

The Lindy Chamberlain Case

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Introduction

The case was one of the most televised cases in Australia in the 1980s. The case was about the death of a two-month-old child named Azaria Chamberlain, who died on August 17, 1980, during a family camping trip at a place known as Uluru or Ayers Rock in the Northern Territory (Bryson, 2016). Azaria's parents, Michael and Lindy Chamberlain, reported that their little girl had been killed by a Dingo that took her from their tent during the fateful night. However, since her body was never found, they could not substantiate their claims, and the lady was charged with murder. She was imprisoned for more than three years until an appeal judge acquitted her. This was after the police retrieved a rag near the Dingo's lairs around Uluru that was a piece of clothing of the deceased child, forcing the police and the justice system to open new inquests into the case (Howe, 2005). However, it was not until 2012 that a coroner officially supported the account of Azaria's death as told by the Chamberlains, subsequently releasing her from any suspicions of killing her daughter.

Forensic Analysis Of The Chamberlain Case

The developments in the Lindy Chamberlain case are a clear example of a shoddy job done by the criminal investigation department, as well as the justice system, as they ended up arraigning and imprisoning an innocent victim because of insufficient evidence, as well as the failure of the concerned parties in doing their job properly (Rohman, 2013). This is especially true considering the fact that the detectives in charge of the case did not conduct a thorough investigation in this case, but instead were quick to take the easy way out by putting the blame on the parents of Azaria Chamberlain as the ones responsible for the death of their two months old child. No one was willing to accept the Dingo version of the story as presented by Lindy and her husband, with some even condemning her for sacrificing her child for rituals.

As crime scene investigators, it was imperative for the detectives in charge of the case to conduct a thorough investigation of the case as well as follow all possible leads to their conclusive ends. It is evident from this case that none of the detectives was willing to follow the version presented by Azaria's parents that a Dingo was the one responsible for the death of their child. On the contrary, they ended up placing the blame on the innocent parents, even to the extent of imprisoning her innocent mother, who was in mourning, at a loss following the death of her young baby girl (Staines, 2006). Furthermore, the fact that the case took several years before being closed, more than three decades, and was very publicized in both local and foreign media only worsened the emotional and psychological trauma of the distraught parents.

A crime scene investigator is supposed to follow a set of laid down procedures when conducting a criminal investigation to ensure that they reach the right conclusions for a particular case. As such, these procedures outline the steps that should be adhered to during the investigation process, subsequently ensuring that no possible lead is left out during the investigation. Furthermore, these procedures are also instrumental in eliminating any premeditated assumptions that the detectives or crime scene investigators may reach on their own, thereby clouding their judgment or shrouding their investigations in such a way that they fail to uncover and thoroughly investigate all possible leads in the case (Wood, 1993). For instance, in this case, the detectives openly refused to follow the Dingo lead, probably because of their premeditated assumptions, which in turn ended with them locking up an innocent victim in prison for a crime she had not committed.

There are several critical steps that every detective in charge of a crime scene investigation has to follow in order to ensure he or she uncovers all possible leads in the criminal investigations. These steps include securing and protecting the scene of the crime from any possible tampering with evidence, taking photographs of the crime scene and preparing the crime scene sketches, and initiating preliminary surveys at the crime scene by searching around it for possible evidence, such as the murder weapon for a homicide crime, and then properly collecting and packaging all evidence retrieved from the crime scene (Fisher, 2004). The other steps involved in a crime scene investigation include evaluating possibilities from the physical evidence collected from the crime scene, preparing a possible narrative of the crime scene, and conducting a detailed search or investigation, following all possible leads of the crime as established from the crime scene investigation. It is only after this step that the investigators can reach their final decision regarding a particular crime, as they would have exhausted all leads in the crime.

Azaria's case is a practical example of shoddy detective work conducted by the Australian crime scene investigators as they failed to exhaust all leads at the crime scene. In the first place, the crime occurred at Ayers Rock, an area that is prone to Dingo attacks since this was their backyard. As such, when Lindy claimed that she had lost her child to a Dingo, the investigators should have taken her seriously and followed the lead to its conclusive end. There is no evidence from the case reports detailing how the investigators followed this lead (Bryson, 2016). In fact, the issue about the Dingo came to light much later when other detectives, investigating a completely different case not even remotely associated with Azaria's case, stumbled upon a piece of her clothing in the lair of a Dingo. However, this happened almost three years later after the actual crime had taken place, and an innocent victim was imprisoned wrongfully.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the facts presented in this case that the crime scene investigators in charge of conducting investigations relating to Azaria's murder did a very poor job. Furthermore, the evidence also points to the fact that the investigators were quick to close the case by pinning the murder on an innocent victim, probably to avoid the hustle of conducting a thorough crime scene

investigation. This was very wrong as it did not comply with the principles outlined for undertaking an exhaustive crime scene investigation. The jury that sentenced Lindy to prison for the murder of her daughter was convinced by the prosecutor of her guilt in the case using circumstantial evidence. Furthermore, most people laughed off the possibility that a Dingo could walk into their tent in the cover of darkness and snatch the baby from them without their knowledge.

References

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