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Better call Burke: Justin Timberlake is the latest of Eddie Burke's high-profile clients.

LONG ISLAND BABYLON

The Hamptons' Mr. Fixit

If you're rich and live on the East End, Eddie Burke can make your problems disappear

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On a Tuesday night in mid-June, Justin Timberlake found himself at Sag Harbor's American Hotel, on Main Street, enjoying what the singer described as a "one martini" dinner, although a witness told the *New York Post* that Timberlake was "wasted" and "drinking other people's drinks."

After the dinner, Timberlake got into his 2025 BMW and was then twice pulled over by Michael Arkinson, a 24-year-old Sag Harbor Village cop: the first time for weaving in and out of traffic; the second, for rolling through a stop sign. Unsteady on his feet, Timberlake refused to take a Breathalyzer, so Arkinson arrested him, and the singer spent the night toggling between holding cells in Sag Harbor and nearby Wainscott. Timberlake has pleaded not guilty.



Left, the American Hotel, where Justin Timberlake was allegedly "wasted"; right, an artist's depiction of his mug shot at a local gallery.

In the aftermath of Timberlake's arrest, Main Street began attracting tourists keen on big name Schadenfreude. The American Hotel is just a few hundred feet from the village police station where Timberlake was arraigned, and just opposite the Romany Kramoris Gallery, where you can buy a Pop-art version of the pop star's mug shot for \$520. However, most visitors don't notice the gold-lettered office door just across the street from the hotel, which belongs to Edward Burke Jr.

The night of his arrest, Timberlake, who does not own a house in the Hamptons, found himself on terra incognita and uncertain of who could help him. Allegedly, a police employee who kept him company through the night suggested that he had better call Burke. A representative for Timberlake did not respond to AIR MAIL's request for comment.

Over the years, Burke has developed a reputation for turning a misdemeanor into a mere slap on the wrist. "Eddie is Eddie. He works magic. He's the Hamptons' go-to guy," says T. E. McMorrow, who has covered crime on the East End for more than 15 years. "Eddie's superpower is as a negotiator. He really understands the system and how to make things work. He's a natural. If he didn't exist, you'd have to invent him. He's like butter, he's so smooth."

The morning after Timberlake's D.W.I. arrest, Burke, wearing a freshly pressed navy suit, led Timberlake out of his first arraignment. When pictures of the duo flooded a local paper's Instagram account, the comments included: "Good ole Eddie to the rescue!!," "Better call Saul," and "Was there any doubt who his attorney would be?"

And, on the morning of July 26, at a hearing on Timberlake's case, a confident Burke could be found surrounded by a gaggle of reporters insisting that the singer had not been intoxicated on the night in question and, furthermore, should have the misdemeanor charge against him dismissed because the arrest paperwork had been signed by a part-time police officer instead of a sergeant. Timberlake, who is on tour in Europe, was not at the hearing. But this was always going to be the Eddie Burke show.

Fixing Lizzie Grubman

Burke, 59, first made a name for himself in the summer of 2001, when he came to the rescue of socialite turned publicist Lizzie Grubman after she backed her father's Mercedes into a crowd outside of a Southampton nightclub, injuring 16 people and fleeing the scene. She was soon photographed outside of court, sobbing on Burke's shoulder, and the publicity he got from the case—which included a *New York Times* profile—transformed him from a small-town contender of traffic tickets into an in-demand fixer for the 1 percent in distress.

In the years since, Burke has amassed a roster of eminent people in peril, from the artist then known as Puff Daddy (noise complaints at his White Party in 2004) to N.B.A. coach Jason Kidd (a D.W.I. in Water Mill in 2012), to restaurateur Todd English (arrested for a D.W.I. near Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in 2014).

Though D.W.I.'s are Burke's bread and butter, he has also represented well-off clients accused of more serious crimes—Jason Lee, a Goldman Sachs executive charged in 2013 with raping a seasonal worker from Ireland in his East Hampton summer rental, and Steven Mezynieski, a North Fork gravel magnate accused of repeatedly raping his teenage niece. Lee was found not guilty on all counts, while Mezynieski avoided jail time by pleading guilty to third-degree sexual abuse, a misdemeanor.

Such success has seen Burke secure a spot in the coteries of powerful Hamptonites, such as former *Today* show host Matt Lauer, his close friend, whom he once represented in a property dispute; billionaire businessman Ronald Perelman; and rock star Jon Bon Jovi.

When not in court, Burke is known to be a man-about-town, spotted in early-morning classes at Yoga Shanti, picking up coffee at Carissa's the Bakery, or meeting with clients at the American Hotel. He and his wife, Tricia, are routinely photographed at local charity galas for everything from rebuilding the Sag Harbor Cinema to raising awareness for Alzheimer's disease.

As the second child and oldest son of Edward D. Burke Sr., an ironworker turned attorney, who served as a Southampton justice (and who was censured for four acts of misconduct in 2014), Eddie Burke grew up in a far less fancy version of what's now known as "the Hamptons," back when Sag Harbor was making its transition from a hamlet of foundry workers and watchcase-makers into a second home for Manhattan's well-heeled elite.

A product of Sag Harbor's public-school system and the now shuttered Mercy High School in Riverhead, Burke, like his sister and brother, followed in his father's footsteps by going to law school, graduating from St. John's University in 1990 before working in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. In the summer of 2001, he was working at his father's law firm, in Southampton, when he received a distressed two A.M. call from Lizzie Grubman's father, the most powerful lawyer in the

entertainment business, Allen Grubman. It was a call that changed the trajectory of Burke's career.

“He's like butter, he's so smooth.”

“I made Eddie Burke,” Lizzie Grubman jokingly told AIR MAIL. Burke, and the rest of Grubman's legal team, got her sentence reduced from eight years in prison to just two months, of which she served only 38 days. Due to the publicity surrounding her case, Grubman was considered a security risk and was placed in solitary confinement. Burke visited her four or five times during her imprisonment. “Eddie was my confidant,” she says. “I would call him in the middle of the night because I was so nervous and scared, and he would answer the phone, no matter if it was two A.M. or four A.M.”

In a response to a request for comment, Burke says, “I don't share any specifics of clients, past or current cases, or my personal opinions about either without my clients' express request.”

Fixing Danny Pelosi

The Grubman limelight brought Burke his highest-profile case yet—defending Daniel “Danny” Pelosi for the murder of Wall Street financier Ted Ammon, on October 22, 2001.

Pelosi, an unlicensed electrician from the Long Island hamlet of Center Moriches, had begun an affair with Ammon's wife, Generosa, in October of 2000, shortly after she hired him to oversee renovations at the family's Upper East Side town house.

Ted Ammon was in the midst of signing divorce papers after months of litigation when he was found bludgeoned to death in his home, granting Generosa—and, indirectly, her gold-chain-wearing boyfriend, Pelosi—his entire \$80 million fortune. When Pelosi was named as a suspect in the murder, he sought out the Grubman-famous Burke.



Generosa and Daniel Pelosi in Guildford, England, in 2002.

While Ammon's murder and its aftermath turned into tabloid fodder, it took prosecutors two and a half years to charge Pelosi. Indeed, by the time of his arrest, in March 2004, Pelosi had married *and* divorced Generosa Ammon, who had died of breast cancer, in 2003, before charges could be brought against her. (Pelosi, who had previously been listed as Generosa's main beneficiary, ended up with \$2 million and a house, thanks to a post-nuptial agreement.)

At the time, then Suffolk County district attorney Thomas Spota blamed the delay in charging Pelosi on Pelosi's lawyers: "The defense in every step of the grand jury investigation obstructed in any way they could." (Two weeks ago, Spota himself was released from federal prison, where he was serving time for corruption and witness tampering in a separate case.)

According to court documents, on August 2, 2004, prosecutors filed a motion to dismiss Burke from Pelosi's defense team due to "the possibility of a future claim of ineffective assistance of trial counsel, apparent and actual conflicts of interest, the proprietary interest rule, the witness-advocate rule, the unsworn witness rule and basic ethical considerations."



The house where Ted Ammon was murdered, at 59 Middle Lane, East Hampton, New York.

In plain English, the motion stated that Pelosi had his friend Christopher Parrino drive Ammon's 1995 Buick, the use of which investigators suspected in the murder, from an auto-repair shop in Center Moriches, where it had been vacuumed and washed, to Burke's home in Sag Harbor. The witness also testified that upon delivering the car to Burke's home, in January 2002, Burke told him, "Just park it and I'll take care of it." On April 7, 2002, investigators finally located the vehicle after months of searching. Hidden from the road, it was found in the East Hampton driveway of Richard Lia, a private investigator Burke had retained for the murder defense.

There was also a missing laptop—part of the surveillance system Pelosi had allegedly installed at the Ammon home in East Hampton. Prosecutors concluded that Burke, who eventually produced the laptop after being subpoenaed, had "information regarding [its] chain of custody" that made him "a likely witness at trial."

Prosecutors also argued that Burke had “gone beyond the traditional role of an independent advocate,” receiving “huge sums of money far beyond the reasonable fee for services rendered.” Not only was Burke defending Pelosi against a murder charge, he had also counseled the defendant in his post-nuptial agreement with Generosa Ammon and, astonishingly, served as the sole executor of Generosa’s estate. On January 15, 2003, Pelosi cut Burke a \$250,000 check—the check memo line read “FOR EVERYTHING!!”—which the attorney deposited into his personal account.

“Just park it and I’ll take care of it.”

“The full extent of Mr. Burke’s entanglement in defendant’s personal and financial affairs is unknown,” read the motion to dismiss Burke, “but what is apparent, based in part on sworn depositions from Mr. Burke in the surrogate’s matter, is that Mr. Burke’s independence from [the] defendant is seriously in question.”

On August 2, 2004, mere weeks before the start of Pelosi’s trial, Burke was forced to withdraw from the defense team for “the appearance of impropriety, if not worse.” In spite of all this, Burke never faced censure or disbarment for his conduct in Pelosi’s case. The Burke-less Pelosi was convicted of Ammon’s murder in 2004 and given a 25-years-to-life prison sentence.

“I hope the reputation I have developed is that of an extremely hard-working attorney and that my clients treasure the trust, professionalism and diligence I look to give,” says Burke in response to a request for comment on the case. “Rather than speaking about cases and clients, I prefer my actions within the Hamptons’ Legal Landscape do the talking for me.”

Fixing Andrew Zaro

But perhaps the strangest, and least documented, of Burke’s cases—one still unresolved more than a decade later—involved the death of Sister Jacqueline “Jackie” Walsh, a 59-year-old Roman Catholic nun, in the summer of 2012.

Mercy Villa, a spiritual retreat house on tony Rose Hill Road, had been donated to the Sisters of Mercy by the Diocese of Brooklyn in 1938, when Southampton consisted mostly of potato fields with a smattering of summer cottages. Sister Jackie had just finished her evening prayers when she decided to go for a walk. On her way back along Rose Hill Road, she was struck from behind by a 2009 Volkswagen Touareg and killed.

Early the next morning, Southampton Town police discovered the damaged vehicle half a mile from the crime scene. It was registered to financier Andrew Zaro, whose 16,000-square-foot family compound overlooked Mecox Bay at the end of Rose Hill Road. The suspect, who was identified at the scene of the crime, but not behind the wheel of the car, by other nuns as well as by the two young men who discovered Sister Jackie’s body, was 30-year-old Carlos Armando Ixpec-Chitay, an undocumented Guatemalan landscaper who worked for the Zaro family.

Burke, retained by Zaro for what he feared would be a civil case because of his ownership of the vehicle, told the local press at the time that his client had “been cooperative with police, that he did not help Ixpec-Chitay escape, and that he encouraged his employee to surrender.”

Although the case received much coverage in local news outlets and the *New York Post*, one salient detail was not reported in the court papers: according to a witness statement from Theodore Garlington, Zaro's longtime chauffeur, Ixpec-Chitay was last seen entering the law office of Edward Burke Jr.



The financier Andrew Zaro with his wife, the actress Lois Robbins, at the Whitney Museum of American Art Gala, in New York.

Garlington told detectives that on the day of the accident, he drove Zaro from Manhattan to Water Mill, where they picked up Ixpec-Chitay from Zaro's house on Rose Hill Road and "drove him to the lawyer in Sag Harbor." Garlington was driving his boss back to the house when Zaro's phone rang. It was Burke, informing him that

Ixpec-Chitay—at midday on Main Street at the height of the high season—had somehow disappeared from his office.

Ixpec-Chitay was last seen entering the law office of Edward Burke Jr.

An “international manhunt” involving town cops, county police, state troopers, and U.S. marshals was soon underway, but the suspect—to this day—has never been found. No civil case was ever brought against Zaro, and he never gave a witness statement to the police.

“Something’s never felt quite right about the case,” says Chuck Walsh, Sister Jackie’s cousin, when we called him in December 2022. Something has never felt quite right to Alex Gregor, former Southampton Town highway superintendent, either.

Speaking with AIR MAIL more than a decade later, Gregor, when asked if he harbors any unanswered questions about Sister Jackie’s death, says: “I’d still like to see what the DNA was on the airbag” of Zaro’s car.



The road sign memorializing the hit-and-run death of Sister Jacqueline Walsh. It was eventually removed after pressure from residents.

Gregor led the charge to install a small blue sign commemorating Sister Jackie on Rose Hill Road. It read simply, SISTER JACKIE'S WAY. But the move was met by opposition from some of the road's wealthy residents, who demanded the town remove the sign—which it did. Gregor says, “The wealthy do not like to be asked questions. It’s uncomfortable. They decide what’s appropriate, and they didn’t think it was appropriate. They didn’t want a constant reminder.” Mercy Villa was sold to a limited-liability company for \$7.2 million in 2020. On Eddie Burke’s East End, the rich have a way of making uncomfortable things disappear.

Carrie Monahan is a Brooklyn-based writer and producer. Amanda M. Fairbanks is a journalist and the author of [The Lost Boys of Montauk: The True Story of the Wind Blown, Four Men Who Vanished at Sea, and the Survivors They Left Behind](#).

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