

## THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | A MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE

### EP 44 Transcript

RUTH PARKER: I was in abject panic, completely shocked. He took every stick of furniture. He took the Bible that my grandmother gave me for confirmation, and he took *his* boys. I'm a mom. You don't give up on finding your children. You don't give up on knowing that they're safe. It's not a choice.

NARRATION:

IN ROCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE, ON A BRISK OCTOBER DAY IN 1986, CHARLES VOSELER TELLS HIS SOON TO BE EX-WIFE RUTH THAT HE'S TAKING THEIR TWO BOYS CJ, AGE 4, AND BILLY, AGE 2, TO VISIT HIS AUNT IN CONNECTICUT. RUTH KISSES HER BOYS GOODBYE, NOT KNOWING THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME SHE WILL SEE HER TWO CHILDREN. NOW, OVER THIRTY YEARS LATER, RUTH IS STILL SEARCHING FOR HER MISSING BOYS, AND THEIR COLD, CALCULATING, HEARTLESS FATHER WHO ABDUCTED THEM.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "A MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE."

IT WAS THE EARLY 1980'S AND RUTH GOTLIEBSON WAS IN HER 20'S WHEN SHE MET THE CHARMING CHARLES VOSELER THROUGH AN AD IN A MAGAZINE. HE WAS EVERYTHING RUTH WAS LOOKING FOR IN A HUSBAND — INDEPENDENT, INTELLECTUAL, A HARD WORKER — AND CHARLES LOVED THE IDEA OF STARTING A FAMILY.

RUTH PARKER: He was recently retired, as he told me, from being an elementary school teacher, so when we talked about how many children he wanted to have in life, he always said he wanted a classroom full.

NARRATION:

LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER THEY MARRY IN 1981, RUTH AND CHARLES ARE THRILLED WHEN THEIR BABY BOY, CJ, IS BORN. HE'S A SWEET CHILD WHO'S EAGER TO PLEASE. THEN TWO YEARS LATER IN 1984, THEY BECOME A FAMILY OF FOUR WHEN A SECOND SON, BILLY, IS BORN. BILLY IS THE OPPOSITE OF CJ — HIS INQUISITIVE NATURE IS ALWAYS GETTING HIM INTO TROUBLE. BOTH PARENTS ADORE THEIR YOUNG SONS, BUT CHARLES MAKES IT CLEAR THAT RUTH IS IN CHARGE OF RAISING THE BABIES.

RUTH PARKER: Charlie is an only child and told me from the beginning that he didn't know how to do babies. He would play with them. He would talk with them, but their daily care was my responsibility.

NARRATION:

AS THE BOYS GROW FROM BABIES TO TODDLERS, CHARLES OPENS A REAL ESTATE BUSINESS AND SUPPORTS THE FAMILY BY FLIPPING PROPERTIES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE WITH THE HELP OF HIS PARENTS. DESPITE THE UPHEAVAL OF MOVING FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, AT FIRST, THE YOUNG FAMILY IS QUITE CONTENT. BUT OVER TIME, THINGS BEGIN TO CHANGE.

RUTH PARKER: We were very happy and very much a cohesive unit, then suddenly he was spending less and less time with us. Also, he was not necessarily coming home at night anymore. His parents were there for that summer, and he was spending more time with them. He made decisions on his

own. He would make an afternoon of taking me and the boys up to visit a property and when I would ask him later, if that was something that we were buying, he would say no. But he did buy those properties. One of the final straws was, he selected a property in Rochester, New Hampshire as a next house that we're going to flip, and I was not in favor of that house at all. It really needed lots of work. We had very little in the house because it was dark and just in ill repair. There were bare nails sticking out all over, and I had had enough of that, because I thought that was absolutely dangerous. So, when we talked, Charlie and I agreed that I and the boys would move into an apartment for a while till that house got a little bit further along.

NARRATION:

WHEN RUTH AND THE BOYS MOVE OUT, CHARLES PLACES ALL OF RUTH'S PERSONAL POSSESSIONS IN A STORAGE SHED AND ALWAYS SEEMS TO HAVE AN EXCUSE FOR WHY HE CAN'T BRING THEM TO HER. BUT RUTH ISN'T CONCERNED, KNOWING THEY WILL SOON MOVE EVERYTHING BACK INTO THEIR HOME AND BE TOGETHER AGAIN. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENS.

RUTH PARKER: He came to the apartment one day and told me he had filed for divorce. I was very much blindsided. I asked him about custody of the boys right off, and he said he couldn't remember what he put in there. He couldn't remember the name of his lawyer. He couldn't remember when the papers were filed, anything of that sort. So, at that point I became very, very alarmed, so I found an attorney of my own at that point. During that time, the boys probably spent most of their time with me. I was working a fast-food job at that point because Charlie did not approve of my returning to my profession of social work because I would become "too involved and wouldn't have enough time for the children."

NARRATION:

AT FIRST, RUTH'S NIECE WATCHES THE BOYS WHILE SHE'S AT WORK, BUT SOON CHARLES SAYS HE'S ABLE TO CARE FOR THE CHILDREN. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE TIME, HE LEAVES THE BOYS WITH HIS PARENTS, AND SOMETIMES FAILING TO RETURN THE KIDS ON TIME. RUTH HOPES A LEGAL CUSTODY AGREEMENT WILL SOON BE WORKED OUT, BUT CHARLES IS EVASIVE ABOUT THE PROGRESS. ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9<sup>TH</sup>, 1986, RUTH GOES THROUGH HER MORNING ROUTINE LIKE ANY OTHER DAY. SHE CHANGES HER CLOTHES FOR WORK AND GETS THE BOYS READY TO HAND OFF TO CHARLES.

RUTH PARKER: My last memory was rushing off to work, and kids never want to see Mom leave for work. So, it's always a matter of, at least one of them, having to peel them off and say, you know, you'll be fine. Your dad's coming. If you had known that it was going to be your last day, you would have spent more time with hugs and kisses instead of being worried that you're late or, in that last moment, they're going to get their breakfast cereal on your uniform. I went off to work with the understanding that Charles was taking the kids to our old house, or possibly to see his grandparents, and was to return them on Saturday. He called me and told me that he had decided to go visit his aunt in Connecticut, and that he would be just a little bit later. He did not let me talk to the children and that is the last time I talked to him. He did not return the children on time. By Monday, I was very concerned, so I went down to his place of business, his, his real estate office, to kind of tell him what I thought about the situation and find out what was going on, and the door was locked. There was no business.

There was a gentleman coming out of the office with a box who told me that Charlie had sold his real estate business over the weekend and laid everybody off.

NARRATION:

SEEING THE EMPTY OFFICE, RUTH NOW KNOWS THAT CHARLES HAS ABDUCTED THEIR CHILDREN.

RUTH PARKER: I immediately try to calm myself down as best I could to get in the car and drive 15 miles safely to my attorney's office, before I fell apart. The first person I called was his parents, who denied knowing anything about it. They said they were completely shocked by the whole thing.

NARRATION:

RUTH KNOWS SHE'LL NEED TO PROVIDE PHOTOS OF THE BOYS WHEN SHE FILES A MISSING PERSONS REPORT WITH THE POLICE, SO SHE GOES TO THE STORAGE UNIT WHERE CHARLES SAID HER POSSESSIONS WERE BEING KEPT DURING THE HOUSE RENOVATION. WHEN SHE GETS THERE, SHE'S SHOCKED TO FIND IT'S COMPLETELY EMPTY.

RUTH PARKER: Apparently, he had gone through and taken what little I had. So when it came time to do a picture for the police to help find them, I had none. I had no pictures of the boys whatsoever, or of Charlie. He took everything I had — all the money in the checking account, so my car payments that came out of that checking account were two months behind before I ever knew about it. He took every stick of furniture. He took the Bible that my grandmother gave me for confirmation, and he took *his* boys. Charlie was a sociopath. A sociopath cares nothing about anybody else's feelings. The boys were less his children than they were his possessions, his property. I believe, and I believe strongly based on his behavior and knowing him so well, that he took the children because they were his.

NARRATION:

THE PARENTAL KIDNAPPING PREVENTION ACT WENT INTO EFFECT IN 1981, BUT AT THE TIME THE BOYS WERE ABDUCTED IN 1986, MANY STATES, INCLUDING NEW HAMPSHIRE, WERE STILL SLOW TO CONSIDER A PARENT DISAPPEARING WITH THEIR OWN CHILDREN AN ISSUE WORTHY OF POLICE INTERVENTION. SINCE CHARLES IS THE BOYS' FATHER, THE POLICE DO LITTLE TO HELP RUTH LOCATE HER CHILDREN.

RUTH PARKER: When I first reported my children missing, I went to the local police department, Rochester, New Hampshire, and they kept asking me about my car. And I couldn't understand why they kept asking me about my car, and finally the Police Sergeant said they did that because there were mechanisms and laws to deal with the stealing of a car, but there weren't really clear-cut responsibilities for children.

NARRATION:

THE POLICE TELL RUTH THAT, WITHOUT A PHOTO OF THE BOYS, THE CHANCES OF FINDING THEM ARE HIGHLY UNLIKELY. RUTH ASKS HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO SEARCH FOR ANY IMAGE THEY MIGHT HAVE OF CJ AND BILLY.

RUTH PARKER: Finally, one of the people that I worked with thought that when we had the company picnic, she had possibly, in taking photos of her children, had panned past my boys because they were sitting at the same picnic table. So, she went back and looked through there and found 13 seconds of a video that my boys were in. But that's where the pictures come from, and all the age progressions, are based on grainy stills from that home video.

NARRATION:

THE POLICE CHARGE CHARLES WITH INTERFERING WITH CUSTODY AND A FEDERAL WARRANT IS ISSUED FOR HIS ARREST, BUT THERE ARE FEW LEADS OVER THE COURSE OF THE FIRST YEAR.

RUTH PARKER: When the kids were first taken, I can clearly say that I was a mess. Anytime I could sleep, which was rare, I had nightmares. I could hear my children calling for me and I couldn't find them. Where is he? What are my kids doing? Who's taking care of them? I didn't have a choice of falling apart.

NARRATION:

FRUSTRATED WITH THE LACK OF EFFORT THAT THE AUTHORITIES SEEM TO BE PUTTING INTO THE CASE, A DESPERATE RUTH BEGINS TO FEAR THAT SHE WILL NEVER SEE HER TWO BOYS AGAIN. TAKING MATTERS INTO HER OWN HANDS, SHE REACHES OUT TO HER FRIEND'S HUSBAND, WHO IS A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR.

MONTY CURTIS: My name is Monty Curtis and I am a professional investigator, have been a private investigator for oh, 30 plus years now. My ex-wife came home from work and said, "This tragic thing has happened to one of my colleagues and, you know, what do you think we can do?" And I said, "Well, I'll do whatever I can do to help her out."

NARRATION:

MONTY TRACKS DOWN ALL OF CHARLES' FRIENDS AND BUSINESS ACQUAINTANCES AND INTERVIEWS THEM, HOPING TO FIND A LEAD, BUT CHARLES HAS LEFT NO CLUE AS TO WHERE HE HAS TAKEN THE BOYS. MONTY HELPS POST MISSING PERSON FLYERS WITH THE BOYS' FACES ON THEM AROUND THE COUNTRY. A FEW MONTHS LATER, A TIP COMES IN THAT THE BOYS HAVE BEEN SPOTTED IN A REMOTE TOWN IN OKLAHOMA. RUTH IS SURE SHE WILL SOON BE REUNITED WITH HER BOYS.

RUTH PARKER: In August of 1988, I received a phone call from Monty. An organization called Child Find had contacted Monty because they knew he worked with my case and told me that they had gotten an anonymous tip from a person in Stillwell, Oklahoma, who had seen a Child Find poster that CJ was on, and she knew where that child was, and his father, and his brother.

MONTY CURTIS: Stillwell, Oklahoma is a very remote place in the country. Why did he end up there? I think one of the reasons why he did certainly was just because of the remote area that it was in. Also at the time, in Oklahoma, they had paper driver's licenses. So, unlike most states that have a photo ID coupled with your driver's license, that wasn't true of Oklahoma at that time. He changed his name to Charlie Wilson and his children's name, names to the last name of Wilson.

RUTH PARKER: We passed that information on to the FBI, but before they got out in the field, Charlie somehow got wind of the event. We found out later he had gotten a note in his mailbox that said Uncle Sam was coming and he took off. So, when the agents got there, he had burned his vehicle. He had burned the house.

MONTY CURTIS: I think that him burning down the house would've been a good way to quickly get rid of anything that might help finding him in the future. It would be to also deprive Ruth of anything going forward.

RUTH PARKER: That was very, very hard. I had taken time off of work. The FBI agent had called me to tell me to get my paperwork in order because they would call me to fly out, to pick up the boys within 24 hours. Everything was all set. And then I received the call that he'd... he was gone.

NARRATION:

AFTER CHARLES FLEES FROM STILLWELL, OKLAHOMA WITH THE BOYS, DECADES GO BY WITHOUT ANOTHER SIGHTING.

RUTH PARKER: I am not sure why Charlie has been so successful in keeping the kids from view. There are days that are not great. There are other days when I'm able to put that behind me and do what I need to do to go on with life. There are months at a time that I don't have a lead and that's bone-crushing, but it's particularly bone-crushing when that lead that looked good isn't viable.

NARRATION:

DURING HIS YEARS INVESTIGATING THIS CASE, MONTY JUMPS IN AND LEARNS AS MUCH ABOUT CHARLES VOSSALER AS HE CAN, HOPING THAT CLUES ABOUT HIS PERSONALITY WILL HELP HIM FIND THE BOYS.

MONTY CURTIS: Charles Vosseler is a unique individual that I would probably consider a malignant narcissist. I think he looks at everyone as a tool, rather than a fellow human being. I think probably can come across as a very charming individual. He is, I would say, very highly intelligent. He took a very premeditated approach to abducting Ruth's children. He had been planning this over the course of at least six months.

RUTH PARKER: He had systematically removed my name from almost everything. The credit card that I knew we had, my name was taken off of. The bank account, I couldn't take money out of.

NARRATION:

STRIPPING RUTH OF HER RESOURCES MADE IT HARDER FOR HER TO CHASE CHARLES IN THE EARLY YEARS, BUT IT'S HIS ABILITY TO LIVE OFF THE GRID, SPEAK MULTIPLE LANGUAGES, AND CHARM THOSE HE COMES IN CONTACT WITH, THAT HAS KEPT AUTHORITIES FROM DISCOVERING HIS LOCATION OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES.

RUTH PARKER: Charlie's impression of law enforcement and rules of life were, they were for the lesser intelligent folks that need those kinds of rules to get along. He did not need them because he was brighter, quicker, faster.

NARRATION:

NOT ONLY HAS CHARLES VOSELER BEEN ABLE TO ELUDE AUTHORITIES FOR DECADES, BUT HE ALSO MANAGED TO KEEP HIS BOYS AWAY FROM ANYONE WHO MIGHT REVEAL THE TRUTH TO THEM.

MONTY CURTIS: Charles Vosseler was homeschooling them. So, this is not just a case of abducted children. It's more of a case of hidden children, where they're literally being hidden from the rest of society.

NARRATION:

IT'S ALSO LIKELY THAT CHARLES RECEIVED HELP FROM HIS FAMILY. AFTER THEIR INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH THE FBI, CHARLES' PARENTS REFUSE TO COOPERATE WITH AUTHORITIES.

MONTY CURTIS: I think his parents probably aided him in the initial efforts to get the children out of New Hampshire and to get him to, at least, to some initial stopping point. You know, whether they knew they were doing anything nefarious or not in the process, I'm not sure.

RUTH PARKER: Not only did my ex-in-laws know, they helped him. My father-in-law, after being confronted with some receipts and credit card bills that we were able to locate, he confessed to the fact that, for the first two weeks, he had been riding around with Charlie through various parts of New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island. My mother-in-law stayed behind to deal with some other details, like the sale of the real estate business and putting the house up for sale that we had lived in, which now they said they owned.

NARRATION:

MORE THAN TWO DECADES AFTER LAST SEEING HER CHILDREN, RUTH GETS A LEAD THAT CHARLES AND THE BOYS COULD BE LIVING IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, BUT THE LEAD COMES FROM A QUESTIONABLE SOURCE — CHARLES' PARENTS.

RUTH PARKER: My father-in-law did have a couple of brief discussions with an FBI agent, and he did talk him into letting me see my ex-father-in-law one time. And during those discussions with the FBI agent, he said that he had seen Charlie two times. Once, he and my ex-mother-in-law had driven through Mexico into South America and met him at some small town. He also said, in my presence, that the last time he had seen Charlie was at a train station in Stuttgart, Germany, but that had been many years before, and he hadn't seen him since. But he did allude to the fact that the boys were with him on both occasions.

MONTY CURTIS: I think the possibility he could be living internationally is very real. He is known to speak Spanish fluently. One of the reasons why he may not have been found is, if he's living in, let's say, in a very remote place on Earth, let's say a country, for example, like Suriname or, you know,

some, some place in South America where people don't, still don't have as much access to media as the rest of the world.

NARRATION:

THIS YEAR, CJ WILL TURN 40 AND BILLY 38. IT'S LIKELY THAT THE TWO BOYS WHO GREW UP WITHOUT THEIR MOTHER NOW HAVE CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN. WHY HAVEN'T THEY SEARCHED FOR THEIR MOTHER AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES?

RUTH PARKER: The children were so young. I'm not sure what memories a child has at 2 and almost 4. I believe my children believe that I have passed away, that I died.

MONTY CURTIS: I think he either told the children that their mother was killed in a car accident, that their mother didn't want them, that their mother was mentally unstable. You know, you're told those things at a young age and you start to believe them. They just don't know who they really are. I mean, if you've lived your life, let's say for the last 29, 28 years, believing that you're John Doe and you're really not John Doe, if you don't know that, then you're not paying attention to any of this really.

NARRATION:

TODAY, CHARLES VOSELER WOULD BE APPROACHING 80-YEARS-OLD. HE COULD BE LIVING OFF THE GRID IN THE UNITED STATES, OR IN SOUTH AMERICA OR EUROPE. HE MAY HAVE BEEN RE-MARRIED OR BE IN A RELATIONSHIP. HE MAY HAVE GRANDCHILDREN. HE'S MOST LIKELY CHANGED HIS NAME, AND OF COURSE HIS APPEARANCE HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST 30 YEARS, BUT CHARLES VOSELER CAN'T ESCAPE ONE RECOGNIZABLE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC.

MONTY CURTIS: He, at least at one time, had a condition that we believe to be something called nystagmus, which is a rapid eye movement in a horizontal fashion, like a quick darting of the eyes. His stance was one where he was known to stand, and either hang his head slightly to the right or left when he was talking to you, or listening to you. It would be a person who's... probably has an interest in off the grid lifestyle. It's likely that he's using an alias. If there is people out there that they know, if there's friends of theirs, maybe extended family now, maybe half-brothers, half-sisters, and someone like that thinks there's a story here that just isn't adding up, those are the people that should call the FBI. You follow up many more leads that are ultimately turned to be irrelevant than ones that are relevant, cuz really there's only one relevant lead here. And that's the one that leads us to finding CJ and Billy. I think the fact that Ruth is still trying to find her children speaks to how strong of an individual she is. Has this taken its toll on her? Of course it has. How can it not? It's not the cases that you've solved that keep you awake at night. It's the cases you haven't yet solved. Those are the ones that haunt you. And certainly, this one is haunting even more so from the perspective of having an unsolved case that involves two children that should have the right to know their mother, and their mother should certainly have at least the right to know that they're alive. It's, its always been about Ruth getting to see her children and knowing that they're okay. I think she should have the right to know her grandchildren. If that ultimately happens, that would be wonderful.

RUTH PARKER: Mostly I hope that they are fine, happy, well-adjusted adults, who have gone on to have wonderful families of their own. I'm concerned that, if they were raised by their father, they are as

emotionally crippled as he is. I hope that someday they get curious and submit their DNA to one of the Ancestry type places. I have listed mine and a number of my family members have listed theirs, and hope that someday I get an email, a call, from one of those services to say that they have located them. I'm a mom. You don't give up on finding your children. You don't give up on knowing that they're safe. It's not a choice. You just do what you need to do.

**NARRATION:**

CHARLES MARTIN VOSELER DISAPPEARED FROM ROCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE WITH HIS TWO BOYS, CHARLES JASON "CJ" VOSELER AND WILLIAM MARTIN "BILLY" VOSELER, ON OCTOBER 9TH, 1986. THEY MAY BE USING THE LAST NAMES OF WILSON, FOSTER, OR AMIDON. CHARLES MARTIN VOSELER IS WANTED FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF CJ & BILLY. A FEDERAL WARRANT FOR UNLAWFUL FLIGHT TO AVOID PROSECUTION WAS ISSUED FOR CHARLES ON APRIL 3, 1987. THERE IS A REWARD FOR ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS CASE. TO SEE AGE PROGRESSION PHOTOS, GO TO [UNSOLVED.COM](http://UNSOLVED.COM), OR IF YOU KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF CHARLES, CJ, OR BILLY VOSELER, PLEASE CONTACT THE FBI OR SUBMIT A TIP AT [UNSOLVED.COM](http://UNSOLVED.COM).

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

JOHN CAMPBELL: Probably within a day or two of the homicide taking place, I had an understanding of what happened to Kevin and how horrific it was. The gruesomeness, just how many times Kevin was stabbed, leads you to wonder what was going through the offender's mind at that particular time. And at this point, the only person who really knows is the person who killed Kevin.

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Unsolved Mysteries is a production of Cosgrove Meurer Productions and Cadence 13, an Audacy company.

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Thanks for listening to Episode 44 of Unsolved Mysteries.