

JUSTICE: Homicide or Suicide?

Was the right conclusion made in this case? We don't think so.....

Case History

At 0730 hours, October 20, 2015, husband David Lovelace claims Leslie's death occurred. He reported the death of his wife to the Raleigh Police Department (RPD) at 0738 hours. In the nine minutes it took the RPD to arrive at the Lovelace apartment, David Lovelace had:

- Moved Leslie's body
- Bagged up bloody items
- Cleaned up
- Showered
- Changed clothes

David Lovelace managed all the above with two children present (five years old and ten months.)

Det. Mark Quagliarello, lead investigator, Raleigh Police Department, arrived at the death scene at 0915 hours, well after the event occurred and was reported to RPD. He did not view Leslie's body at the scene or hospital, stating he did not need to examine the body. The death scene was well compromised by the time he arrived.

Both the lead investigator and Medical Examiner (ME) appear to have accepted David Lovelace's claims Leslie was depressed and killed herself. October 22, 2015, in a meeting with family members, Det. Quagliarello stated, "I have had a suicide in my family, and I know what a suicide looks like." Family members present heard the detective state, "There was no other explanation for Leslie's death than suicide."

Investigative tests, techniques, tools **NOT employed by RPD** before or after the immediate determination Leslie's death was a suicide, include:

- Although bagged, Leslie's hands were not tested for gunshot residue (GSR) or back spatter/blowback.
- No trajectory charting was undertaken.
- No effort was made to retrieve No or examine bullet (lodged in building across the complex.
- No testing for fingerprints on death weapon.
- No examination of the immediate area for back spatter/blowback patterns.

Also of interest, the M. E. did not conduct a full autopsy, merely an external autopsy (visual examination, no invasive procedures). Further, the M. E. failed to retain sufficient amounts of Leslie's body fluids to conduct any extensive tests, but did report **no alcohol in Leslie's body** at time of death. The Medical Examiner did not respond to requests for a conference with CIS.

When being interviewed by CIS Investigators, Det. Quagliarello stated at the time the weapon was discharged, all the matter went through the wound channel, including scalp tissue around

wound entrance; this is forensically impossible at the close range indicative of a suicide. (The law of physics: Due to gases from a weapon used in contact wounds, **all matter cannot go through a wound channel.**) However, this was the detective's reason for little to no blood spatter showing in photographs of the walls or weapon at the scene.

Despite RPD's finding of suicide, I determined suicide was highly unlikely based upon:

- Interviews with family members and friends of Leslie.
- Examination of a similar apartment where Leslie's death occurred.
- Trajectory mapping of bullet path.
- Review of Medical Examiner findings.
- Viewing of death scene photographs at meeting with RPD staff.
- Statements by Det. Quagliarello and other officers during meetings with RPD.
- Numerous reports of David Lovelace as controlling, violent, and untruthful.
- David's threats during the marriage, to kill Leslie.
- David's highly suspicious statements and actions in the days after Leslie's death.
- Insurance eligibility to cease December 13, 2015.

Leslie's family and friends were horrified at Leslie's death, immediately suspecting David of having murdered Leslie due to many of the bullet points above, and the discovery David compromised the death scene, as well as Leslie's body at the hospital (**digging into her head and hair to locate bullet hole; washing Leslie's feet; family member witnessed**).

It is my hope the circumstances surrounding the death of Leslie Lovelace will intrigue you. In all the years of my investigative experiences, I have not encountered a more alarming apparent lack of attention to investigative procedures and detail than in this case.

Following is a portion of my findings, in the hopes you will be interested in assisting this family in clearing Leslie's name and bringing a form of justice to them.

List of CIS Investigative Findings:

David:

- History of control issues and volatility, including threats to kill Leslie.
- History of verbal and physical abuse of Leslie.
- History of distorting truth.
- Big spender. Trouble holding down jobs. History of financial problems.
- Isolated Leslie from family and friends.
- While jobless, David began campaign to frighten Leslie two months prior to her death.
- Kept guns in the home, openly displayed.
- Was the only other adult present when Leslie was shot.
- **Compromised death scene and Leslie's body at hospital, after death.**
- Took bloody clothing to Leslie's cousin, Brea, to wash.

David's Inappropriate Actions/Statements day of and days immediately following death:

- According to ME Report, David said Leslie was depressed. Family: No Way!
- Observed at hospital, feeling through Leslie's hair to find bullet hole. Washed her feet.
- Made passes at Leslie's sister, Candace, and cousin, Brea.
- Discussed spending plans for insurance money (\$100,000.00), day of funeral.
- Discussed the "hot chicks" in Florida (with Leslie's family members).
- Displayed jovial demeanor at funeral while speaking at funeral service.
- **Asked step-brother of Leslie's to write statements she was suicidal. He refused.**

Leslie:

- Vibrant and fun-loving personality. Adored her children; was stay-at-home mom.
- Taught the boys Christian children's songs. Was very devout.
- Was still breast feeding infant. Little David, son, was 2 years and 10 months old.
- Had prepared menu and grocery list for the week. (Located on kitchen counter.)
- Had Bible Study materials ready to take with her to church day she died.
- Afraid of and intimidated by David's death threats throughout marriage.
- Leslie was **very excited about Christmas plans** made with cousin, Brea.
- Close family ties. Was frequently in touch with parents, sister, cousins.
- NONE of family believed death was suicide, or David's claims Leslie had dementia.

Death Scene:

- Compromised by David.
- David's actions and statements were contradictory and inconsistent after Leslie's death.
- No blood spatter / blowback visible in photographs.
- Police photographs showed nothing on walls, no blood spatter.
- Gun used in Leslie's death appeared very clean in photos; no spatter.
- Head wound, but little blood at scene.
- **Leslie was nude from waist to feet, at time of death.**
- Bullet went through bedroom window and struck another building.
- Trajectory of bullet illogical for suicide unless Leslie was held down.

Law Enforcement:

Raleigh Police Department, lead investigator: Det. Mark Quagliarello.

- Det. Quagliarello made no efforts to examine Leslie's body, arriving 9:15 a.m. to death scene. Leslie had already been transported to hospital. Did not examine her there either.
- He also stated GSR testing was not necessary, "because GSR tests are inconclusive".

- RPD did not interview all family members until they agreed to re-open case.
- **Det. Quagliarello missed the in-house security system. Did not see it or ask for SD storage card.**
- At April 18, 2017, meeting with CIS and family members, after questioning, Det. Quagliarello became visibly angry and was allowed to storm out of the meeting after stating, "I'm not listening to this."
- After numerous requests from family and CIS, RPD agreed to re-open case. However, RPD declined to appoint a different investigator. Not surprisingly, Det. Quagliarello arrived at the very same conclusion as prior.
- Having conducted no testing initially, RPD had no test results to prove or disprove Leslie committed suicide. As far as is known, there were no efforts to conduct any tests.
- Leslie's parents offered to pay for forensic testing to be conducted at family's expense. However, they were told there was not a sufficient amount of body fluids left to test.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND/OR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS CASE:

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