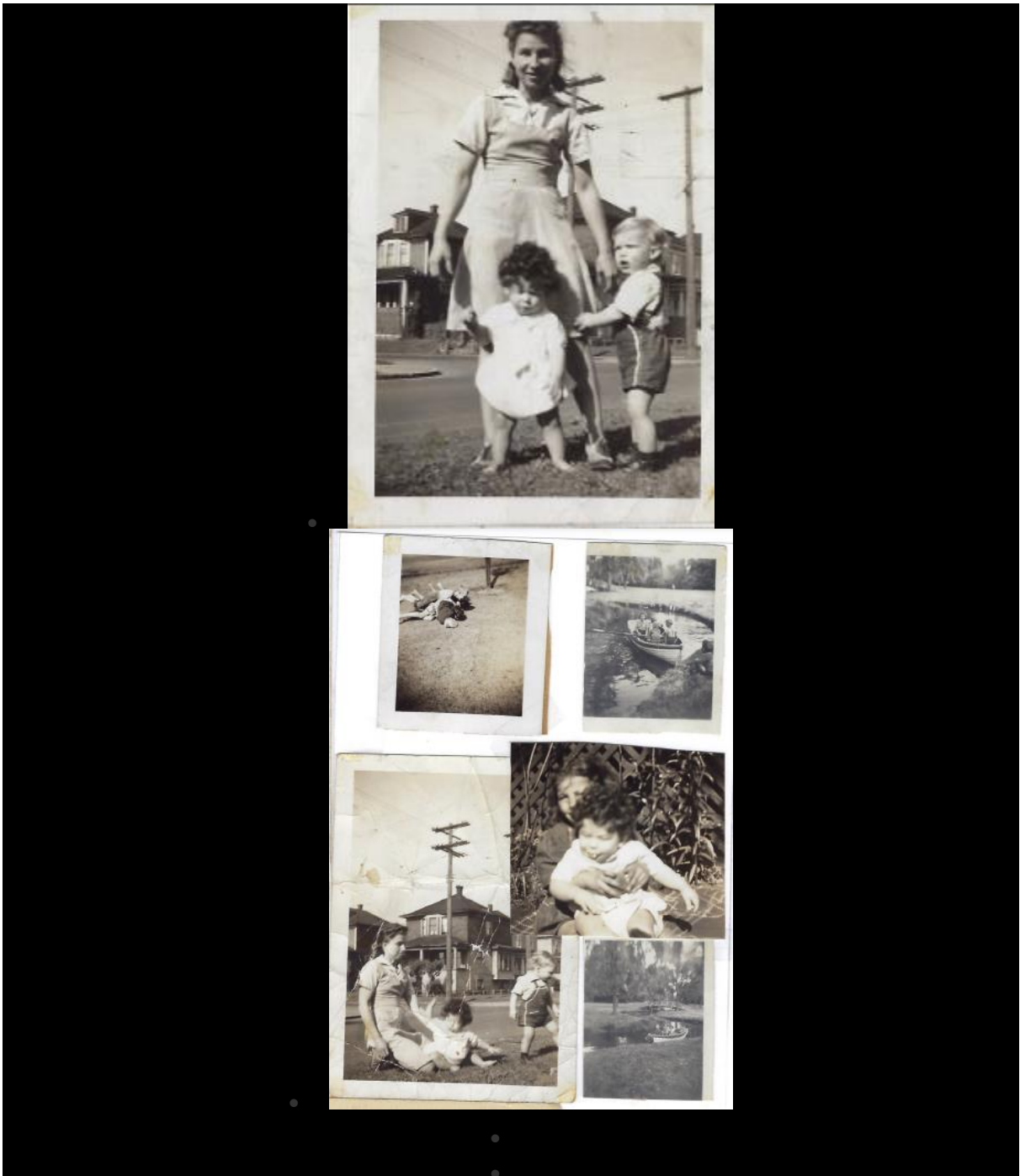


Babes in the Woods: After nearly 70 years, remains of children found in Stanley Park finally identified

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Eve Lazarus

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When Ally Brady spit into a tube in 2020, she had no idea that her DNA would solve one of Vancouver's oldest and coldest murder mysteries.

Ally Brady, 26 was flicking through the family album one day when she discovered that she had two great uncles who she had never met. The older boy had blonde hair and blue eyes, and the younger had darker features. When Ally asked her grandmother Diane who they were, she found out they were Diane's younger brothers David and Derek Bousquet.

"I remember my mother sharing stories with me about her mother's poverty and how they used to jump out of windows at places they were renting in Vancouver to avoid having to pay because they were just so poor." Ally says that she was told the two little boys were taken away by social services because their mother Eileen, a sex worker of Metis heritage, was too poor to look after them. Diane remained with her mother.

But when Ally's Mum pressed her mother for more information, Diane would tell her: "we don't talk about that" or "that's in the past."

In 2020, Ally decided to search for her great uncles—hoping to find them still alive, or at least trace their children or grandchildren. Her mother took a swab from Diane, who was by then suffering from Dementia, and sent it off to MyHeritage. Ally spit in a tube and sent it to 23AndMe—a genealogy database where people go to learn about their ancestry and locate lost relatives.

Ally didn't have the boy's birth certificates or know the year they disappeared, but she knew that Diane was born in July 1937 and was the oldest and then came Derek and David. All three children attended Henry Hudson Elementary in Kitsilano.

Ally uploaded her DNA to Ancestry, MyHeritage and several other genealogy platforms including GEDmatch—which was used by law enforcement to identify the Golden State serial killer in 2018. She hoped her DNA would lead her to her uncles, instead, what she found was devastating.

Last May, the Vancouver Police Department partnered with the BC Coroners Service and Massachusetts-based Redgrave Research Forensic Services, to try and identify the Babes in the Woods. Most of their remains had been cremated in the 1990s and only a few fragments were left. Because they had been handled by many people over the years—and been on display at both the Vancouver Police Museum and the PNE—the DNA was contaminated, making it difficult to get a sample. But in January, Redgrave announced that they had succeeded in extracting a DNA kit from the bone fragments of the older boy (Derek), had uploaded it to GEDmatch, and their team of forensic genetic genealogists were building out family trees and searching for living relatives.

Then, earlier this month, Ally's mother was approached by a VPD detective who told her that her uncles were the two skeletons that had been found in Stanley Park in 1953 and who were known for the next seven decades as the Babes in the Woods.

Their mother, Eileen Bousquet was born in Alberta, and as far as Ally is aware all three of her children—Diane, Derek and David were born in Vancouver. Detectives told Ally's mother that they couldn't find any records to indicate that the boys were taken into the custody of child protection services as she had been told.

Police have always believed that the boys were killed by their mother, who covered them up with her coat and most likely committed suicide soon afterwards.

Ally was three months old when her great grandmother Eileen died in 1996 at age 78. "My Mum always described my great grandmother [Eileen] as a non-violent woman and it's hard for her to come to terms with the possibility that she may have done this."

Ally says Diane did not know who her father was or who the fathers were of her half-brothers. "That's something I've been trying to trace with Ancestry, but so far no luck," she says. "Even though it came to a devastating resolution, at least we know what happened," she says.