



D7 Was It an Accident That He Shot His Wife With a Gun?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the principles of crime scene reconstruction and the use of firearms training and pattern injuries in investigating a death scene.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the real world implementation of the knowledge gained through hours of lectures and training in crime scene reconstruction and the use of firearms training and pattern injuries in investigating a death scene.

During this presentation, a case study will be presented of an actual investigation that was initially reported as an accidental shooting. Through the evaluations of statements, observation at the death scene, examination of pattern injuries, and radiological testing, the investigation took a sharp turn. This was no longer being investigated as an accidental shooting.

Using trajectory, mathematics, bloodstain pattern analysis, pattern injuries, and gunshot pattern analysis, the crime scene was physically reconstructed. This was all due to refute the statement of the suspect that he tripped, while walking down a dark hallway, causing him to shoot the victim.

The investigation started on January 24, 2001 when the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department was advised of a shooting that had occurred in the south/east part of the county. When officers arrived at the scene, they found a 20-year-old female lying on the basement bedroom floor. The female had a gunshot wound to her lower left abdominal area. She was transported to an area hospital and pronounced dead on arrival.

While investigating the shooting scene, the husband of the victim was explaining to the officers what had occurred. He told officers that he had been hunting earlier in the evening and had brought the shotgun into the residence where he and the victim, his girlfriend, lived with his parents. The husband had stated that he and the victim had drunk some beer and had retired to bed. After having intercourse, the male states that he got up to use the bathroom. Upon returning from the bathroom, the male tells deputies that he remembered the shotgun that he had brought into the house and wanted to put it up. He said he retrieved the weapon and was walking through the darkened living area towards the bedroom when he tripped over a small stool. He told the deputies that when he fell to the floor the shotgun struck the floor with the butt of the shotgun and discharged. He then heard his wife moaning and turned on the lights. He found that she had been shot in the stomach by the shotgun.

An examination at the hospital was requested in order to look for any evidence on the body that might help the investigation. The female

victim's body was still in the trauma room. Her injuries were still bandaged and upon removing these to examine the wound, it was noticed that the intestines had eviscerated. An x-ray of the victim was taken and it was found that the pellets from the shotgun had gone down into her pelvic area and not up into her chest. This directionality of the pellets reinforced this shooting did not occur as relayed by the husband.

After an autopsy was performed, it was noted that the gunshot wound was 35½ inches from the bottom of the wife's heel. There was also no stippling pattern which indicated that the shotgun blast was from 3-6 feet away from the victim. The approximate angle of entry of the shot pattern was 27 degrees.

Using this information, a number of forensic disciplines were utilized to come to the conclusion that the husband had intentionally shot his wife. The reconstruction will be discussed and the attendee will be able to observe how this conclusion was attained.

Homicide, Accidental Shooting, Crime Scene