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Questions swirl after second infant's death

By [Michael Scott Davidson](#)

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They named him Chance, because he was their second.

After the death of her baby boy Duane in April 2014, Kristen Bury seemed ecstatic that she was pregnant again, said her former landlord Diane Wood, 54. It would be the 32-year-old's second baby with Joseph Walsh, 36.

"They had tried to get pregnant after that, so when she finally did she was happy about it. She was happy through the whole pregnancy," Wood said. "They told me they were going to name him Chance because they hoped he had a chance at life when the other baby didn't."

Duane's death hit the couple hard.

Wood remembered meeting them years earlier when they lived at a home across from hers on Lullaby Road. They had barbecued together from time to time.

The couple seemed stable, so it surprised Wood when they showed up at her home unannounced and desperate one night close to a year after Duane's death.

"They just came knocking on my door at about 11 at night one night saying they were homeless and needed place to stay," she said.

Kristen was pregnant with Chance, so Wood gave them a room.

The couple paid rent when they could. She let it slide when they couldn't.

Prior to Duane's death, Walsh and Bury had appeared inseparable from him. Wood said the couple often talked of their lost baby boy while living with her, their conversations ranging from sorrowful to fond recollections.

"He was never forgotten," Wood said. "He was their pride and joy."

'Unusual finding'

Duane Walsh died from a severe, acute kidney infection on April 4, 2014. He was 22 days old.

According to interviews, police records and investigatory documents:

Early that afternoon, Duane's parents called 911 and reported that he was unresponsive.

A North Port paramedic found Duane in his parents' bedroom, lying face up on the ground between the playpen and the door. His heart was not beating.

Duane was pale with dark colored patches on his skin. Blood was coming from his nostrils.

He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Bury told paramedics that Duane had been vomiting earlier that week and that

morning. She took Duane to a doctor, she said, but was told his condition was normal.

She, Walsh and Duane took a nap in their bed sometime after feeding Duane at 8 a.m. They woke up around 1 p.m. and found the baby unresponsive.

As police escorted the couple from the home, Bury was reported as saying "I killed my baby."

Sarasota County's chief medical examiner, Dr. Russell Vega, later determined Duane died a natural death.

Vega said it was the only time in his nearly 20-year-long career that his office had handled an infant who died of an acute kidney infection. But, he stressed, the cause of death was natural.

"Both the autopsy and the background investigation, were not very different than most other infant deaths we see," he said. "It didn't raise any red flags for me. It was just an unusual finding."

Vega's office will conduct an autopsy on the body detectives found Thursday, which is believed to be Chance. A positive identification could spark a review of Duane's autopsy, Vega said.

Fateful meeting

Douglas Card, 69, said Walsh and Bury met while renting separate rooms at his home.

When he looks at their mugshots now, he has a hard time recognizing the sunken and disheveled faces staring back at him.

Things have changed since the summer of 2012.

"Joe looked like he was a space cadet. That's not Joe," Card said. "That's not the way Kristen looked when I met her."

There were other differences as well, Card said. First of all, Walsh and Bury didn't know each other when they moved into his home on Lullaby Road.

When Bury arrived, she was married to and living with another man, according to Card. Not long after, Walsh began renting a room as well.

Walsh was working at Charlotte Motor Cars after finishing a drug rehabilitation program, Card said. He was shy and reserved.

At first, Kristen Bury didn't want Walsh living in the home, Card said. But eventually her husband moved out, and she and Walsh became a couple.

Time passed. Walsh lost his job. Duane was born, then died.

The grief-stricken couple left Card's home and bounced around from place to place in southern Sarasota County, the landlord said. Walsh called him once, crying because they were homeless.

Eventually they wound up at Wood's home across the street. Calamity was not far behind.

Drug trouble

Walsh and Bury were nice people, Wood said, but they had their vices.

While living with her, she said, they both took Subutex, a medication to fight opiate dependence. Kristen was pregnant with Chance at the time.

On June 10, Walsh had a bad experience with cocaine.

North Port police responded to their home shortly after 7 a.m. that day, police records show. Walsh was calling 911 nonstop for no apparent reason.

Bury told police that he was paranoid after taking two lines of cocaine, records show. He was dialing a phone in each hand.

Walsh refused to talk to the responding police. He was later charged with misuse of the 911 system.

Three days later — a month before Chance was born — Wood's house caught on fire.

The fire's exact cause remains undetermined.

According to official reports, it started in the home's garage. It was where Bury and Walsh stored their baby items.

Wood and Bury reported they were cooking when they heard crackling in the garage. Walsh was not home when the fire was reported.

The fire spread to the wooden-frame home's attic and roof before firefighters extinguished it.

Everyone had to move out. The American Red Cross put Walsh and Bury in room No. 208 at the Budget Inn in North Port.

The Florida Division of State Fire Marshal responded to the scene and found no physical evidence that the fire was deliberate.

Wood said she believes the fire was electrical in nature. However, the fire's cause was never determined.

The case was closed for lack of further leads.

Charity

All her life, Christine Zagrobelny said she has tried to help others.

So when she heard of a local family that lost almost everything in a fire, the 66-year-old restaurateur sprang into action.

“No job. No home. Baby on the way,” Zagrobelny recalled. “These people needed help.”

So in mid-summer, The Olde World Restaurant in North Port hosted a quarter-auction fundraiser for Bury and Walsh. More than a dozen vendors donated merchandise.

The event, according to Zagrobelny, was a marked success.

Attendees crowded the restaurant's Sherwood Forest Lounge, a white room with big windows and black chandeliers. Spices, candles and other donated auction items lined the walls.

“Our customers at the bar gave money, even though they weren't part of the fundraiser,” Zagrobelny said. “This was a miracle baby for them. Everybody tried to chip in.”

At that point Chance had just been born. He was cute and healthy looking.

Bury showed up in slacks and a nice top, Zagrobelny said. Walsh mostly sat in a corner; he appeared sick.

“I felt they were embarrassed,” she said. “He didn't speak much. She did all the talking.”

Afterward, Bury told the staff that they had made enough money to buy a used car. She asked about coming back and working at the restaurant.

It was the last time Zagrobelny saw them.

Resentment

Soon after Chance's birth, Bury's joy seemingly turned to resentment.

Bury complained that her new baby was fussy and cried too much, Wood said. The family moved into a duplex on Orduna Drive and became reclusive.

“The difference between the way they were with Duane and the way they were with Chance was totally a 180,” Wood said. “Her words were 'I thought it would help with the loss of Duane, but it's made it worse.'”

A week before she and Walsh left Florida, Bury told Wood she might give the baby up for adoption. Investigation documents indicate that Chance might have been already been dead. Bury reportedly said that she “despised” the baby and would harm him.

Wood's gut tells her that the body detectives found Thursday is Chance. She has a hard time fathoming how it could all end like this.

“I've been sitting here and trying to figure out why,” she said. “What happened that was so horrible with Chance that they would choose death over life for this child? They had so many options.”

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