

Australian Infant Murder

On August 17, 1980, a baby was removed from a camp site at Ayer's Rock. At this writing, I think it was never found.* The parents, Lindy and Michael Chamberlain, came under suspicion, and the mother was convicted, in connection. The only other possibility anyone considered, was that a dingo might have done it, but neither possibility may have occurred to anyone, if the mother had not said a dingo had done it. (In 2012, Lindy wangled a reassessment from the government. You must ignore that.) {*I use the same spellings of "foetal", "dingoes", etc., whether I'm quoting or not, because they appear in quoted passages. They are still the preferred spellings in Australia.}

Dingoes

The coroner's report* says, "... there is total lack of objective evidence to support the view that any dingo was involved in the incident that night and, to the contrary, a considerable quantity of evidence to suggest that a dingo could not have been involved."

"Ultra violet fluorescent photograph suggests the presence of a right hand of a small adult gripping the left hand side of the child within the jump suit while that hand was blood stained. Less well defined is the presence of a left hand. The mode of death had been caused by a cutting instrument possibly circling the neck or at least cutting the vital blood vessels and structures of the neck." The certainty of coroner and canine experts, eliminates the dingo hypothesis, but, in the absence of a corpse, how much worth should we invest in the assessment of the coroner or canine experts?

A dingo could have taken a clothed baby from the camp site, without breaking the skin, using the clothes as a handle. One experiment demonstrated that dingoes can remove a segment of animal carcass, from a "matinee suit", but from Galvin's findings about the clothing,* 1}"The absence of tissue stains ... make it inconsistent with an animal holding the body ..." 2}"There is no evidence on the clothing of dragging ... nor the presence of saliva." 3}"Vegetation contamination on the clothing is inconsistent with vegetation found at the scene and inconsistent with the likely contamination, which would have occurred if the clothing with a body in it had been carried by an animal." 4}"The clothes ... were not strewn around ... this is inconsistent with an animal being responsible ..." 5}"The evidence is consistent with an attempt to simulate a dingo attack ..." {*Category # 1}

Blood

Lindy Chamberlain was convicted on the presence of blood in the car. She was released on the claim that the lab results had been flawed and that there never was any blood, but a sound damping agent which had been mistaken for blood?! Both things can't be true. If, as it seems, it is accepted as standard science, that the blood of babies, up to about one year old, is easily distinguished from that of everyone else, as "foetal", how can it be that

that any kind of blood could ever be mistaken for anything else, especially an inorganic compound, like an acrylic sound damping agent.

The Galvin report finds, “... a quite considerable quantity of blood on and near a coin under the seat”. I can’t say how unlikely it is for a car to be delivered to the showroom with change under the seat, but, unless that coin came from the factory, the substance on it, was not sound damping agent. It was applied post-sale. Galvin also says, “A quite considerable amount of blood was needed to bring about the flow of blood staining under the hinge cover ... to collect in the floor well.” The description, “quite considerable”, is vague, but I assume that the amount of blood can’t be determined, once it has dried into carpets and nooks. The word, “collect”, must mean that the substance gathered so as to pool. I don’t know how evenly sound damping agent is usually applied, but Galvin describes a pattern, totally without symmetry; too random to indicate a manufacturer’s intent.

Assuming there was “a considerable quantity of blood”, in the car, introduced after sale, and if it was “foetal blood”, it would mean that the baby was taken to the car, either for the purpose of killing it, or removing it from the scene, after death. If the parents had meant to kill the baby, they might have used the car to remove it to another site, but why would they not wait until they had arrived at the disposal site, to commit the murder? Why would they choose to contaminate their own car with the evidence of their crime?! To believe they killed the baby in their own car, in a manner, calculated to spill the entire content of the victim’s blood, you must believe they are too stupid to even drive a car, plan a vacation or to have kept any of their children, alive, to that point! Had such a slashing wound been administered in the car, it would have been too hard to contain well enough to fit Galvin’s description, but, after the wound was a few minutes old, the blood flow might have seemed manageable enough to try containing it for the time required to unload the body. Galvin says that it “spurted up, onto the underside of the dashboard”, and that “blood had been removed from the car”. They wouldn’t have gotten any blood in the car, if they hadn’t been under time pressure to remove the body, but the body was still bleeding as it was taken into the car.

Only if there was a very small amount of blood in the car, could the owners seem suspect. It could mean that they took the baby out of the car, to kill it, and inadvertently carried some blood back into the car, but to track enough for it to pool, even in small areas, the killer would have to be so drenched that the foolishness of getting back into the car, would rival that of shedding the blood, while still inside. Only actions performed in desperation and panic can account for the blood which was found. No preconceived plan would have left that evidence.

Could the Parents Have Done It?

Parents do kill their own children for certain reasons, but the Chamberlains don’t have

those motives. 1}Psychosis: It's impossible that both parents were hit by the same mental problem, at just that moment, or so closely together in the recent past, that their derangement manifested itself in the exact same way, and that the manifestation was a desire to murder their own child. 2}Rage: In the case of an infant, it may be either parent's doing, but it's never a joint venture. Rage is an emotion, felt within a single human mind, but even if two people feel a similar emotion, at the same time, they are not likely to combine on the same action, which is so radical and emotionally personal. 3} Financial Pressure: This is the only reason that both parents might agree to kill their own children. Both of the Chamberlains were successful in professional pursuits. Other than rage, I have never heard of a father killing his child, except to profit, as from an insurance policy, or as an alternative to starvation, in which case, both parents agree, and they usually kill all their kids.

If both parents were in on the murder, then the whole trip was planned for that purpose. It's a popular spot, but unpopulated except for the tourists, who must spend much of their time, concentrated at the campsite. There's plenty of space to accomplish something illegal, in seclusion. 1}To make such a trip just to utilize that big, open space, then pin the crime on yourself by doing it in your car, just doesn't make sense. 2}No one could fail to anticipate that they would have to put the body in their car to remove it, or that blood would be found, inside. 3}People don't come to such a place, in the hope of being in a tent for long stretches of time, except overnight. Someone is always likely to step out, any second. Having travelled so far to get to a low population area, why would they kill the baby where there are so many people gathered, as at the campsite? At dinner time, everyone is in camp. They're bound to be around for many hours, as night is coming on, and even the cooking is done, outside. All the campers would be in camp and up in the morning, too, but they would be gone soon, to hike, etc. To suspect the parents, you must believe they chose the worst hour of the day to announce the disappearance and remove the body; when they would have to sneak past all of the campers, still up and active, outside their tents and not going anywhere, soon.

Just the Father

How could the father have slipped away long enough to pull off the crime, without Lindy noticing his absence? If the baby and father were missing at the same time, the mother would not have panicked because the baby was gone. She would merely have wondered why he took the baby without telling her. If she did feel the apprehension she expressed, she would have had to include the father; 'the dingo took my baby — and my husband!' When he returned, Lindy would have noticed he was bloody. Whatever he said, would not have caused the dingoes to cross her mind. Her suspicion would naturally have fallen on him. Unless they were both in on it, which is eliminated in the numbered segments, above, the mother would have to choose between accusing the father or covering for him.

The Mother Or The Dingo

If they did want to get rid of the baby, and couldn't think of a means, the camping trip would have been planned to use the dingoes as alibi.

Does it make sense for the killer to announce the disappearance so boldly? It seems to violate self-preservation and common sense. Eventually, she must acknowledge the baby missing. She would then face the question of when she noticed. She can't claim they didn't know, until they got home! If the camping trip was a cover story, and the dingo, the fall guy, they must establish the time of the disappearance, to be before they left the park.

When the dingo story fell through, suspicion fell on the mother. A juror later confirmed that it was either the mother or a dingo; that, if a dingo didn't do it, Lindy's claim that one of them had, proved her guilt. When this loopy bit o' logic leapin' is expressed in the movie, [A Cry in the Dark](#), I think it's intended to represent the majority of public opinion. If the family had interacted with dingoes near the campsite, especially by feeding them, one might return for seconds. If Lindy did actually see a dingo, at any time, even hours before, she might assume that a dingo had done it. She might have honestly drawn a connection of cause and effect between two events which didn't even quite coincide, but, as foolish as that might seem, how much smarter is it, to assume that she has implied her own guilt, by doing so?

Addendum

Child murder is hard to recognize because people accept so much as accident, which cannot really be. The conviction (and, these days, the verbosity) with which plastic bags warn you of how easy (and, yet, somehow, complicated) it is for a baby to suffocate, and the unblinking public acceptance of that belief (if it is as commonplace as I think) tells us how willing people are to discount obvious reality when it discomfits them.

8/?/05 - 07/12/12

Resumed

01/28,29,31/18

02/1,2,3,19,24,25/18

3/14-18,20/18

4/08/18

Re-resumed

3/1-9/23

Footnotes