

Ramsey media interview - May 1, 1997

JOHN RAMSEY: We are pleased to be here this morning. You've been anxious to meet us for some time, and I can tell you why it's taken us so long. We felt there was really an obligation to talk with the Boulder police ... The interrogation of Patsy and I, that is, I think as you know, been successfully accomplished yesterday. So we feel now we have a little more freedom to talk out and clear some issues we wanted to address.

I think one of the issues that was distressing to us and that perhaps caused some bias of opinion is why did we bring lawyers into this process early on, and I can tell you both how that happened and why it happened. The how is that ... after the tragedy we were being told by friends and family, and a close friend of mine who's also a practicing attorney, took me aside and said, "John, I think there are things developing here that I would like to ask your permission to do some things that I think are necessary to be done." And I said, "Fine, do it." And so he retained counsel for Patsy and I, and, we later learned - and later was in the next few days - that, the reason we did this is that, sadly for our country, most tragedies of this nature, the killing of a child, apparently in the majority of cases, are family related. And I think that's a, that's a that's a tragic statement for our country that because we were the parents of JonBenet that we were automatically put in the suspect pool and so to not have knowledgeable counsel, my close friends thought would be foolish. And we also at that time, as parents, I looked at retaining attorneys.

We also brought in a couple of investigative firms and experts; there were several. I felt a very helpless feeling as to what can I do to help solve this case. ... So we, as we looked at the group of people that we pulled together, it was not only to advise us in this process but hopefully to assist the investigation, too, and get closure.

To those of you who may want to ask, let me address very directly, I did not kill my daughter, JonBenet. There have also been innuendoes that she has been or was sexually molested. I can tell you those were the most hurtful innuendoes to us as a family. They are totally false. JonBenet and I had a very close relationship, I will miss her dearly for the rest of my life.

PATSY RAMSEY: I'm Patsy Ramsey, JonBenet's mother, and I'm grateful that we are finally able to sit together face to face. I'm appalled that ... either John or I could be involved in such a hideous, heinous crime. But let me assure you that I did not kill JonBenet, I did not have anything to do with it. I loved that child with my whole of my heart and soul.

We made a firm commitment that we would not speak openly until we had spent time ... with the authorities. That was successfully accomplished yesterday, and now we feel like it's time to talk with all of you. Quite frankly, over the past months (starts to cry) it has not been easy to talk with anyone. As with anyone who has suffered the loss of a child, this is a time spent with family and

friends and clergy people and, quite frankly, a lot of time in prayer. We feel like God has a master plan for all of us and that in the fullness of time our family will be united again and we will see JonBenet.

I'd like to take a moment to just let you know how much we have appreciated the hundreds and hundreds of cards and letters and pictures that children have written and, little angels and books and all kinds of things that wonderful, compassionate, caring people from all over the world, actually, have sent to us. We have read each and every one of those cards and letters and I cannot tell you how much encouragement they have given us. And at some time we have to respond to each and every one of those and ...

JR: One of the most heart-lifting things to us that came out of this tragedy was that while we certainly know there are evil people in the world, we have just been overwhelmed by the goodness that has come to us from people that we don't even know. We have received cards from Tenerife. We've received cards from Saskatchewan, Canada, Europe (prompted by Patsy), certainly from all over the United States.

I have corresponded several times with a little girl about our son Burke's age in southern Illinois that was very distressed by this. I received a card from an elderly lady, I think she said she was 85 and she had to wait until she got her Social Security check to buy stamps and send us a letter. And, it's just been wonderful. So we've come out of this perhaps differently than you would expect in believing that there really is a lot of goodness in the world and that that's been an outcome that I think we certainly didn't, wouldn't have anticipated with this kind of a tragedy.

PR: I'd like to say that we would, one of the reasons we asked you all to be here this morning is that we need your help from this moment on. I know you have been diligently covering this case and we have appreciated some of what you've said and ... not all of what you've said. We need to all work together as a team and we need your help.

Some of you may have seen the ad that we place in our local Daily Camera newspaper this past weekend. This reward money has been offered since the death of JonBenet, but we felt like it wasn't getting out to the public enough. So this ad with her most recent kindergarten picture will be appearing more and more frequently. And what we want to let everyone know is that this \$100,000 reward is for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer of our daughter. We feel that there are at least two people on the face of this earth that know who did this, and that is the killer and someone that that person may have confided in. And we need that one phone call, we need the one phone call to this number that will help the authorities come to a conclusion to this case. Please, if you know anything, I beg you to call us, call us. And I guess if any of you have questions of us ...

REPORTER: (You gave) ... an interview on CNN four months ago. But over the last four months, we have seen no ads, we haven't seen you come out publicly to say we need to catch this killer. Some would say you've let a lot of time where ...

JR: We've been distressed that the reward wasn't better publicized. It's been in place almost from the beginning. We had hoped that the authorities would have publicized this reward better. We frankly gave up and decided to do it ourselves.

REPORTER: John, what do you say to people who raise questions and criticize and say no amount of advice from any number of attorneys would have kept me from talking and telling them every bit of information I had ... this criticism came from Polly Klaas's father ... that you wouldn't take a lie detector test, that you would have ...

JR: We have spoken to the police, we spoke with the police approximately eight hours on the 26th, another two hours on the 27th (and) have supplied them with every piece of information we have, so the question that we haven't spoken to the police is totally false. What we have but what has been delayed, has been this formal interrogation of us as suspects. And frankly, we, we were as you might imagine, insulted that we would even be considered suspects in the death of our daughter and felt that an interrogation of us was a waste of our time and a waste of the police's time. But because we have to do this, we had to do it. But not under any circumstance that was presented to us.

REPORTER: What do you want to say to the killer of your daughter?

JR: We'll find you. We will find you. I have that as a sole mission for the rest of my life.

REPORTER: Mrs. Ramsey?

PR: Likewise. The police investigators have assured us that this is a case which can be solved. You may be eluding the authorities for a time, but God knows who you are, and we will find you.

REPORTER: I'd like to ask, short of an arrest, you know the kind of publicity around this crime and around you two as, frankly, suspects, are you concerned that without an arrest, you might always live under a cloud of suspicion?

JR: Well, we're not concerned about that. People who know us know who we are. We have a wonderful set of friends to which we're very thankful of. I've realized that more in the last four months, but an arrest is absolutely necessary in our lives for closure. Our lives cannot go on the same as they might have had JonBenet still been here, but I know how I feel today, and it, an arrest, must be made for us to go on with some semblance of a life and a hope for the future. Yes...

REPORTER: A lot of people have said that your actions, in particular the CNN interview ... the swirl of publicity around it, would you have done things differently, I mean, if you could?

JR: Well, I don't know. That was a time when the, really the purpose that Patsy and I had in doing that interview was that we were overwhelmed by the outpouring of caring. You know, it's

a tragedy that you know, many children are killed in this country every year. I don't see why this case in particular ... kept so much attention. But there was an article in the Atlanta Constitution that after the funeral when Georgia says goodbye to JonBenet, we were just terribly touched by that and just primarily felt a need to thank people and that was the principal reason ... and had really not intended to even do that, but it was spur of the moment.

REPORTER: You mentioned that in several hours with the police when your daughter was first reported missing, from the time that you found the note until her body was found, did you, who came to mind after reading that note? Who did you think ...?

JR: Well, we can't discuss that, frankly, because we've shared that information with the police ...

REPORTER: But did anyone come to mind, Mrs. Ramsey?

PR: You know, we would like to think that we don't know anyone that we've ever met in our lives that would ever do such a thing to a child, you know, but they talked with us and said, please tell us names of people, you know, who may have been in your home at any time. We just outpoured information, as much as we could try to remember. But no one specifically came to mind, I mean you can't imagine such a horrible thing ever happening much less somebody that you may know.

REPORTER: In trying to follow up, what does it do to you to hear these comments and reports from profilers and investigators, rampant speculation in public that somebody close to you may have been in your home, may have done this to your daughter?

JR: Well, it's, as a, as a person I think it makes you much more guarded. We felt we lived in a safe community, we still do. We weren't terribly concerned about security and privacy. But certainly those issues come right up to the top of your priority list when something like this happens regardless of ultimately who might have done it.

REPORTER: Mr. Ramsey, how do you handle that your daughter's dead, your son's alive and that you're a possible suspect? How do you cope with this?

JR: Well, it's, you know, at first we were shocked and then outraged and then we understood statistically that's a sad state of affairs that's apparently in the majority of cases like this in our country, family members or parents are ultimately involved, and so we accepted being suspects. But, what concerned us and certainly still does concern us, at least up 'til yesterday, is that any time spent looking at us is time that's wasted and that in part is why we brought in an investigative team as well to immediately look in other directions. And I know there are other directions to be looked at.

PR: Paula, I know you asked, how are we coping? I mean, literally, it was hour by hour, day by day, and there's no rule book written as to how you handle something like this and, I mean, we suffered the loss of our child as well as this travesty of all of this that's happened on top of this.

We have just, basically, have read and bought very little. I mean, because you can't, it just doesn't ... if anything, it's hurtful, I, I can't tell you how bad it's been...

JR: I think, I think probably the first issue that raised people's curiosity is the involvement of lawyers, and I hope that I explained that clearly. But I think we also as a country, and perhaps some of you as a reporting entity, are cynics. And that's kind of sad, and we are not perfect people, but we are not bad people. We are a normal family. We love our children dearly.

REPORTER: Do you feel that you have made any mistakes in the way you've handled things since Dec. 26 onward? Have you ... yourselves about any steps you've taken?

JR: Well, no, not really and we don't, we haven't sat down and, frankly for the first few months Patsy and I were really not capable of making any decisions...

REPORTER: John, would you recommend the death penalty for the person convicted of killing JonBenet?

JR: I would absolutely want the most severe penalty that could be brought.

REPORTER: John, do you worry, are you troubled at all that the delay ... and the formal interrogation with the police ... that it may hamper the investigation to find the killer of your child?

JR: No, no, absolutely not, this was a process that the police went through with us as suspects. I don't believe any information was provided that we hadn't provided very early on. It was a step that had to be taken. We have all along through our investigative group and people that communicate every piece of information we have and thought was relevant to ...

REPORTER: I have another question... You've shown us the ad with her most recent kindergarten picture, but most of the American public knows your daughter through glamour shots from pageants. In hindsight, do you wish that she had not participated in that because it gives a different feeling to what your family actually may have been? Any regrets about that at all?

PR: (Those are) beautiful pictures and I'm so happy that we have those pictures. They're all we have now.

JR: That was just one very small part of JonBenet's life...

REPORTER: You know what I'm talking about, you've been accused of dressing her up like a little adult. Was there any inappropriate behavior going on in that home?

PR: No.

REPORTER: Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey, what do you think about the investigation by the Boulder Police Department?

JR: Well we think there's some very good people working on the case, we've been very impressed with the people the DA's office has got on it. They're highly competent people.

REPORTER: How is Burke doing?

PR: He's doing very well, thank you.

REPORTER: And your other children?

JR: They're, they're doing well. My son is a student at CU. He's been widely reported as a mysterious dropout; he's been in class, I hope he's been in class, for the last three months.

REPORTER: What would you like to say to people who are watching this about you and about this?

JR: We think we are a normal American family that loves and values their children, much like most of the families in this country, and one thing we have learned, we learned it frankly, with the death of our oldest daughter is that life is precious and ... We got a wonderful letter from a lady early on that said this loss that you've experienced has touched me deeply and I will, I will spend that extra time reading to my daughter now, I will spend that extra time helping her dress her dolls. And if that effect happens to more than one person then JonBenet's life had some meaning.

REPORTER: Patsy, how do you feel about some of the mind games that were being played by investigators? For instance, saying that John Andrew's alibi doesn't check out. In fact, investigators knew from very early on that he had a rock solid alibi. And the fact that they held JonBenet's body trying to strong arm you 'til ... I could tell you were outraged by that.

JR: We did not know that until we returned from Atlanta. Atlanta was our home, we'd lived there for 25 years. We were, we were absolutely nauseated by all that and appalled. And frankly, that's when the worm turned.

REPORTER: Explain that a little bit.

JR: Well, in terms of ... we were coming back to in our minds, frankly it was difficult for us to come back to Boulder on the 31st of December. That was some pretty difficult memories for us. But we felt we had to come back to help with the investigation and we heard that that was going on, that was really disturbing.

REPORTER: Are there other aspects of this investigation similar to those that disturb you in terms of having some trust in people that were doing the investigation?

JR: Well, I think there's been some areas that were outlined in the letter ... that were pretty clear ... Well, I hope that we can move to a new level in the process. Our objective is to get this killer found.

PR: We want to get on the same page now, there has been an extreme effort we are fully willing to cooperate, we have been.

REPORTER: Do you think the Boulder investigators are happy going outside the family ...

JR: We are feeling much better about that, yes.

PR: I feel like they are doing a broad investigation, and that's all that I need to hear. I understand perfectly that they need to investigate us as part of the process. I wish that we had not been investigated for such a long period of time but that's their decision, that they have assured us that they are doing a broad-reaching investigation and that's all we need to know.

REPORTER: The majority of what has been printed in the Denver media on it, my impression has been that's been leaked on the investigative side. Are you frustrated with that? Do you feel some of the information has been very wrong?

PR: We don't really know much about leaks. You probably know more about the origin of those leaks than we do.

REPORTER: If the police told you that they may need to do any more interviews with you, would you be willing to do more and have they told you that they have cleared you as suspects?

JR: We had no conversation with them after we left the interrogation yesterday.

REPORTER: Do you believe the killer will be caught?

JR: I do, yes I do. We've been told by some of the experts that we've consulted with on a national level as well as assured by people that the Boulder DA's office has brought in, this is a solvable crime. And it will be solved.

REPORTER: Will you stay in Boulder?

JR: We're on a week-to-week basis right now. As Patsy said, you know, we're up to where we now look at what are we going to be doing next week. But the people of Boulder have been wonderful to us, absolutely wonderful. And that's been very heart-warming to us.

PR: We have so many emotions. We have very good friends here, we have very dear friends in Atlanta and other parts of the country. We've had a lot of good memories here, and, as you know, we've had bad memories here.

REPORTER: If you could, what would you say to JonBenet right now?

PR: I talk to JonBenet and I tell her that I love her...

REPORTER: Why did you choose this format for the interview?

JR: Well, this is a new thing for us, so we rely on his advice.

PR: This was kind of ... the setting, you all were kind of the leading journalists in your field and there are a lot of wacky journalists that have been following us around and ... they don't have a real picture of us and they don't put somebody in the picture that kind of looks like us, but they may make up ... there's no

JR: ... soap opera... Thank you all very much.