

## **EYE FOR AN EYE'S Robert Doob - Was He a Sexual Sadist?**

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**“...to have complete mastery over another person, to make him/her a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over her, to become her god, to do with her as one pleases, to humiliate her, to enslave her are means to this end...” - Mike DeBardeleben , Lethal Shadow**

John Schlesinger's movie **Eye for an Eye** featured as the antagonist, a fictional serial killer named Robert Doob. A twenty-six year old Caucasian male, Doob viciously rapes and murders a seventeen- year-old girl in her home in a quiet, well-to-do neighborhood. He is caught by the police and before he can be brought to trial, the case is dismissed on a technicality. He then commits a second rape and murder of a young Hispanic housewife at her home in another middle-class neighborhood. This time, although a suspect, he is not charged with the crime. Both crimes exhibit high levels of violence, rage and sadism but does that actually qualify Doob as a sexual sadist? I will analyze the details of Doob's crimes and life against a sexually sadistic real life killer, Mike DeBardeleben. DeBardeleben's criminal history is described by some authorities as “unmatched anywhere for its sadism, scope and his success at eluding detection”. (1) For this reason, DeBardeleben is an excellent subject to compare with Doob to see if Doob also exhibits sexual sadism.

The definition of sexual homicide given in the book *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives* is as follows: Sexual homicide, a crime of increasing concern in our society, is the killing of a person in the context of power, sexuality and brutality. (2) There is no question that the homicides of both DeBardeleben and Doob can be classified as sexual homicides. There is also considerable evidence that both of these offenders were extremely sadistic in nature. Sadism, simply explained, is a “delight in cruelty”. (3) Doob showed sadistic characteristics a number of times throughout the movie. Outside of the commission of his crimes, he exhibited sadistic mannerisms in dealing with the world. On one morning's stroll, when asked for a cigarette by a homeless woman, he flicked his half-smoked cigarette across her face onto the ground, enjoying her fury at the slight. Later, he poured out the remains of a hot cup of coffee over the head of a scraggly dog and was indifferent to its yelps of pain. He clearly enjoyed observing the pain the parents of the murdered girl were experiencing at the pre-trial hearing. He sneered at them and stuttered a sarcastic “S-s-s-sorry!” in their faces with a clear attitude of amusement. He later approached the mother and whispered vulgarisms in her ear, threats of abuse and rape of her younger daughter, delighting no doubt in the look of horror upon her face. In the commission of the rapes and subsequent murders, Doob was extremely violent and the actual death of the victims was a result of bludgeoning. However, for all the evidence of sadism in Doob's character, we find no actual evidence that pain and violence sexually stimulated him. Although his rapes were a sexual expression of power and anger, it is not evident that power and anger became eroticized in those rapes. (4) Vernon Geberth further explains that the essential feature of sexual sadism is “that the individual derives sexual excitement from the infliction of psychological or physical suffering (including humiliation) on the victim”. (5) The rape/murders also were completed quickly and without any prolonged suffering of the victim. It is not clear from his acts that Doob was sexual stimulated by the suffering of his victims. On the other hand, it was Mike DeBardeleben's purpose to humiliate and inflict suffering on his victims over an extended period of time, increasing the humiliation and pain as the rape progressed. One of DeBardeleben's compliant victims, wife number five, said that her husband forced her to listen to torture tapes, recite

scripts detailing pain and submission, and submit to anal sex. Although this wife claims DeBardleben did not torture her, his fourth wife, Caryn, is heard screaming on an audiotape “What are you going to do to me? Please, please tell me! Please untie my hands! Please, Mike! Don’t fuck me in the ass!. Please let me die. Let me die. Why can’t I die?” The tape continue for over thirty minutes during which DeBardleben tortured and sodomized his wife while he forced her to beg for pain and humiliation. It made him giggle. Another tape found included a bizarre episode in which DeBardleben played the two roles himself. (1)

I want you to do it, do it do it! Bite it! Bite it! Bite it!  
 Okay, here goes.  
 You’re bitin’ it right now! Aw! You’re bitin’ it right now! Oh, the pain’s sharp! I love the pain! Bite harder! Suck it! Bite it! Make the nipple bleed. I hate myself! I hate myself! I’m a bitch! I’m a bitch! I’m a bitch! Bite! Bite! Bite! Make it bleed! Rip it off! Hurt me! Ahhh! You did it!

Clearly, DeBardleben enjoyed the process as well as the result. His second wife describes him this way. “His greatest thing he could have ever thought about was to abduct a woman, torture her, have various sexual activities go on, strangle her and watch her die or blow her brains out with a gun.”(1) It is clear that DeBardleben enjoyed sexual fantasies involving sadism. Fantasies that he would create and then carry out. He had a large collection of pornography involving bondage and torture and he wrote scripts that he then forced his victims to participate in acting out. Doob, on the other hand, had no violent pornography in his collection of magazines, rather a more traditional fare of naked women and large breasts. DeBardleben also had a large collection of items for use in acting out his fantasies; whips, dildos, handcuffs, K-Y jelly, a choker chain, shoelaces, twine white adhesive tape, knives, razors and guns. Doob had none of these items and when he arrived at the scene of the assault he only brought along gloves to wear at that time. So while it appears DeBardleben fantasized and planned his rapes quite carefully, Doob committed them more spur-of-the moment. In the first murder, he blitz attacked the girl as she opened the door. He may have observed her previously and then decided this was the time he felt like doing it. The second rape/murder victim had been observed by Doob three weeks prior when he delivered groceries to her home. After the delivery, he had urinated on her front lawn, not a sexual act as much as an act of power and contempt. The second time he delivered groceries, he realized no one was around and proceeded to rape and kill her. Again, a blitz style of attack was used. Doob also did not carry on conversations with the women while he raped them except to tell one women to shut up.

Other hallmarks of the sexually sadistic killer involve his ability to carry out the crime in a manner less likely to result in arrest. This kind of killer has gone through the fantasy in the planning stages so many times in his head that when he actually acts out on it, he is in more control than other kinds of killers. DeBardleben selected women with high victim risk but with low offender risk. He chose mostly hitchhikers and real estate women. Both categories of victims were out alone and would not be missed for a reasonable length of time. DeBardleben did not wear a mask in his rapes but he did blindfold the women he took to an isolated house to assault. The women that he then let go, could not identify what area the offender was from and therefore give the police a point at which to start looking for a suspect. The other women he killed. Their bodies were either not found or not attributed to DeBardleben. The real estate women were found dead in the sale houses. Most of these women were attacked far from DeBardleben’ home when he was working his way up and down the East Coast passing his counterfeit money. It is very likely he would never have been charged with the murders had not he been caught on the counterfeiting rap.

Doob chose victims that were low risk in their behavior but were a high offender risk. Both females were attacked in their homes in nice neighborhoods. They were in the right place at the right time. Doob attacked these women while he was on his delivery rounds making him an obvious suspect. Also, both women’s deaths should have been upsetting to the community and put a higher pressure on the police to be solved. Doob was immediately picked up and tested for a DNA match with the semen found

at the scene of the first murder. He would have been convicted had not there been a technicality in the evidence admissibility. He learned something from the first time around and used a condom in the second murder. The police admitted that although his fingerprints were found in the house, that would be useless in court because as a delivery person one would expect his fingerprints to be there. Therefore, it is likely he would get off on the second murder as well.

The sexual sadist is most likely to be at the high end of the psychopathic continuum. The crime scene will likely reflect this. DeBardeleben planned his attacks, often pick his victims ahead of time (one time he apparently chose the Realtor from a newspaper picture), brought his rape/death kit with him to the scene, used restraints, and controlled the conversation and demanded submission from the victim and apparently dumped the bodies in a remote location. The real estate saleswomen's bodies were found at the same location where the murder took place, but these murders tended to be DeBardeleben's second kind of killings which appear to have more psychotic characteristics. That these women looked more like his mother or represented a higher class of women than hitchhikers may have set off a different set of feelings in him. Doob's murders leaned, in my opinion, toward the psychotic end of the continuum. He did not plan the offenses in any detail, perhaps having seen the victim once or twice before on his route, suddenly decided to take action and kill her. He did not attempt much in the way of conversation. He cared little who they were and even commented on the fact to the mother of the young girl. "She could have been anybody. It wasn't personal." The attacks were blitz style with sudden and deadly violence. He killed them with his hands through strangling and he bludgeoned them with objects from the scene. In the first murder, he used a large chunk of ice from an ice sculpture bought for a birthday party as a weapon. The bodies were left at the scene. No attempts were made to cover them.

If Robert Doob was not a sexually sadistic killer, then what was he? He certainly exhibited sadism in his behaviors although not sexual sadism. He lived alone and appeared to have no relationships with women. He apparently despised women and exhibited tremendous anger toward them and also toward society in general. He worked menial jobs, lived in a flophouse, owned very little, and had no friends. The fact that he must have felt relatively powerless in the world may also have been a motive for his crimes. But his murders lean heavily toward anger as the motive. It is clear that Doob meant to kill the women he attacked; he did not use just enough violence to control his victim as might a power assertive rapist. Sex was extremely violent; almost just an add on to the physical attack. He used excessive victim force and the duration of the attack was extremely short. The offenses were sporadic and these two occurred in the middle of the day after a period when he appeared to become more highly agitated and irritable. These components of the anger retaliatory rapist fit well to Doob's acts of violence. (6) At this point of his career, Robert Doob was put out of business. For those of you who have not yet seen this excellent movie, an **Eye for an Eye** does a good job in presenting the anger retaliatory serial killer and his impact on society.

## **Bibliography**

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