its story online.

"Too much of the time the police or the detectives come in and they submit evidence and they stand around and visit for a while and start telling chemists their version of what happened in the crime," Johnson said. "That's a dangerous situation."

Examiner bias as defined or seen by Thompson and Johnson is subtle, not overt. As there is no reason to think that the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the paying client, much less the Walshes or any agency in Broward, exerted any influence like Johnson noted on the lab or its analyst, there is no reason to think that Bode, an FBI accredited private lab, would be beholden to any such influence.

But Bode surely must have realized that any conclusion it wrote that was not as definitive as the medium of mitochondrial DNA would allow might have suggested doubt about the found child's identity as Adam. By sending a report to the police that the DNA profile from the found child was "consistent with" Mrs. Walsh when lab contamination and data problems perhaps indicated they shouldn't have written any report at all, they may add to our list of those who either had cognitive dissonances or just recognized (or should have recognized) problems with the identification but felt they couldn't say so because challenging it was somehow out-of-bounds or would rock the boat.

Here are two other recent cases of DNA contamination, both that occurred during the process of collection:

In November 2012, after a millionaire named Ravi Kumra was killed in his San Jose home, a police crime lab found foreign DNA material on his fingernails. They profiled it and made a match to a 26-year-old San Jose transient named Lukis Anderson, who police arrested. "Bingo," a commentator wrote.

Only one problem, though. How to explain that at the time of the murder Anderson was in a San Jose hospital, picked up two hours earlier passed out drunk near a liquor store in downtown San Jose, his blood-alcohol content five times the legal limit for driving?

As it happened, Anderson had been transported by the same two paramedics who later transported Kumra. One of the better explanations for an otherwise impossible event was that one of the paramedics had inadvertently transferred some of Anderson's DNA to Kumra, and the DNA lab was sensitive enough to pick it up.

Anderson was lucky because he had an airtight alibi. Still, he spent five months in jail before prosecutors dropped his charges.

Commenting on the case, the blog *Science in the Courtroom* wrote:

DNA analysis is a highly sensitive forensic technique, and it doesn't take much to produce a testable sample. Cases like Mr. Anderson's illustrate Locard's Exchange Principle, frequently cited by forensic investigators. That principle is

described in various ways; one source describes it as “stat[ing] that when two objects come into contact with one another, a transfer of material will occur between the objects.”

Remember that next time you drop some of dinner to the floor and debate with yourself whether to eat it.

Also, in 2007, after a policewoman in the town of Heilbronn, Germany, was murdered, DNA results pointed to a female killer. For the next two years, the same DNA was connected to five other murders, making her the “Phantom of Heilbronn.”

It was “the most mysterious serial crime of the past century,” wrote a local newspaper. In all, the Phantom was connected to forty crimes with little discernable pattern, to include a car-dealership robbery and a school break-in, not just in Germany but also in Austria and France. Her DNA was found on a cookie, a heroin syringe, and a stolen car. There were never any witnesses to her, nor was she ever caught on a security camera.

Then in 2009, a break: to identify a burned corpse found in 2002, police took DNA from fingerprints on an asylum application. Again, the DNA matched the Phantom. This was problematic: not only did this person’s death pre-date the Phantom’s established murders, the asylum seeker was male.

How could a female’s DNA show up in a male’s fingerprint?

Investigators repeated the test using another cotton swab. This time they didn’t find the Phantom’s DNA.

It turned out that the shared DNA came not from evidence taken at all the different crime scenes but instead from the cotton swabs the police used to pick up the evidence. Somewhere in the manufacturing process a female worker’s DNA had contaminated the cotton.

That meant there was no criminal connection between any of the crimes.

The swabs were packaged as sterile, which removes bacteria, viruses and fungi. However, that process doesn’t destroy DNA. The manufacturer quickly issued a statement that the swabs weren’t certified for DNA analysis. Police technicians using them hadn’t realized that.

To look for the phantom Phantom of Heilbronn, police wasted 16,000 investigative hours.

*Time* magazine, which reported the story, quoted Stefan König of the Berlin Association of Lawyers regarding the risk of basing an investigation solely on DNA evidence:

DNA analysis is a perfect tool for identifying traces. What we need to avoid is the assumption that the producer of the traces is automatically the culprit. Judges tend to be so blinded by the shiny, seemingly perfect evidence of DNA traces that they sometimes ignore the whole picture. DNA evidence on a crime scene says nothing about how it got there. There is good reason for not permitting convictions on the basis of DNA circumstantial evidence alone.

In 2003, Billy Capshaw's psychiatrist Dr. Eugene Watermann had supervised videotaping sessions of Billy speaking about his experiences with Dahmer. Because Watermann's therapy was to get him to forget the worst of his experiences, or at least not be constantly reminded of them, he hadn't wanted Billy to view the tapes. But after Watermann died, and Billy felt cured by the therapy, he wanted to see them, and in 2013 he finally did.

Indeed Billy had successfully forgotten much of what he'd said, so he was stunned to see himself talk about this:

He'd had a long-recurring nightmare. He and Jeff were in the equivalent of a meat locker, or possibly a morgue, and Jeff was happily chopping away at bodies. In buckets or tubs or bins there were headless human torsos, severed arms and legs, and severed human heads, blood everywhere.

"That's just like what [A.W.] says," Billy told me the morning after he'd stayed up all night watching the tapes. "It's too fucking coincidental for me. I can't figure out what's real and not. But it's on the tape."

Of everything crazy A.W. had told me, perhaps the hardest thing to believe was the nightmarish scene he'd described with Dahmer and the severed children's heads in buckets, on ice. How the fuck could I corroborate that? But as Billy had just evidenced on videotape, he had spoken of nearly the same thing—six years before A.W. said it to me.

Might both Billy and A.W., albeit separately, have had their recollections (or dreams) influenced by reports of the horror scene in Dahmer's Milwaukee apartment when he was arrested in 1991? There were human skulls and torsos and body parts throughout, although none in buckets or similar containers.

No, Billy said flatly. His nightmares had begun long before Dahmer was arrested.

His dream was vivid and had multiple sensations: the room was cold, he was shivering, there was a smell of dead people, and he'd heard bones cracking. Jeff's eyes were "cold, dead." Billy wanted desperately to get out of the room, but couldn't—he thought possibly because he'd been drugged. He described walls and the cutting table of brushed metal, "like you could wash blood off them." There were meat cleavers—"I wanted to grab one and kill him with it."

"It's the most vivid dream I ever had, if it's a dream."

Describing Jeff, he said he was "happy, excited, he was screaming with joy." With his sleeves rolled up, "he's pulling them apart, cleanly. He wanted me to help him. 'Grab something! Let's get with it!'" Jeff told him.

"I have a funny feeling that Jeff took me somewhere, and I wanted to get out, so bad. And I was never the same after that."

"That dream scares me so much, I think it's real. I think it happened. And happened to [A.W.], too."



The killer had a name. The sciences and techniques of sleuthing could identify him. Law enforcement just needed to expend the necessary effort. To the question in the headline, the answer was knowable.

Said Sherlock Holmes famously, what one can hide, another can discover.

More than thirty years after that four-word headline was published, we actually know less than we thought we knew then.

Was Adam killed? Is he even dead?

Catching cons is sometimes itself a confidence game. Although the cops can't always con the cons, they can often con the public—and maybe even themselves. In the last thirty-plus years of official investigative work, despite deep conflicts in the evidence, police, medical examiners, the DNA lab, and the Walshes have implied certainties that have been difficult or impossible to refute at brief glances, which is what the news media and public generally give them.

Oh sure, built into all of their declarations were qualifiers, stuff that doesn't fit into headlines, like a contract's fine print—the yada yada. Hollywood police in 2008 didn't say Ottis Toole killed Adam, they said the evidence satisfied them that he did. The Walshes, too, said they were satisfied. The Broward State Attorney's Office penned its blessing with a reservation that they could change their mind if new evidence ever arose. Toole, dead, could never be put to trial, where his attorney could have disputed all of the evidence (and where the standard for conviction is beyond a reasonable doubt, itself a caveat for determining guilt). What put Joe Matthews over the top was the luminol photo that reminded him of the Shroud of Turin, although he admitted he might have been seeing "images in clouds." Bode wrote of its DNA comparison between the found child and Mrs. Walsh that it was "consistent" with a match and "support[ed] the identification

of these remains as Adam Walsh.” Dr. Cox wrote that what confirmed that the head was Adam’s was Monahan’s identification and Adam’s dental records.

I asked Google, “Who killed Adam Walsh?” and it equivocated too. Its dropdown bar offered, “who killed adam walsh ottis toole, “who killed adam walsh jeffrey dahmer,” and “who really killed adam walsh.” Results from the latter didn’t break the tie.

The deeper problem is, some questions, even those asked childishly simply and succinctly, cannot ever get answered for certain, that is, without qualifiers. Sometimes the answer can only be, We’ll never know for sure. All the science and shoe leather isn’t enough—and there isn’t anything else to try. When A.W. first wrote to me, he asked for help getting a DNA comparison to Mrs. Walsh. But as I just spent a lot of time showing, DNA results aren’t proof, they’re just evidence, flawed as are any other pieces of evidence. On close examination, Bode’s results showed evidence of lab contamination. In samples of old bones or teeth most DNA has degraded and what remains must be amplified—a step that can also magnify inadvertent contamination. Oral swabs, well-taken, are teeming with DNA and should overwhelm any contamination, said Stephen Fratpietro, however he also thought that Bode’s swab test results could fairly be disputed because of contamination in the negative controls. The problem seems to be, as he said, DNA testing equipment is highly sensitive, and DNA is always floating around everywhere, presumably also in “sterile” lab rooms. Repeating a new comparison test at a second lab would be a safeguard, but would duplicate results constitute certain proof? At a third lab?

This sort of inconclusiveness used to eat at me until I was able to embrace that there was an essential uncertainty in this kind of work, if not every endeavor of some size. Some things, maybe most every decision we ever make, we have to guess at based on the evidence we’ve gathered, or just nearly nothing at all. If you have time in advance to explain your decision, include all the escape hatches you can think of. They’re pretty much cost-free and they’ll help you later when your decision turns out wrong and looks stupid.

Around this time, I read a story in *The Atlantic* by its former editor Cullen Murphy adapted from his book *God’s Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World*. It’s really about the history of institutionally-sponsored torture to squeeze out crucial information, up to its use by the U.S. military and intelligence services after 9/11.

This is what struck me: the Inquisition, initiated by a papal bull in 1252, marked “the advent of a modern way of thinking: the truth can be ascertained without God’s help,” Murphy wrote.

“The ability of human beings to discover the truth was thought to be limited. Thus the reliance not on judges or juries but *iudicium Dei*—the judgment of an all-knowing God—to determine guilt or innocence.”

Then in the late-medieval period “a revolution in legal thinking... took the pursuit of justice out of God’s hands and put it into the hands of human beings... there was no need to send the decision all the way up the chain of command, to God. These matters were well within human capacity.”

But next arose questions of proof. What evidence was acceptable? How are evidentiary conflicts resolved? How much can you trust confessions, especially considering the means by which they are offered or extracted? “And in the end, how do

you know that the full truth has been exposed—that a bit more isn't waiting to be discovered some little way beyond, perhaps with some additional effort?"

The answers are what we all know but prefer not to admit: the processes by which humans determine truth are unreliable. To sell the marginally or desired true as definitively true we march out the supposedly unimpeachable authorities: in a criminal case the police, the medical examiner, the grieving surviving victims, and these days, the forensic technologists and best, DNA results. But it's all a shortcut, a fiction.

The proper answer to the *Miami News*'s headline, as it turns out, is "God knows." You can take that literally or figuratively, it matters not to me.

So now, after all this work on this story, to end that in terms of conclusiveness I'm back to where it started—that is, sort of nowhere—I confront myself, why did I bother?

I've never read the Kabbalah, but I'm told that it's the same experience, years of study to realize a full circle. Where is my enlightenment? I demand my enlightenment! Back to Holmes's line that one's secrets are discoverable by another, I would say now, that is illusory. More accurate is a rabbi's old joke (and I used this before in a previous book): A fool throws a pebble in the garden and a hundred wise men can't find it.

On the stage called a courtroom, prosecutors and defense attorneys argue competing narratives, judges referee, and juries of six or twelve (deemed wise men and women) make binary decisions carrying the heavy weight of the state. For determining the truth, the system is laudable—and deeply unreliable.

Murphy paraphrases John Locke, writing in 1685, considering similar thoughts:

"He made the case for freedom of thought and expression—and a certain humility regarding one's own cherished beliefs—on the grounds that, no matter how much certainty is in our hearts, human beings cannot know for sure which truths are true, and that believing we can leads us down a terrible path."

Holmes is an invented character who entertainingly misleads us into believing the fiction that others' secrets can be discovered. Geometry, not a fiction, misleads us into applying its theorem that there is a straight line between any two points; in the reality outside of mathematics, you can't always get from here to there. More than fifty years after John F. Kennedy's murder, at this point the definitive answer as to who did it feels unknowable. To pursue the unknowable, is that the definition of folly or delusion? Apparently it was in the fatalistic Dark Ages, before the Inquisition birthed us, literally kicking and screaming, into the modern world. Or at least, the medieval world.

The Adam Walsh case is different from the JFK assassination in that there is a legitimate Decider—two, actually: Reve and John Walsh. Should they accept A.W. as their son, Adam? They can examine all the evidence, submit their DNA for a direct comparison, and meet him, touch him. Still, they have to accept that either way they could make the wrong biological decision.

Their emotional decision is something else.

Evidence is real, and arguable, and so is emotion, but certainty is unattainable.

In its absence, at least so far, what I've done is to present a case that A.W.'s claim is worth the Walshes' close look. Had I not been able to corroborate it, a task that at the outset seemed impossible, I would not have advanced this.

But as I complete my closing inventory I realize I bothered to do all this not just for the Walsh parents but also for the boy in the T-ball picture; the found child (should that in fact be someone other than the boy in the T-ball picture); A.W., if he's Adam or even

if he turns out not to be; Billy Capshaw, who suffered from Jeffrey Dahmer and is heroic not in his victimhood but because he has worked so hard on his recovery, which continues and will continue for the rest of his life; all those who apparently came in even brief contact with Dahmer at Hollywood Mall that day in 1981 and were traumatized by it, but especially Willis Morgan, who crusaded to be heard, and Chuck Sutera, who may have been a near-co-victim of Adam; and the community of Hollywood and South Florida, traumatized by the disappearance of Adam Walsh and the horrifying discovery of the remains of the found child, who they were led to believe was Adam.

Now to something larger that I learned through all of this:

The crime stories I write about are violence against persons. On the headline level they're about ugliness. But under the surface they're about dehumanization.

Aren't all of society's problems, local and universal, ultimately about dehumanization? Some people or groups deem others less than human, and therefore, whatever happens to them has less consequence. Check the front page of the next newspaper you read and see how many of the stories are really about dehumanization.

My role in these crime stories, I have realized, is to bring humanity to those affected and to share that with readers. I do that largely through listening and making an effort to get to the (elusive) bottom of whatever happened during the criminal actions, to answer the never-answered questions that those affected inevitably have.

But there's another part of the criminal equation which I don't write much about: what happens after a criminal's conviction.

As the criminal has dehumanized the victim, the justice system in this country, and possibly in most of the world, considers it their mission to dehumanize the criminal. You made somebody's life miserable, we're going to make yours miserable.

What does this state-authorized vengeance-by-proxy get us? Is anyone healed by it? The criminal, the victim, our society? Doesn't additional dehumanization just beget more dehumanization?

Or is the lesson to learn from all of the criminal acts in the world, including the ones I've written about, that we need to do more to show those who dehumanize the lessons of humanity?

The name of the federal Bureau of Prisons implies only isolation. Some state prison systems, including Florida's, are called departments of corrections. In reality, they are misnomers, names left over from a previous era before we decided to "get tough" on crime and stopped believing that those we deemed "criminals" could ever normally fit back into society.

The politics of Get Tough on Crime, that is, the punishment of criminal actions, is so pervasive that hardly anybody anymore says what we should be saying: Now that you, the criminal, have been stopped and convicted, we who are wiser and more level-headed, the community elders, the authorities, recognize and are going to try to correct your basic problem, that you don't adequately treat all others as human. That is essentially why you've landed here. You should have learned that lesson growing up. But you didn't, or not well enough, and now we're going to keep you until you understand it. And if it turns out that you're incapable of ever learning humanity, that's when we probably should just keep you.

In the real sense, correction is mercy, justice, teaching, and healing—and not just for criminals but for all of us observing the process.

My parting words: Dehumanization is about de-identification. To dehumanizers, victims don't have important identities as individuals. If my story of the Adam Walsh case is true in that the corpse of one child was misidentified and that the living child who had been Adam was re-identified, the identities of both children were taken from them.

Short of the taking of a life, to have your identity stripped from you is the penultimate act of dehumanization.

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