

## Episode 13-1: Little Billy Gilley – Billy Gilley

(Theme music) Ring around the rosies, A pocket full of posies, Ashes, ashes, We all fall down

**Marie:** Billy Gilley, the son of Bill Sr. and Linda Gilley, will be the first Juvenile Family Annihilator we've discussed in this series. A Family Annihilator is a person who kills multiple members of his own family. Typically, the annihilator is the head-of-household, a male, in his 30s, and has a family of his own. But Billy is only 18 years old and doesn't even have a girlfriend. But he thinks he might have a girlfriend after the murders take place. How? Well, that's part of the story.

This is a two-part episode, but we won't make you wait two weeks to hear the ending. We'll release that next Tuesday. Today we'll give you a glimpse into the lives of each family member and what went wrong.

**Sherry:** Welcome to the Parricide Podcast. I'm Sherry...

**Marie:** ...and I'm Marie...

**Sherry:** ...and today we're sharing the case of Billy Gilley. We haven't talked about a family annihilator before.

**Marie:** Are there many family annihilators among our Youthful Parricide Offenders?

**Sherry:** That's an interesting question. And looking at all of our Youthful Parricide Offenders - the offenders who are under the age of 25 - there are 1,274 cases and approximately 10% have murdered other people along with their parents. A little over half of those extraneous murders will include all, or most, of the perpetrator siblings.

**Marie:** Wow! That's more than I would expect.

**Sherry:** It surprised me, too.

**Marie:** Yeah. Especially the ones who claim that it's because of abuse - because obviously their siblings were not abusing them like their parents would or could have been.

(musical interlude)

**Sherry:** In order to understand what happened in this family, we again need to talk about almost everyone in the family. Billy Frank Gilley Sr. – Bill - was the son of Irish immigrants. He grew up with his two sisters in an unhappy household with an alcoholic father - who firmly believed that sparing the rod was spoiling the child. The kids can't recall any positive interactions with their emotionally cold parents during their childhoods. According to *While They Slept* by Katherine Harrison, Bill's father was hit by a truck - losing both of his legs - just as his mother was filing for a divorce. This stalled the divorce; but Bill's mother still wound up a widow when his father's wheelchair went off the end of a pier while he was fishing. Bill dropped out of school in the 10th grade. He was mechanically skilled and employed as a migrant worker traveling between California and Oregon as work required.

**Marie:** That's kind of a rough start.

**Sherry:** Yes, but he felt he was quite successful compared to his parents.

**Marie:** Yeah. He made progress for his family.

**Sherry:** Right.

Linda Louise Higdon was the product of a brief marriage between her parents. Before she turned one her mom caught her dad cheating. So, she did what any crazy Italian woman would do - she shot him dead. She was forever-more known in the community as the Crazy Italian and Linda was adopted by her father's sister, Betty.

**Marie:** Can you imagine if everybody started calling your mom the Crazy Italian now? They'd be in so much more trouble.

**Sherry:** I know. That was so racist! But that was the times, back then.

**Marie:** (laughs) It was like the 50s, right?

**Sherry:** It was. Betty was determined to keep Linda's biological mother out of the picture, so Linda never knew about the cards and letters that were diverted and thrown into the garbage. Betty was enamored of her newly adopted, raven-haired beauty of a daughter - and she wanted her all to herself. Ignoring her two stepchildren, she lavished attention, love, and adorable clothing on Linda as she grew up. Betty's husband was a bus driver, and her spoiling of Linda left the entire family constantly short on resources. Linda's stepsiblings, rejected when she was adopted, constantly reminded her that her mother was the Crazy Italian - and was the one who killed her father. Linda didn't care. She knew she was beautiful and knew how to dress and she knew this would benefit her as she grew up.

**Marie:** Isn't it crazy how so much of the sibling rivalry that goes on, and the bullying that came out of that, comes from parents favoring one child - so it ends up hurting the child in their sibling community?

**Sherry:** It is interesting - isn't it - how that happens. And this actually is repeated in this family because Linda grows up to favor her youngest child.

**Marie:** Um hmm. That happened a lot, too.

**Sherry:** Yes. And it was to the detriment of her other two children. In the meantime, Betty kept Linda involved in their Baptist Church and watched her closely for any hints of that Crazy Italian. Any behaviors deemed crazy by Betty were punished severely.

**Marie:** So, Betty was the sister of the husband who got killed?

**Sherry:** Yes.

**Marie:** Oh. Okay.

**Sherry:** Bill and Linda fell madly in love the instant they met. Bill - confident in his manhood since he could fix a car, make a living digging potatoes, and drink any man under the table - proposed marriage. Linda, equally besotted and spoiled enough to not understand what she was asking for, agreed. But her parents were vehemently opposed to the union. They had heard Bill speak to his mother and they knew that old adage - that how a man treats his mother - and how his father treats his mother - is the best predictor of how a wife would be treated. They wanted better for their daughter and knew she

deserved a happier life. They worked hard to get Bill out of the picture. Linda fought them on this and her love for Bill stayed true regardless of what her parents did. They even sent her to a home for wayward children for two months, but she came back more determined than ever to marry Bill. So, her parents relented, and 19-year-old Bill married 16-year-old Linda in Las Vegas, Nevada on February 14, 1963.

**Marie:** Have you noticed a lot of these parents get married when the mom is still a teenager? I wonder if that affects their parenting skills.

**Sherry:** That's a good question. But I think the better question might be, 'How old was the mother and father when the parricide offender was born?' What do you think?

**Marie:** Yeah. I think that probably would be much more informative.

**Sherry:** Okay so, here, let me look that up. If we look only at the kids aged 24 and younger and we only include kids who tried to kill both parents - regardless of whether or not both actually died - we have an N of 233 moms. The mean age is 30 and the standard deviation is 6.9. I'll round that up to 7 for the sake of the discussion. So, the average age of the mother when she gave birth to the parricide offender is 30 years old, give or take 7 years. Which means a range between 23 and 37 years old. Let's take a look at the median. Oh, it's 29. There were several modes, so we're going to ignore those for now. And, considering the two Measures of Central Tendency - the median and the mean -the moms are typically 29 or 30 years old - but given the standard deviation definitely not teenaged moms.

**Marie:** Okay. so be very unusual for a teen mom to be the parent of a parricide offender.

**Sherry:** Right. And I'm betting that, because the men are usually older than the women, they'll even have an older average age. So, let's look at it.

**Marie:** Okay.

**Sherry:** So, looking at dads using the same criteria we have an N of 232 dads.

**Marie:** How surprising! It's the same as the moms.

**Sherry:** Mmmmm. They were 233.

**Marie:** That's weird.

**Sherry:** So, we didn't have information on one dad which - that happens sometimes. We just can't get the information.

Anyway, the mean age of these dads is 32.6. Which I'll round up to 33 for this discussion. And the standard deviation is 7.67 - which we're going to round to 8. So, the average age of the father when the parricide offender was born is 33 years old, give or take 8 years. Which means the range would be 25 to 41. And the median is 33 - which is perfectly in line with the mean. So, considering these two Measures of Central Tendency, the dads are typically 33 and, given the standard deviation, are definitely not teen dads.

We'll put the Stats Table, along with this information, on our Patreon Page - at [patreon.com](https://patreon.com) - that's p-a-t-r-e-o-n slash parricidepodcast for those who are Second or Third Tier Patrons and interested in understanding this all in detail.

**Marie:** Okay, awesome.

**Sherry:** Anyway, once married, Bill commenced to drinking and cheating - you know living the hard life. And that meant Linda was going to have a hard life, too. Linda was pretty, but that didn't matter to Bill, he still cheated. And they would fight about that and Bill's drinking a lot over the years.

They had a son, Billy Jr. in June of 1965. Billy's birth would be followed by the births of two daughters - Jody was about two years younger than Billy and five years after Jody was born, Becky came along.

**Marie:** Wow! That sounds a lot like bill's family.

**Sherry:** It really does - emotionally cold family, alcoholic father, man with a short temper, brother who's the oldest, and two younger sisters - it's a lot like his family structure was.

**Marie:** Yeah. Startlingly so.

**Sherry:** Unfortunately. Anyway, despite their fighting, Bill and Linda did love each other and they were determined to create a better life for themselves and their children. But their relationship was rife with instability. Bill left Linda and Billy Jr. right after Billy was born. He didn't come back for months. Then when Billy was two, Linda tired of Bill's drinking and philandering - so she left Bill and went to live with Betty. They reunited after Bill was released from jail for his second DUI.

**Marie:** Wow. Okay. So, two DUIs. He's got quite a problem.

**Sherry:** Yes. His first DUI was before they were even married.

**Marie:** Oh.

**Sherry:** But their peace was disrupted when Bill broke his neck by diving into a shallow lake in a park in Eugene, Oregon - rendering him temporarily paralyzed. He was hospitalized for several months and was, by all reports a cantankerous and miserable patient. They had him sandwiched between two mattresses, which they would flip every two hours, and he was angry - instead of being grateful for having his life saved - because he wanted to smoke and they wouldn't let him.

**Marie:** He'd light himself on fire!

**Sherry:** (chuckles) Exactly. And Linda found out she was pregnant with Jody at that same time.

**Marie:** Wow! So, just two years after Billy is born they've broken up twice, his father's been to jail, and now his father's in the hospital and Linda's pregnant again.

**Sherry:** Yes.

**Marie:** That's a lot to happen in only two years.

**Sherry:** It really is. Right around this time, they decided that it was time for them to stop being itinerant farm workers. Remember, Bill was the best potato digger around? And that really wasn't enough for Linda, who had a middle-class, Baptist upbringing. So, they saved up their money until they could afford to rent a little house on Dyer Road in Medford, Oregon. This was in 1970. So, Billy was five and Jody was three.

**Marie:** So, it took them a while to save up.

**Sherry:** It did.

Billy found sporadic work to keep them afloat and they worked together to create the stability that [Linda] valued and Bill had never had. When Bill became a tree trimmer everything fell into place for them, financially.

**Marie:** What's a tree trimmer?

**Sherry:** A tree trimmer is a person who goes up the tallest trees and cuts the branches out. It's not someone who's landscaping - they're up in a forest.

**Marie:** Oh. So, he's in the logging industry.

**Sherry:** Yes.

**Marie:** Oh, okay. I was thinking of someone who trimmed trees, like, for power lines.

**Sherry:** Ah. I wonder if they call them tree trimmers, too. I don't know. But I do know that he was a tree trimmer in the forest.

**Marie:** Okay.

**Sherry:** So, that financial stability had been a challenge at first, but six years later they were excited to be able to purchase a four-bedroom home attached to four acres!

**Marie:** That's how you can tell it's the 70s - they could buy a big house on a Tree Trimmer's budget.

**Sherry:** Right.

**Marie:** On a one-income budget.

**Sherry:** I know. That's a whole different story. But this would never happen now.

**Marie:** Yeah, but good for them.

**Sherry:** Exactly! Linda was very pleased as she felt her little family had now reached middle class status - which is what she yearned for. And Bill was excited until Linda declared that their new home would be a Dry State - and she barred all use of alcohol in their home.

**Marie:** Oh, I'd bet that was a fight.

**Sherry:** He was not happy! The home had two outbuildings; so one became Bill's garage; dedicated to his puttering, around punishing Billy, and - most likely - drinking.

Emotional stability was harder to achieve for this couple. Bill had had punitive, emotionally cold parents who did not believe in sparing the rod. Linda had been pampered and favored and encouraged to only think of herself - the rod was spared, and the child was - most definitely - spoiled.

**Marie:** That's strange they had such opposite households. We would call his parents Authoritarian and her parents Permissive - which are two sides (well, his parents were probably on the abusive side - but definitely Authoritarian) but it's it's the opposite end of the spectrum and together I don't know how they agreed on any parenting decisions.

**Sherry:** Oh, I agree. And unfortunately, instead of taking the best of both worlds - they seem to have picked up the worst of both worlds.

**Marie:** That's too bad.

**Sherry:** It is. He was very authoritarian, and she was very self-centered and wanted everything to be about her. So, they had few parenting skills to work with; but they did have the best of intentions not even realizing what they were lacking.

Their fighting continued and it continued to center on Bill's drinking and his infidelity. These fights got out of hand and frequently involved the children. For example, the Autumn before their deaths - it had been revealed that Bill had a daughter with another woman. Billy, tired of familial chaos and hoping to push his mother toward divorce, decided it was time to add fuel to the fire. He took his mother into the yard, extracted a promise that she not reveal her sources, and told his mother that his dad would mess around with other women when he was out on the road doing jobs.

Linda immediately located Bill and betrayed her source during the ensuing confrontation.

**Marie:** That's not very nice. She just promised she wouldn't!

**Sherry:** I know. She never kept her commitments to her children. Like I said, she was very spoiled.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Sherry:** But Bill - angry at the betrayal - decided to kill Billy. And he went to get his gun. 18-year-old Billy hightailed it out of the house and went to hide in a shed at a neighbor's house. His mom threw Bill out of the house for two weeks (because that was the longest they could afford) and she concocted a plan with Billy wherein they all went to California for Thanksgiving and he would stay behind and create a life for himself there.

**Marie:** Was that to hide from his dad?

**Sherry:** Yeah - sort of.

**Marie:** Let him get out of the house where there'd be less conflict and maybe grow up a little better.

**Sherry:** Right. And I think Linda, most likely, was thinking that would make her job as a parent easier, too.

**Marie:** Yeah, with Jody and Becky.

**Sherry:** Right. He had \$500 saved and Linda gave him \$200 in cash and \$400 in food stamps; thinking he could get a tree trimming job to sustain himself. He had privately decided to become a drug dealer - but we'll talk more about that career aspiration later. Unfortunately, neither occupation was achieved because he totaled his car as soon as he got there and ended up returning home.

**Marie:** Oh, okay. So, these murders wouldn't have even happened if he had made it in California.

**Sherry:** Exactly. Anyway, Billy Gilley was a bad boy. They didn't really come much worse. By the time Billy was in second grade which is about seven years old he wasn't doing well at home or in school this was about the time Becky was born. Billy claims to have loved his sisters, Jody and Becky, and describes

himself as having been their protector. Jody vehemently refutes this statement. She states that while they all played together well as small children, Billy started molesting her at about the same time they moved into the new home - so when he was 11 or 12.

**Marie:** Oh.

**Sherry:** And we all know what he does to Becky - he was most definitely not her protector.

**Marie:** Not at all.

(musical interlude)

**Sherry:** In school, Billy was having problems both within his peer group and academically. No one wanted to be his friend and he was always fighting someone on the playground. He was also struggling in his efforts to read and was generally failing school. Billy was held back a year, but by the time he was 10 he'd figured out that peer group thing. He was now the identified leader of a shoplifting ring.

**Marie:** Ah. Exactly. What every parent hopes for.

**Sherry:** Exactly. His parents were angry and upset. of course. And Billy was always misbehaving. He refused to learn from his mistakes.

Billy's parents believed in corporal punishment and they applied it liberally when he messed up. It was his father's job to mete out the punishment. But it wasn't making Billy act any better.

**Marie:** It usually doesn't, does it.

**Sherry:** It doesn't seem to. According to the book, *While They Slept*, by Katherine Harrison - Billy had his first of many psychiatric evaluations at 13 years old - on July 14, 1978. This was at the behest of the Westside School; to evaluate his continuing lack of performance and poor social skills. He was already selling marijuana to his schoolmates, but there's not a clear date when this activity began.

**Marie:** So, he had troubles from the second grade on up.

**Sherry:** I'm sure he had troubles from birth, on up. That's when the school started documenting - was when he was in the second grade, though.

**Marie:** Okay. So, what did the psychiatric evaluation say?

**Sherry:** In 78? Well, the school psychologist diagnosed a behavior disorder. And he recommended they get Billy one-on-one tutoring as remediation (because he felt Billy was very capable of the schoolwork), that Billy be referred to the school's mental health consultation team to devise a plan regarding his in-school behaviors (which seemed like that would bring some relief at school - if he started to behave he might actually learn), and he recommended Billy and his parents enter family counseling to aid the parents in designing an in-home intervention program to encourage good behavior at home. But none of these recommendations seem to have been followed.

**Marie:** I think family counseling was probably even harder than it is now, because even now a lot of parents don't want to enter family counseling because they think it implies there's something wrong with their family.

**Sherry:** That's true. But in this case, there was a lot wrong with this family and the stigma that would go along with it would be something that Linda would not be able to bear. You're right.

**Marie:** Yeah, and it's just hard because - not everyone, as we well know, grows up in a family that teaches them parenting skills and they may have gotten some if they'd actually gone to family counseling.

**Sherry:** Right. The family counseling, remember, was not going to focus on their parenting, though. It was going to be in-home intervention programs. So, they probably were recommending a behavioral program - where the therapist would teach them how to create a chart where Billy would behave.

**Marie:** And how to respond when he was disrespectful and sold drugs.

**Sherry:** So, you're right it would have given them a few skills, hopefully.

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean, almost everything can be counted as a parenting skill if you look at it the right way.

**Sherry:** That's very true! And these parents needed some skills.

By the time he was 15 years old, Billy had been arrested for burglary and arson. And he dropped out of school and he'd even run away from home a couple of times. At one point, his very frustrated father had spanked him with a hose; leaving lesions on his buttocks and lower back, according to both Billy and Jody.

**Marie:** (gasp) That sounds painful!

**Sherry:** Yes. And that is the one instance of clear abuse that they report. But no one reported it to Family Services - or no one took evidence of what had happened to him.

**Marie:** Oh, I guess they didn't have cameras on their cell phones back then. So, maybe it was a little harder to develop photos of child abuse.

**Sherry:** Right.

By the time he was 15 years old Billy had been arrested for burglary and arson he'd also dropped out of school permanently and he'd run away from home a couple of times. At one point, his very frustrated father had spanked him with a hose - leaving lesions on his buttocks and lower back, according to both Billy and Jody. I think this was after he set fire to someone's living room.

**Marie:** Wow, well I'd certainly be frustrated if my child set someone's living room on fire.

**Sherry:** I would be, too. But I don't think many people would think about taking a hose to whack him with.

**Marie:** Yeah. I think that's a really strange reaction. I've never thought, 'Oh, you know what would really work to make a child behave? Garden hose beating.'"

**Sherry:** Well, I think probably what happened is - back then it was very common for children to be spanked - and often spanked with dad's belt. And I think dad was so frustrated with this boy - because



dad had no parenting skills and he had a very difficult child - and I think he started escalating the situations himself.

**Marie:** Yeah. So, he'd go well this isn't working and try something more violent instead of more effective.

**Sherry:** Right. He wasn't sure what would be effective. But when Billy dropped out of school, things at home settled down. And Billy began working for his father in the family tree trimming business. His father was pretty successful with this. They were never rich people. But his father had been able to purchase equipment and move the family forward, until forestry funding was cut by the government.

But Billy was just getting started on a life of crime. His juvenile record indicates a string of offenses that would have put him in prison had he been an adult. He was involved in thefts, assaults, and arson before he ever turned 18 and Billy had a lot of contact with Children's Services. On October 9, 1979 - when he was 14 years old, so this is just barely before he dropped out of school - Carol Wood, of Children's Services interviewed Billy who told her his parents spanked him and yelled at him and fought over dad's drinking. And I think it's important here to note that parents spanking him doesn't quite cover the 'spanked me with a hose.' Spanking can mean so many things.

**Marie:** Well, especially in the 70s. I think that that wouldn't set off too many red flags - for Child Services - because most children were spanked.

**Sherry:** Exactly. Well, Ms. Wood confronted his parents and told them they weren't very good parents, and they were offended.

**Marie:** I think most parents would be; but...

**Sherry:** I think so, too!

**Marie:** Tone is so important when you have that kind of conversation.

**Sherry:** Exactly. They confronted Billy - and he recanted his complaints, formally, saying that he lied.

**Marie:** Did he lie, though? Those all sound like the truth.

**Sherry:** I don't think he lied. I think they made him lie about lying - which is kind of abuse, in and of itself.

**Marie:** Yeah. Certainly confusing.

**Sherry:** Yes. Well, a furious Bill and Linda also contacted Family Services and insisted that Ms. Wood be fired for her ineptness. And she was fired, and her report was destroyed. But on April 9, 1980 - so, about six months later - Billy and a friend who lived in foster care ran away from home.

Billy claimed he ran because his dad had knocked him unconscious in the garage and he'd lain there for the most part of the night. No one noticed until he came in the house after. [Over the years, they had never said anything about being knocked unconscious by their father. Plus, Jody added their mother was very conscientious about knowing where her kids were. If he had been AWOL at bedtime, everyone would have been out looking for him. More likely, Billy got caught sneaking in the house and tried to create a cover story that would shift his mother's ire onto dad.

**Marie:** Oh. Okay.

**Sherry:** Anyway –

**Marie:** So, was he saying this right after it happened - or years later?

**Sherry:** It was years later when he started saying his father would knock him unconscious. He has a chance to have a second sentencing hearing and all of a sudden all of these instances of abuse started coming out in his stories as he tried to find a way to get a lighter sentence

**Marie:** Okay, that happens a lot too.

**Sherry:** Yes. And Billy has a reputation for being quite a liar from early on. When Billy came back from running away he was taken into custody of Children's Services and Dr. Marie Taylor, a psychologist, interviewed him extensively about why he'd run. He complained about troubles at school - he also told her there was a lot of confusion and yelling at home and he didn't want to return. Billy was sent to the County Youth Center where he was housed and observed for a month. So, it sounds like they sent him to Observation and Assessment to see what was going on with him. Their treatment notes indicate that he told a lot of lies and that he was really good at it. He was also very immature for age and had difficulty getting along with others. The O&A staff reported he seemed sad, had a flat affect, and made several mentions of suicide. But he was also getting in trouble at the Center. The biggest problem was he tried to sell dried peppermint to the other residents as marijuana. So Billy was sent home.

**Marie:** That's such a classic teenage prank, though.

**Sherry:** It is a prank. But if you notice, the kids who pull this prank are usually pretty troubled kids.

**Marie:** They are. And they're often selling real marijuana when they can get it.

**Sherry:** And Billy was. But he was also selling fake marijuana several times over the next few years. And he got caught several times; so maybe every time he tried it.

Desperate to find Billy the help he needed to grow up well, Linda took Billy to be tested for chemical abnormalities that might escalate the behaviors that indicated he had a behavior disorder. So, she wasn't one of these mothers who went, 'Oh, he has a behavior disorder.' and used it as an excuse. She was a mom who really was actively looking for ways to ameliorate his problems on his behalf. And this was on June 23, 1980 - just a few months after the running away episode. This Specialist suggested they eliminate sugar from his diet as it seemed to agitate him and to not let him do illicit drugs - referring to his pot smoking.

**Marie:** Like she had been letting him do it, just for fun?

**Sherry:** Exactly. But they weren't letting him smoke pot. He was just doing it, like you said. And they had no idea how they were supposed to stop him.

**Marie:** Yeah, that's like telling people to lose weight. It's like, okay, if it was that easy we would have done it already!

**Sherry:** Right! And this was in the 70s - when sugar was everywhere and sugar – someone saying, 'Oh, don't eat sugar.' seemed completely ridiculous. And so she changed him to Diet Cokes and kind of gave up on the rest of the recommendation.

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean, she was already checking where they were at bedtime. She probably didn't know what else to do about pot.

**Sherry:** She was a pretty good mom, in some respects. She tried to give them opportunities outside of the home to take karate or dance lessons or different things like that. She took them to church all the time. She checked on them. She was trying really hard to be a good mother - she just really didn't have the skills to carry it off.

**Marie:** Yeah and if she'd had easier children it probably would have worked out very differently. But she had at least one child with some pretty serious behavioral problems.

**Sherry:** Well, and as as I research this family further, it seems like most of the people in this household have very disagreeable temperaments. They're not the easy-going, roll with the flow kind of kid - or parent. And that also had impact on what was happening in this home. It was fairly dysfunctional.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Sherry:** Well, while he was on the radar of Children's Services, the Social Worker recommended they place him in a Residential Treatment Center for troubled children. Family Services wasn't involved in this family because of problems with the parents; it was problems with Billy. But the parents declined. Despite the toll that this boy was taking on their marriage and their family., he was their problem and they loved him. They were not about to pawn him off to become the responsibility of a bunch of strangers. They would work hard, and they would figure out how to shape this shiftless, violent boy into a man who knew how to follow the law. A week later he helped some friends burglarize a home on Old Stage Road. Billy stole a calculator. A couple of days later they returned to the scene and started a fire. And of course they were caught.

**Marie:** So, he was a criminal; but not very good at it.

**Sherry:** Right. He was not a smart criminal or a clever criminal; he was just a criminal.

**Marie:** See, this case is unusual because they had a lot of people offer to help. A lot of times we see families with serious problems and no resources offered. But they declined resources.

**Sherry:** Right. Because they felt like they had what it took to take care of this boy. They had no self-introspection; no idea what it was they were missing or how what they were missing was impacting their child.

**Marie:** Yeah. And they sound like they were pretty, um, more of the rugged individualist types.

**Sherry:** Probably...

**Marie:** Yeah. They were like, 'No, we can handle this problem. This is our responsibility.'

**Sherry:** When you say rugged individualist, I see people in flannel. Like, being kind of like a survivalist - and I don't think that Linda was that way. But I think I went there because they're in Oregon. And he's a tree trimmer.

**Marie:** Oh, (laughter) yeah. I know. I just mean, like, they believe that your problems are yours to solve and they don't believe in getting help or, um, relying on your community to help with problems you're having.

**Sherry:** Most definitely. And they did reach out, but they reached out in funny ways: the Specialist. They didn't reach out in any way that said, 'Maybe if I do something differently, it will change the situation.' Which might be typical of people.

**Marie:** Yeah, I think a lot of parents really want to maintain that nuclear family and don't want their children to be off somewhere being raised by anyone else.

**Sherry:** Many people don't trust others to actually do anything but ruin their children.

**Marie:** Umm hmm.

**Sherry:** So, two months after the Specialist evaluation - on August 5, 1980 - Dr. Frederick Fried administered the MMPI and reviewed his past psychological records. The MMPI is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - it is kind of like a psychological tool that is very accurate and can tell someone a lot about your personality. It's very long and very complicated; so it's difficult for people to lie on it. And it has several scales - one of which is a Lie Scale - so if you do try to lie, it's sensitive to that and will tell the psychologist, also, that you lied. This test is usually used early on in treatment. I'm very surprised that no one had thought to give the MMPI to Billy before this time, but he was still pretty young. It was used to diagnose Ted Bundy. It can be used to diagnose sociopathy. It can be used to diagnose a lot of different things. It's a very useful tool.

**Marie:** Okay, so what did it say?

**Sherry:** We don't have the exact test results from the MMPI. But he did use this test and the past records to diagnose Billy as having a Conduct Disorder - as evidenced by his inability to experience anticipatory anxieties to deter his own behavior, his unwillingness to follow rules, his dishonesty, his vandalism, his theft, and poor tolerance for frustration. This is tantamount to saying that he would grow up to be a Sociopath.

**Maire:** Wow! I wonder if his parents understood that when they got the results.

**Sherry:** Back in the 1980s...I could almost guarantee they would not. Those of us who were in school for Psychology or very involved in abnormal psychology would have gone, "ohhh" (sound of dismay). But most people weren't into labels or even the psychological labels that are used frequently now. But this is the history that his parents knew.

What they didn't know is a history that was held by Jody - and her parents were missing quite a few important details. When they moved into the new home, eleven-year-old Billy had discovered a cache of prescription drugs that had been inadvertently left by the previous homeowners in one of the two outbuildings. Billy hid these drugs; hoping to take them to school and sell them to his schoolmates. He aspired, even then, to be a drug lord - thinking that that would garner him a lot of money; and he would finally get the respect of his schoolmates (because remember no one really liked him). Jody discovered his hidden drugs, and she says she confiscated those drugs and hid them herself. She planned to give them to her mother and tell on Billy as soon as she got the chance. But Billy discovered her perfidy first and insisted she return his drugs. When she refused is the first time Jody recalls being sexually assaulted by her brother. She says she was already afraid of him, so she didn't tell her parents what had happened.

Soon after that, Jody found herself waking up at night in her attic bedroom with the unsettling feeling that someone was touching her sexually as she slept. In the article, Day and Night by Laura Wexler, Jody is quoted as saying, "Eventually, I found Billy in my room in the middle of the night, and he'd have lame excuses, and I put two and two together...When I saw it was real, it was a relief."

**Marie:** That's horrible! To be so upset and worried that when you find out your brother is sexually assaulting you in your sleep - that it's a relief.

**Sherry:** Yes. Because she thought she was having, like, really naughty dreams and, remember, they're a strict Baptist family.

**Marie:** Or just horrible...I mean...those must have felt like night terrors.

**Sherry:** Yeah, I think so. So, this time she did tell her mother what was happening. But she says her mother dismissed her claims as fabrications and never did help her to be safe at night.

**Marie:** Her bedroom was up in the attic in the house. She was the only one who was up there. It would have been as easy as putting a lock on her door.

**Sherry:** Exactly. But this was devastating to her; that her mother called her a liar

**Marie:** ...and ignored her.

**Sherry:** Yeah.

**Marie:** ...didn't protect her.

**Sherry:** Yes. And then later, when Jody's father offered her "all of the money in his pocket if he could fool around with me." Jody approached her mother again and reported what had happened. This was six months prior to the murders. Linda did take this proposition seriously and Bill found himself sleeping on the couch until his death.

**Marie:** Poor Jody wasn't safe anywhere.

**Sherry:** No, she really wasn't. I just can't believe a father would be so crass. But I guess at least her mother believed her that time.

**Marie:** Right. I don't know why she didn't believe her with Billy. Billy seemed more out of control than the father.

**Sherry:** Yeah. But that's another story, I guess. Jody says her parents were mean to each other and mean to their kids. She said their dad would whip, hit, and punch Billy in the face. He would also verbally taunt him. A lot of this would be after Billy was caught breaking the law or getting in trouble; so I think that the parents were both seeing it as discipline.

At Billy's second sentencing hearing, Jody said she believed most of the corporal punishments ended soon after Billy dropped out of school - so he would have been 15 years old - and that's really important to think about. His parents were disciplining him, disciplining him, disciplining him in some pretty brutal ways and then - when he dropped out of school and started working - the disciplining stopped. But for the next three years Billy is fomenting anger at the discipline, according to Jody and Billy and fomenting hatred against his father for the discipline.

**Marie:** Yeah. It doesn't, the anger about it doesn't go away when it stops. But it's interesting that it stopped when he dropped out of school. I think a lot of parents would be more upset when he drops out but it seems like they saw him giving up on school and getting a job as another route to success.

**Sherry:** Yes, and it also refutes the model that children are killing their parents to escape abuse. He hadn't been abused for three years - according to both Jody and Billy.

**Marie:** Yeah. This certainly wasn't to stop ongoing abuse.

**Sherry:** Right. But, anyway, Jody's mother is the one who Jody said abused her. She said her father never did physically abuse her. For example, she said her mother once sat on her and blew cigarette smoke in her face while Billy watched and laughed. Her mother would also restrict her from reading books - sometimes destroying the books. Out of context, this behavior is difficult at best to understand or interpret. Jody also said she was put on restriction a lot and did not feel it was warranted; or felt the restriction was harsher than the crime.

**Marie:** Well, I think most kids feel like their restrictions are harsher than their crime - but the cigarette smoking and the tearing up books seems a little strange.

**Sherry:** It does. And I know it doesn't reach the level of abuse that the Courts or Family Services would look at, so I'm not sure how to interpret it at arm's length.

**Marie:** Yeah. It's certainly worrying behavior; but it's not exactly beating them with a garden hose.

**Sherry:** Right. Well, Billy and Jody both hated how their parents treated them. And this is something through which they found solidarity. They would get together often to complain. Just like they were doing on the afternoon of the murders. Jody said Billy thought they were allies; but his ongoing molestation of her made her feel more like a captive audience to a predator when she was with him. She would often do what he expected of her due to her fear of him. She had no allies in this family. Her only recognized allies were books. They were her escape, her intellectual mentors, and her solace - except when her mother took them away from her.

(musical interlude)

**Marie:** That's everything for now. Check back with us next week for Part Two of this episode - where we'll describe the murders and tell you how Gin Rummy, integrity, good decision-making, and new allies helps one member of this family survive.

We'd like to thank Jade Brown for our theme music and the Statesman Journal, the World, Albany Democrat-Herald, Corvallis Gazette, Times, Laura Wexler, Katherine Harrison, the Mail Tribune, and the Washington Post for a variety of information and the photos that we use for the show.

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Bye for now!

Bye!

(Theme music) Ashes, ashes; we all fall down.