

CURRENTLY 2,204 EXONERATIONS
MORE THAN 19,350 YEARS LOST

JENNIFER WILCOX

Other Ohio No Crime Cases



Jennifer Wilcox

Barnette.

Huber Heights police detective Jennifer Bazell was the lead investigator and interviewed children, parents and neighbors. Ultimately, Bazell identified 22 different children as victims and numerous parents were allegedly involved in getting children to engage with sex with each other.

Children named adults, using first names and nicknames such as "Scar Face," and alleged the adults were taking photographs of children performing sex. On the basis of the children's stories, Bazell concluded that **Robert Dale Aldridge** and Jennifer Wilcox were the leaders of a group of adults who repeatedly molested children.

A search of the apartment where Wilcox and Aldridge lived turned up no evidence to support any of the allegations, and eventually all adults except for Wilcox and Aldridge were dropped as targets of the investigation.

Although Justin Chronopoulos was considered a suspect at one time, Bazell brought his 12-year-old brother, John, in for questioning and when he denied knowing anything, she threatened to lock him up until he decided to "come clean." When he still declined to implicate anyone, she had him taken to the Juvenile Detention Center to be detained on charges of rape.

Bazell used the same tactic on Chronopoulos' 10-year-old brother Jason who, after a period of time in a holding cell, told of two occasions where adults had forced him, his brothers and other boys to engage in sexual activity with other children. Jason was then released.

Bazell continued interviewing other children, using similar methods. On September 27, 1984, Wilcox was charged with two counts of forcible rape of a child under 13 years of age and three counts of gross sexual imposition of a child under thirteen years of age with specifications of threats to cause physical harm. Aldridge was charged similarly, although he was accused of threatening with a knife.

A second indictment returned on December 11, 1984 charged Wilcox with three additional rapes and two more counts of gross sexual imposition. Aldridge was charged with four additional rape counts and five more counts of gross sexual imposition. The victims included the three Chronopoulos brothers, Chris Barnette and two girls.

The victims testified against them at trial in Montgomery County and on January 11, 1985, Wilcox and Aldridge were convicted on all counts. Both were sentenced to life in prison.

No other adults were ever charged. The cases of 11 other young children were not pursued due to conflicting statements and their ages.

In 1992, the Chronopoulos brothers recanted their testimony and said they were coerced by Bazell and other police to testify falsely against Wilcox and Aldridge.

A post-conviction hearing was held, where they recanted on the witness stand. Further, lawyers for the defendants showed how exculpatory statements of the alleged victims had been sanitized from police reports by the prosecution before the information was given to the defense.

On March 8, 1996, Wilcox and Aldridge were granted a new trial because of the failure to turn over exculpatory evidence and the recantations. They were released that day from prison. The state appealed and the order granting a new trial was upheld on March 14, 1997. The state then dismissed the charges.

Aldridge and Wilcox filed a lawsuit seeking a finding of innocence in order to seek state compensation, but the lawsuit was denied.

– Maurice Possley

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Posting Date: Before June 2012

State: Ohio

County: Montgomery

Most Serious Crime: Child Sex Abuse

Additional Convictions: Sexual Assault

Reported Crime Date: 1984

Convicted: 1985

Exonerated: 1997

Sentence: Life

Race: Caucasian

Sex: Female

Age at the date of crime: 20

Contributing Factors: Perjury or False Accusation, Official Misconduct

Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?: No