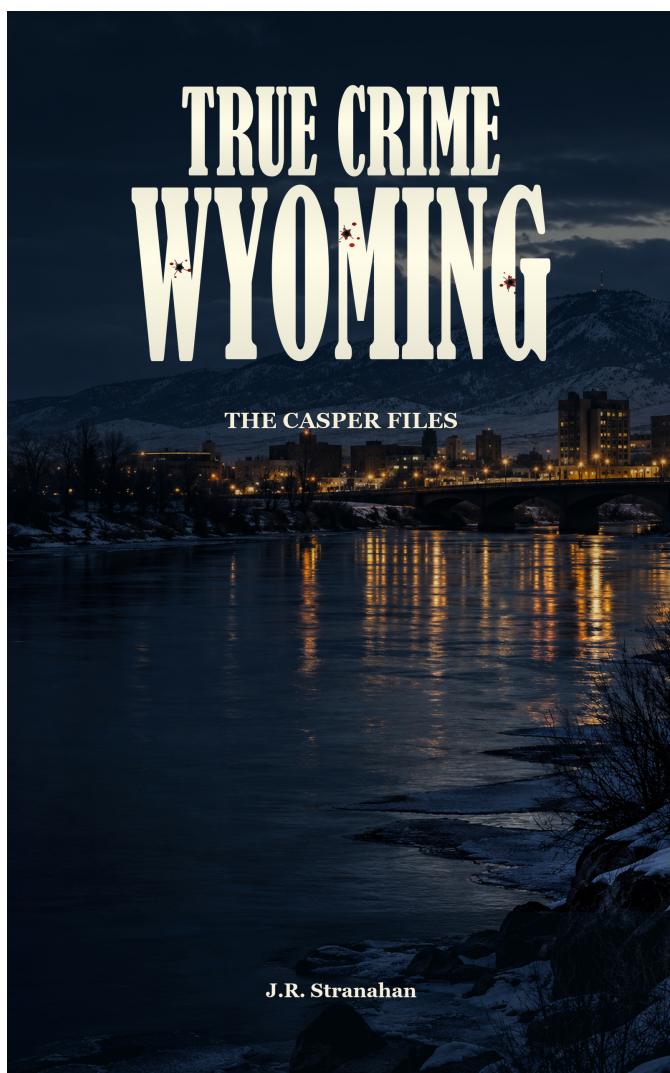




True Crime Wyoming: The Casper Files

J.R. Stranahan

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The Murder of Lisa Marie Kimmell

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File 1: The Murder of Lisa Marie Kimmell

Place and period: Casper and Natrona County, 1988-2008

Present legal status: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force.

This file belongs first to Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers. The public record is necessarily organized around investigation and adjudication, but a criminal case is not the measure of a life. The account uses the available record to describe what happened and how institutions responded, while avoiding invented biography where sources are silent.

The human scale

Lisa Marie Kimmell disappeared while driving from Colorado toward Cody in March 1988. That fact is the fixed point for this portion of The Murder of Lisa Marie Kimmell. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. In Casper and Natrona County, later retellings sometimes collapse the investigation and the judgment into one continuous story. The public record does not. It preserves the order in which information appeared and the forum in which it was tested. The present legal posture is stated separately: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force.

For Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. Her body was recovered from the North Platte River near Casper, but the case remained unsolved for years. The detail belongs here because it changes the chronology, not because it supplies atmosphere. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made the response necessary.

The 1988-2008 record from Casper and Natrona County contains a point that resists shorthand: DNA testing eventually identified Dale Eaton as the source of biological evidence preserved from the investigation. The present legal posture is equally specific: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. One proposition may be established while a neighboring proposition remains disputed. Treating them separately is not hesitation; it is accurate reporting.

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. Investigators recovered Kimmell's vehicle after excavating Eaton's property. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Casper and Natrona County determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1988-2008 marks the span over which the public learned it. The trial

produced convictions on murder, kidnapping, robbery, and sexual-assault counts, followed by extensive capital review. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The result is a chronology with identifiable custodians rather than a collection of free-floating claims.

This part of the account begins with a modest question: what did the cited source actually establish? Its answer is plain: Lisa Marie Kimmell disappeared while driving from Colorado toward Cody in March 1988. The answer does not automatically prove motive, identity, or every charge in the case. The account keeps the people harmed, the routines interrupted, and the community consequences in view. The remaining status is stated without embellishment: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force.

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The first account

By the time *The Murder of Lisa Marie Kimmell* reached public memory, sequence had become easy to lose. Investigators recovered Kimmell's vehicle after excavating Eaton's property. Restoring sequence shows what investigators knew, what prosecutors alleged, what the defense contested, and what a court or jury ultimately resolved. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. An older headline cannot replace the current status: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force.

There is no need to enlarge the evidence to make this file serious. The trial produced convictions on murder, kidnapping, robbery, and sexual-assault counts, followed by extensive capital review. That proposition is consequential on its own. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. The account therefore avoids borrowing certainty from unrelated defendants, other jurisdictions, or later cases that happen to resemble events in Casper and Natrona County.

The public record speaks most reliably when attribution travels with the claim. Here is the supported proposition: Lisa Marie Kimmell disappeared while driving from Colorado toward Cody in March 1988. The source may recount an allegation, summarize trial proof, or state a judgment, and the language must match that function. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. That practice protects the accuracy of the case and the dignity of Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers at the same time.

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Consider the detail in its proper scale: DNA testing eventually identified Dale Eaton as the source of biological evidence preserved from the investigation. It is neither disposable nor self-executing. Its force depends on where it sits among the other records from Casper and Natrona County. What witnesses reported at the time remains separate from what investigators later inferred. A measured account can explain that relationship without turning legal caution into a repetitive disclaimer.

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Building a chronology

The most useful context is the context that changes interpretation. Her body was recovered from the North Platte River near Casper, but the case remained unsolved for years. In the Casper and Natrona County record, that detail helps explain why a particular investigative or legal step followed. Dates and sequence preserve the difference between early uncertainty and later knowledge. General crime lore would add volume but not understanding, so it is left outside the account.

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Witness evidence

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Digital and documentary trails

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Charging choices

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The courtroom

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Appeal and review

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For Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers, the procedural vocabulary cannot be allowed to eclipse consequence. DNA testing eventually identified Dale Eaton as the source of biological evidence preserved from the investigation. The detail belongs here because it changes the chronology, not because it supplies atmosphere. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families occupy different roles in the record. Keeping that boundary visible lets the reader understand both the institutional response and the loss that made

the response necessary.

The 1988-2008 record from Casper and Natrona County contains a point that resists shorthand: Investigators recovered Kimmell's vehicle after excavating Eaton's property. The present legal posture is equally specific: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families occupy different roles in the record. One proposition may be established while a neighboring proposition remains disputed. Treating them separately is not hesitation; it is accurate reporting.

A headline can make this episode appear settled in a sentence. The underlying record is narrower. The trial produced convictions on murder, kidnapping, robbery, and sexual-assault counts, followed by extensive capital review. From there, the inquiry moves through source, timing, corroboration, and legal consequence. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families occupy different roles in the record. None of those steps authorizes invented dialogue or a claim about what Lisa Marie Kimmell, her family and friends, investigators, and the communities that searched for answers privately thought.

Location matters in this file. Casper and Natrona County determined which agencies, courts, and communities carried the case, while 1988-2008 marks the span over which the public learned it. Lisa Marie Kimmell disappeared while driving from Colorado toward Cody in March 1988. Police, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, laboratories, journalists, and families occupy different roles in the record. The result is a chronology with identifiable custodians rather than a collection of free-floating claims.

Status at manuscript lock

The controlling status for this account is: Dale Wayne Eaton was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated robbery, and sexual assault. Federal habeas litigation later vacated the death sentence, while the convictions remained in force. That sentence is deliberately narrower than a television summary. It does not merge co-defendants, convert accusations into findings, or imply that an appeal erased a human death. Later proceedings may change the legal posture, but they should not be projected backward onto the record described here.

Sources from the edition

The Murder of Lisa Marie Kimmell

- Wyoming Supreme Court, Eaton v. State:

<https://documents.courts.state.wy.us/Opinions/2008WY97.pdf> - Tenth

Circuit Court of Appeals, Eaton habeas litigation: <https://www.ca10.uscourts.gov/sites/ca10/files/opinions/010110202061.pdf>

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