

# Violent death ends a child's fairy-tale life

As a supermarket tabloid releases autopsy and crime scene photos from the murder of 6-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey, police and the Boulder, Colo., community are growing even more tight-lipped about the case.

By Debbie Howlett  
USA TODAY

**Boulder, Colo.**  
JonBenet Ramsey wanted to be an Olympic figure skater when she grew up.

She liked eating cherries, inline skating, making ceramics and watching Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins*. One of her favorite TV shows was *I Love Lucy*. Her favorite color was purple. She liked monkeys because they seemed to laugh.

The person she admired most was her dad, John Ramsey.

"He is the nicest guy in the whole world," she wrote on her Sunburst USA International Beauty Pageant questionnaire in August.

Now, nearly three weeks after her murder, mystery still envelopes the case of JonBenet, the 6-year-old beauty queen found strangled in the basement of her family home the day after Christmas.

Police have made no arrests and refuse to release even the most basic details of the investigation. Every written record of the case has been sealed by court order. The lead investigator, Detective Sgt. Larry Mason, was reassigned after information was leaked to local newspapers.

But not every secret has been kept. Authorities are irate about autopsy and crime scene photos published today on the front page of the *Globe*, a supermarket tabloid. The photographs show a rope mark on one wrist and a garrote — a cord used for strangulation — that news reports have said was used to kill the girl. Three sheriff's deputies are investigating how the pictures got out of the coroner's office.

The Ramseys released a statement calling *Globe* editors "jackals, not journalists" and urging other media not to publish or televise the photos. Two grocery store chains are refusing to stock the weekly. *Globe* Editor Tony Frost said the photos were "very professionally and very sensitively" displayed in the paper.

As the investigation grinds on, the community seems to be following the lead of Boulder Police Chief Tom Koby, refusing to release details about JonBenet and her family:

► School officials have refused to even confirm that JonBenet was in



"He (Daddy) is the nicest guy in the whole world."

— JonBenet Ramsey wrote on her Sunburst USA International Beauty Pageant questionnaire

kindergarten at High Peaks Elementary School, which features a "core learning" program. The Ramseys chose that program over a closer neighborhood school.

► The congregation at St. John's Episcopal Church formed a human buffer between the Ramseys and a horde of TV crews last Sunday.

► Family friends, neighbors and business associates no longer talk to the media and refuse to respond to reporters knocking on their doors.

Koby has even gone so far as to publicly ask journalists to "back off" from the case.

"I know it's a media event, but you have got to give the family a little room," says Kevin Andresen, a computer salesman who knows John Ramsey through his work. "They need some peace. Look at what they've been through."

What little is known about Jon-



Photos by Dave Sartin

**Dreams snuffed out:** A week after she turned 6, JonBenet Ramsey competed in the Sunburst USA International Beauty Pageant in Atlanta, her biggest contest yet. "She never knew ugliness," her grandmother said.

Benet paints a picture of a happy child living a fairy-tale life. "She never knew ugliness," her grandmother, Nedra Paugh, told the *Boulder Daily Camera* last week.

JonBenet Ramsey was born Aug. 6, 1990, in Atlanta. She was baptized at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, the same church where her parents married in 1980 and where she was eulogized after her death.



"That child was a joy. ... She was extraordinarily bright and talented for her age."

— Wayne Doland of Denver's Tiny Miss pageant

ture trimmed in gold scrolls, pink ruffles and lace skirts on a pair of twin beds. Dozens of party dresses hung in the walk-in closet. A silver brush and professional makeup lay on the vanity.

JonBenet played on a jungle gym and swingset in the back yard that rivaled any park. A basketball hoop hung over the garage. She spent hours playing with her bichon frise puppy named Jacques.

She was never short of attention, with a 9-year-old brother, Burke, and a 20-year-old stepbrother, John Andrew, in the house.

She loved to swim at the family's second home at Lake Charlevoix, Mich., where they moored a sailboat christened the *Miss America*. The answering machine message at the home there was erased over the weekend. It was JonBenet and her mother, Patsy, giggling together and

JonBenet saying, "We're having a great time; wish you were here."

From all accounts, mother and daughter were inseparable. Patsy Ramsey, who turned 40 three days after JonBenet died, was a Miss West Virginia who competed in the 1977 Miss America pageant. She later earned a journalism degree from the University of West Virginia. She moved to Atlanta, where she met and married John Ramsey, recently divorced from his first wife.

Last summer, Patsy guided her daughter into pageants. "They were so serious about this beauty queen stuff," says an acquaintance, Dee Dee Nelson-Schneider.

Preparations for JonBenet's contest debut consumed Patsy Ramsey's time and cost thousands of dollars. JonBenet's blonde hair was highlighted and styled into perfect curls at a salon. She spent hours in a chair while stage makeup was applied.

She took singing and tap dance classes. She had fittings for her dresses by local seamstress Anna Zapp. Zapp created outfits for the young star that included a frilly, pink cow-girl dress; a black-and-white evening ensemble; a red, white and blue tap dance outfit with a top hat; and an outfit that could have been designed for a showgirl in Las Vegas.

From the start, JonBenet excelled in pageants. She won Little Miss Charlevoix in Michigan, America's Little Royal Miss and the Tiny Miss Beauty pageant in Colorado.

"That child was a joy. I mean an absolute joy," says Wayne Doland, who runs the Tiny Miss pageant in Denver. "Naturally she was very beautiful. She also had a wonderful personality. She was extraordinarily bright and talented for her age."

In Atlanta, a week after her sixth birthday and a month after winning the Colorado pageant, JonBenet competed in the biggest contest she would ever enter, the Sunburst USA International Beauty Pageant. There were 48 state pageant winners in the 4-6 age division.

JonBenet didn't win the overall title. But contest director Theresa Spooner was impressed with her runner-up finish in every category of the contest she entered.

"She was a little doll," Spooner says. "You knew right away she had a big future ahead of her."