

THIRTEEN

SISSY

Sissy Pierce

I've been incarcerated for 16 years. I will be 70 years old in August of 2018. I have been here at the Wyoming Women's Center for the last nine years, and the seven years before that were spent out-of-state in private prisons.

On December 28 of 1999, I shot my husband and, I was told, killed him instantly. It didn't mean that I didn't value human life or that I didn't care about him. I did. I had never been in trouble with the law in my life. I was a child bride with four children by the time I was 19. I had been either physically or emotionally abused for most of my life and at this time I was 51.

Currently, I am in a class teaching me how to write my memoirs, and I am so excited because I've always wanted to write about my life in hopes that, if someone read my story, they might find something of use for their own life. But, I don't want this to be "A Self-Help" book; I find them very boring. What I have been able to write now, upon DOC approval, will be published. My time is limited so if you want the whole story, you'll have to wait until I am out of prison and able to finish and publish my book.

After 11 years, my first marriage ended and I found myself with three little boys looking to me for support. I had terror of losing my children. Their dad, Mike, had always said if I ever left that he'd get the kids. My kids were a gift from God and I wasn't giving them up to anyone. I did what I had to do to keep us together, sheltered, and fed. At the time of the divorce, my oldest, Shelby, was in the second or third grade. The other two, Justin and Jerry, were still at home. Mike had run off with a woman twelve years my senior and four years his senior. I had very little self-esteem or self-confidence prior to him leaving, and now I had even less.

When I was eighteen, he had taught me to drive an 18-wheeler, but I only worked a few short months before his uncle's wife told the company I wasn't 21, which was required for insurance to cover employees. I had quit to keep from being fired. The shame of being fired was more than I could bear. Five years later, when Mike left me, I'd been working at Burger King for about a year and was waiting for a new store to finish getting built, one block from my house, that they wanted me to manage. I was 23.

My children and I moved from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to live with my grandparents in East Texas, who raised me, as I tried to make a life for us. I asked for enough food stamps to feed my children until I found work. The Welfare Department said no because my grandparents had too much money. That wasn't fair. It was my responsibility. My grandparents had worked hard for what they had. They took care of us, but every day my grandmother reminded me of my plight and how I had messed up my life by running away to get married at thirteen. The old cliché, "You made your bed, now lie in it," comes to mind. I did soon find work in a poultry plant seventeen miles west of our house. I had a new 1972 Chevrolet Monte Carlo, but then I lost my job and the car within a few months from being sick with tonsillitis while my middle child was sick with pneumonia. We received no help from their dad. Mike had a new family.

After he left me, and our family, for another woman, I was pretty sure I had a hard road ahead. I chose to fool with a married man, Joe, who was close to 15 or 20 years older. It didn't last, and my relationship with my grandmother deteriorated more each day since I had to move back in with them. I found work again thirty-five miles east, over the state line in Shreveport, Louisiana. My cousin helped me get a 1968 Chevrolet station wagon; I was able to get into low-income housing two blocks from my job and hire a babysitter who lived next door.

By this time, I had filed for a divorce in Texas. Any man that asked me out, I went with, whether he was married or not. I didn't stop to think how I was hurting myself because I was trying

to get back at Mike and he didn't even know it. I kept moving up in the job pay scale and moving up in the caliber of men, or so I thought. I married two whose line was, "Marry me and let me help you with the boys." One I really did love and respect, Cody. He taught me everything a "man" should know. I took care of cows on a ranch where we lived and raised row crops and cattle. It belonged to his ex-brother-in-law, Jesse, who soon took a fancy to me. Cody was 25 years my senior and Jesse, the boss, was a little younger. I learned to ride horses, take care of them, pen cattle, and doctor them as needed. We rodeoed on weekends; he was a judge and I was a rodeo secretary. We also shod horses, made ropes for riding the bulls, and worked as ranch hands, so we made a decent living. Everything we did, we did together. We'd probably have stayed together if he better understood my kids, or kids in general.

In 1976, we moved back to Shreveport, Louisiana, the town that I really considered to be my home. He went back to the welding and blacksmith shop he had worked at before. I wanted to be a girl again and landed a job in a dermatology office with two doctors and on-the-job training. It paid \$500.00 a month, and two and a half years later, it still only paid \$550.00 a month. After those two and a half years, I went next door to a gas station and convenience store to work as manager making \$1500.00 a month with a \$1000.00 bonus every three months if inventory stayed good with little shortage and good sales. Wouldn't you know it—the District Supervisor, who was married just like I was, fell in love with me. Then, the CEO of an oil company, Ron, came to town for a visit, and he also fell in love with me. I soon visited him in Tulsa. I was married and so was he, but that didn't stop Ron from offering me a luxury penthouse apartment, chauffeured limo, an allowance and to not have to work. Boy, I had made it. How come I don't feel great? I did not drink hardly at all, I went to church with my family, I took good care of our home; no fast food, I cooked, did laundry, starched and ironed twenty-seven pairs of jeans a week, shined cowboy boots and dress shoes—all until the boys learned to do it. The one thing was that Ron never mentioned

my children. That was a bad mistake—I'd leave a man for my children, but I'd never leave my children for a man.

Working twelve-hour days, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., I had no time off or “me time,” and I still had horses to care for. By this time, Cody and I were in business for ourselves with our own welding and blacksmith shop. One of the doctors I had worked for had overheard me talking about buying equipment and offered me a loan. With the money, he put us in business. I paid back every penny and never had to do anything other than be a very effective, proficient doctor's assistant. My phone rang one night and it was the lady from the alarm company saying the gas station I'd been working at, to supplement my income till the welding shop got off the ground, had been robbed and my clerk was missing. She had been kidnapped, then raped and thrown out on the side of the road. I handed my keys in the very next day.

I ran the welding shop, rodeoed, helped with the weekend horseshoeing, and longed for a life. I felt that Cody had begun to pick on my boys. He wanted them up at the crack of dawn to “chop cotton” even we didn't even have a cotton field, just a horse pasture that the horses kept mowed. He also objected when I let them go to the movies, skating rink, or the penny arcade. But, they were good boys and they deserved some entertainment.

Soon, I was asked by Jesse, my husband's ex-brother-in-law, if I could drive a truck. He had always been astonished at the feats I could accomplish. That started my twenty-year-career of trucking all over the country.

Cody and I divorced. Shelby, my oldest boy, dropped out of school and was driving a truck for a local steel company. He was home at night when I was away. By summer, Justin and Jerry were going with me to the grain elevators in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Houston, Texas. I was hauling soybeans, milo, and wheat. Shelby married in September and I gave the two younger boys a choice: stay with my mother or go to their dad's while I hauled grain in South Texas. I did have a new boyfriend, J.R., and yes, he was married. I would drive his truck and make money every now and then when he went home. By Thanksgiving of the

third year of our relationship, I had my own travel trailer parked in Pasadena, Texas and was pulling a tanker making between \$14,000.00 and \$20,000.00 a month. But, I was tired of sharing my man. I gave him an ultimatum—he took his wife, helped me buy my first truck, and I was on my way. I had been in a 1982 Kenworth with a suicide sleeper, a short wheelbase, and no air-ride suspension. I did put in expensive air-ride seats, but it was like putting chrome wheels on a go-cart. Useless. The truck he helped me get was a repo, but a real nice one: only twenty thousand miles, a red-striped, 1982 gunmetal grey Peterbilt with a walk-in sleeper and room for a port-o-potty and refrigerator. There was a closet to hang my clothes and room for a suitcase in a compartment under the bed. I was over the moon.

I married again for nine months, to a man nine years younger than me. From that I learned, don't marry young ones that have nothing. By the end of that marriage, my youngest son, Jerry, was 16. I only saw J.R. a few times in passing. I did contemplate dating his brother after his wife passed away and left him with three kids.

My truck was stolen in December of 1983, and when insurance paid off, I bought another truck, a brand new 1984 Peterbilt. It was a deep metallic blue with big grey, white, and gold stripes. I wasn't fond of the paint job, but I needed to get to work and it was the only one in the lot in Shreveport. This one I bought with my own good name and credit. At that time, I'd never financed a house. I did have an almost-new car I bought just before my first truck was stolen, but buying this truck gave me a real feeling of accomplishment like I'd never felt before.

Buying that truck got me introduced to the truck salesman's best friend, Curtis. You guessed it—I soon moved in with him. He had an insurance business and a beautiful home. He also had a deliberate and ambitious plan to get my truck. Yes, I willed everything to him and, before I completely gave him a partnership, I came to my senses. Curtis changed the locks on the doors and for the second time, I lost everything I had, including all my children's baby pictures—stuff that couldn't be replaced. At least I had

clothes in the truck. I spent \$5,000.00 in a Texas court to get all that back from him but to no avail.

I had met a Kenny Rogers look-alike a few months after my other truck was stolen, and on my way to New Jersey, I met him in Sugar Tree, Tennessee. Josh and I dated over the phone through our dispatchers for weeks. He finally quit his job and came on the truck with me. That was one of my costlier mistakes and very damaging to my business and reputation. I gave him too much control. Josh had a house and two acres in Louisiana that he had jointly inherited with his brother and sister. I bought them out and spent \$8,000.00 remodeling it. Six months later he had it burned to the ground while I had gone to Houston with Justin, his wife, and his baby for his Naval entrance exam. I knew something was wrong—call it a gut feeling. Josh admitted it later. The whole thing ended up with me in a psychiatric hospital after a suicide attempt.

I have often wondered why I didn't shoot him. He walked up on me in the woods during my attempt. Little did I know it would get worse. The year I met Josh, I had filed taxes on \$135,000.00, which I'd pretty much made on my own. I had a seventh-grade education, no job, and my car had a lot of miles on it. On top of it, he'd cost me my 1984 Peterbilt. My one good thing was that I had eight beautiful grandchildren. I had adopted a girl and my boys are all good men. Again, I thought I had made it. After eight years together, seven of which we'd been married, I walked away.

This was 1992, almost '93. I found a job, but soon hated it. I mostly ran trucks from Arkansas to Iowa and Illinois, and all throughout the Midwest. Finally, I moved to Tennessee, working for a guy with a fleet of trucks running from coast to coast. From there I moved to Georgia. I hauled gasoline all over the state for Marathon Oil until I ruptured a disk from all the heavy work. In January of 1996, Shelby came and got me and I went to live with him and his wife, who I'd met once.

I had spent my life savings in Kansas City, buying a truck for him to lease. Shelby said if I bought it that he'd run it and support me so I'd never have to work again. His wife had won

some money at the casino, which she wanted to put into the endeavor. I had no objection to that. Little did I know, she wasn't the sweet person she seemed to be. However, she was my son's wife and I was going to treat her as a daughter. Their marriage didn't work and neither did my living with them. I moved out, took the truck, and went to live in East Texas with my mother. I couldn't work, was drawing worker's comp, and pretty much knew my truck-driving career was over. I bought a piece of ground from my mother, a nice mobile home, and started over. I still wonder how after all this I didn't give up. I just needed some time to figure out why my life was such a mess.

It was a hot summer in the piney woods of East Texas and I had met another guy, Tom. Of course, I had had several between Georgia and Louisiana. But, I was beginning to see the light and I was tired of supporting them mentally, physically, and not to mention financially. I told myself that I'd never love again. Sometimes I thought maybe I hadn't really loved those men as much as I'd loved being in love. Still, every time one of them left me, it hurt so bad and I swore to myself I'd never do that again, but this new guy was different and we talked on the phone a great deal. I told my son I was inviting him to our Fourth of July barbecue that my son's girlfriend and kids were coming to; that way, I could get my son's opinion. Had I listened to him many times before, I'd have been richer and more mentally adept in choosing my men although he'd been two times divorced and about to make his third mistake with marriage. It seems to run in the family.

By August, Tom and I had a beautiful church wedding, honeymooned in Branson, Missouri, and life was good. He was 47 years old and I was 48. He had his own jewelry and watch repair business at the house. We had a wonderful relationship, but a lot of people were unhappy about it. His family even had background checks run on me. He'd had a similar childhood to mine and had moved from Oregon to Texas to develop a relationship with his mom and two siblings. We lived next door to her. Did I mention his mom left him, as a toddler, on his dad's porch in a snowstorm and that he was raised by his aunt? His aunt was in her seventies

when we were married. She seemed very happy to start, but it didn't last.

The jealousy was horrendous and stupid in my book. I didn't believe in it and I still don't. His aunt was jealous of his mom, and the mom was jealous of me and his aunt. His mom thought that because she gave him the two acres that he built the house on, she had control. It was that way with my mom also, and I was paying for the lot next to her. Yes, my mom was mad, too, because I had left her control. My stepdad of 46 years had passed away in March.

What kind of mess did I get myself into? We soon loaded the motorhome, put Auntie in it with her wheelchair and walker, and headed west. We had plans of retiring. In Tucson, Arizona, we started looking for houses and jewelry stores in shopping areas that we could work for. Bingo! We found a home that was handicap accessible, which we needed because his aunt had a stroke shortly after we married. It also had a master suite with private patio, and a huge patio with a brick fire pit and grill out by the pool. They pre-qualified us while we were there. We wanted to move before monsoon rains started in August. In May, before we met, Tom had knee replacement surgery and wasn't doing well. I'd had back surgery and had already overextended myself. Auntie was practically helpless. Even the dog was sick. I had a maid, as needed, for housekeeping, but I was very picky. Her husband was our gardener and handyman. He also helped with the pool and the vehicle. We hired people to do everything we couldn't do, in Texas and in Arizona.

We moved into our new home on August 17, 1997. We celebrated our first wedding anniversary on August 24. His aunt had another mild stroke, and we had to hire babysitters for when we left the house together. We already had at-home healthcare for her. By September, things were leveling out. We were so in tune, compatible, and very happy, looking forward to our life together. Jerry often stopped by on his way to California; otherwise, it was just us three.

In late September, Tom hurt his knee trying to move his aunt's bed alone and within a few days, it had tripled in size and was hot with fever. I sent him to the Emergency Care Clinic alone. They drew out the fluid and advised him to see an orthopedic doctor as soon as possible. It wasn't till Tuesday that I found one, way across a town that I was unfamiliar with, but we got there. After all, I'd driven an 18-wheeler in downtown New York City, Los Angeles, and Atlanta—I can do anything. The doctor said the dreaded word, “hospital,” and that he had to check in as soon as possible. I called my mother to drive his aunt's car, which we left in Texas, to Tucson and care for his aunt. My mom was a retired RN and had done a lot of private-duty sitting after retiring. She had warmed up after my marriage. The aunt needed someone who cared about her. She and my mom had become friends before we left Texas. My mom now worshipped Tom because he petted and spoiled her. It was funny!

As I suspected, his knee was seriously infected. They kept him for four days. He was sent home with an IV port and received a small package of antibiotics every eight hours, which I administered. Now, we also had at-home healthcare for him. They had taken out the knee prosthesis, and he was confined to a wheelchair. With my help, he could sit and do his jewelry and watch repair. I became superwoman. I had to go to all of our customers for pickup and delivery and arrange all the doctors' appointments for all three: him, his aunt, and the dog. Then there was me. I had a bad case of tendonitis, better known as “tennis elbow.” I was worn out and scared. Tom was not getting better. By mid-October, the infectious disease doctor said Tom would die if they stopped the antibiotics and the orthopedic surgeon wanted to amputate but was afraid the infection would spread. They kept saying that they didn't know what it was. What it was, was a Superbug.

On Halloween night, they amputated his leg. I had his aunt in a private home care center for the elderly, and I was alone. My mom couldn't come. His family was useless and didn't care. His daughter had called once. They were all still mad about our move

and, of course, blamed me. He questioned if I would still love him with only one leg. My reply was, "I'd love you without any," and I did. He came home after he went through rehab, got fitted for a prosthetic, and was back to work in his wheelchair. I had gotten a little help with his aunt after I brought her home; the at-home healthcare center and doctor ordered it for me. It did give me a much-needed break, three days a week for eight hours, without anyone to care for. It was now getting close to the holidays, and I was determined to have a great first Christmas in our new home. Little did I know what my future would hold.

I had decorated inside and out. I loved the southwestern style of Christmas. I'd put luminaries, the little brown paper bags with sand and candles inside, all around the driveway, front walk, the pool, and the patio, and I bought a live tree like Tom had asked for. I also bought something popular for the area, a small freestanding fireplace for the patio. We loved our fireplace, but sometimes liked to sit on the patio in the evening. I bought small bundles of wood and artificial logs at the 7-Eleven down the street.

On December 10, I thought I had it all under control, and things were going pretty well. I had my schedule down to a science. Tom bought me a new glass top range to replace the drop-in cooktop oven that came in the house. They delivered it that morning. I think it was a Wednesday. Auntie was at the daycare, Tom was in the jewelry shop working, and I soon had to go make deliveries and pickups, finish Christmas shopping, grocery shopping, and get my nails done. By dinnertime, I had nothing started. Tom had come to the living room and asked for a fire in the fireplace. He couldn't get close enough to do it. I got one going and returned to the kitchen. Auntie had spilled water and said nothing until I slipped and almost fell. She smiled and I fussed. She ate and returned to her chair by the fireplace. I cleaned up the water. She and Tom were having a loud discussion and I went to see what it was about. Somehow, the subject was her going to the home permanently. She threatened suicide and went to her room.

I was upset and trying to cook breakfast for our dinner. I burnt it all, not being used to the new electric oven, unlike the gas

stove. Tom hugged me and told me to back the truck out, get the dog, and we'd make a quick trip to Burger King—his favorite. We were gone maybe thirty minutes. A few days earlier I had built a low bar, with his help, so he could roll his wheelchair up under it; he couldn't do that at our dining table. So, we ate and talked about our day and the situation with his aunt. We had a routine now. His job was to take the dog out after he set up the coffee pot for the morning and I turned off the Christmas lights and secured the house. I had helped him remove his prosthetic earlier and marked his stump where it was rubbing since we were going to the prosthetist the next day for an appointment.

When I got to the bedroom, he was in his recliner and the dog was in mine. I went to the bath suite to do my evening ritual and get on my pajamas and robe. I don't exactly remember why I went back to the kitchen. At the end of the hall, I turned into the living room and heard, "POP! POP! POP!" I looked at the fireplace, but the fire had gone. I thought of Auntie's threat of suicide. I checked on her earlier; she was cozy in her bed and watching TV. I ran to our room. I found him on the bed, gun in hand. I had jerked the gun from his hand and I told him, "Hang on, I'll get help!" I had a female friend next door whose boyfriend lived two doors down the opposite way. I was out of my mind. I called 911 and ran for the boyfriend's house because my friend's car was in his driveway. I beat on the door until he answered and said, "He shot himself!" and I took off running back to the house. I was barefoot, and I never even felt the desert ground on my feet. I was on the bed with him when my friends got there. They dragged me off and into the living room. I was still convinced he was alive. They told me no.

We'd been invited to church by a guy who had responded to an ad we'd placed when Justin decided to sell our musical instruments. We had so much happen that we had never made it to church with him. Since he was the only person I'd spoken to about church in Tucson, I called him and told him what had happened. He got his pastor and found pallbearers for the funeral. I buried Tom on Monday, December 15, 1997.

I had to be in Marshall, Texas by Wednesday for his social security disability hearing. The battle for my life and everything we owned and had worked for began that day. I had his aunt back in the private care home. By the first of January, I was on the verge of collapse. My mom came out to help me with my problems. She stayed a week and abruptly left. I felt abandoned, alone, scared, and hopeless. A few weeks later, I, again, called the man from the ad; his wife came and picked me up on a Sunday morning and we went to church. Still to this day, neither of their names come to me. I was not ungrateful, just was in shock, and don't remember a lot. The psychiatrist said it was alright if I never remembered.

Fast forward to March, 1998. Everyone, it seemed, had deserted me again. I had few loyal friends. I met a guy, Jim, and he called me a lot. I finally agreed to let Jim come to my house. He knew what I'd been through and that I wasn't ready for anything more than friendship. He called from down the road for me to come meet him. He'd been to Applebee's and had a drink or three. He left his car and we went back to my place. He seemed to be a great guy, a real gentleman, opening car doors and pulling out chairs for me. I cooked dinner, and he helped. He'd been to culinary school. I was impressed. He was older; I was thinking middle- to late-50s, nice looking, well groomed, and very intelligent and articulate. He also was down to earth. You wouldn't have expected him to be somewhat wealthy. He spent the night on my sofa. We spent a lot of time together, and he finally told me he was a non-practicing attorney and in a property settlement fight with his ex. Ah! We had something really in common as I was also in a property settlement dispute. By the last week of March, my defense had wavered, and we flew to Las Vegas. On the fourth day of our trip, April 1, 1998, we married in the Monte Carlo Hotel Wedding Chapel. (April Fools!) I got the full treatment, too, and he finagled for the high-rollers' limo to take us to the airport. Again, I was impressed.

After three weeks, we were off to Wyoming to, and I quote, "see my new house." My 1498 square foot house in Tucson fit in the 1500 square feet of the Great Room of our Wyoming Big

House. It had a tree growing up out of the spiral staircase; yes, real, but no longer living. It had a huge horseshoe wet bar that held 12 people. This is where he and his best friend of 35 years, who was also his former banker, were sitting when I heard, “You’re crazy for getting married before your divorce is final.” I said nothing, as if I had not heard from where I was.

The Big House was lovely; I could see Lynwood Bay from the balcony of our master suite. That’s where the marina was on Flaming Gorge Lake. I could see the backside of the actual gorge too. We sat against a large hill, and the Utah Valley rested below. We lived on Stateline Road and the house had 24 acres. I soon discovered that Jim drank a lot and could become very belligerent when there was no one around. I stayed quiet, and he eventually passed out. I wanted to be on my own turf in Tucson before I confronted him.

He had the gift of a Philadelphia lawyer. He could make you forgive him and, as I’ve learned about domestic violence, the cycle goes from violence back to the honeymoon stage, and all that happened pretty quickly with him. Back in Tucson, he knocked me over a recliner chair and broke the grandfather clock my late husband bought me. But I kept staying and kept forgiving. The good times were great. We had wonderful times and a lot of fun. We traveled and saw lots of stuff—pretty much anywhere that I hadn’t gotten to travel to while driving trucks, we tried to go to. He had a huge boat, and we could stay on the lake fishing for two or three days at a time. He had taught me how to drive it and also how to run the remote control trolling motor as we fished with the downriggers. I loved living on that lake in Wyoming. It’s very scenic, and to me floating on water is great. I hated going home; those were some really happy times. I had no worries except not making him angry with me when he was drinking. The bad times were awful. I’d only been hit by my children’s dad, and he never bruised me or blackened my eyes. This wasn’t the case now; I had to wear sunglasses a lot. Jim would force me out of the Big House in Wyoming and I’d go back to Tucson. But, he’d either show up or call and talk me into coming back.

By April of 1999, he convinced me to move everything he would allow me to keep to Wyoming. I'd asked just to spend the winter in Wyoming with his three young kids for Christmas. My kids weren't allowed on the property. My youngest, Jerry, had taken a gun away from Jim when he pulled it on me while drinking in Tucson. Jerry didn't hurt him, but the next morning, he told Jim that if he ever did that again or hit me, Jerry would kill him. I had to keep them apart.

Once again, for the love of a man, I had given up most of what I worked for with the promise we would be legally married in July, since the Vegas wedding wasn't legal. I could buy anything I wanted to replace what I had given up in Tucson. I learned not to let him know what I'd had in another marriage; he was insanely jealous and would throw it back at me when he was drinking.

By August, his best friend had married and I was ecstatic to have the chance to have a friend—we could be a foursome. Not a chance! Jim was furious. I was even more confused. Anyway, she and I saw each other when I could sneak away to have lunch and shop. He called on the cellphone every 30 minutes. They came and got me in the middle of the night a couple times when he got violent. His friend got on him about hitting me. That made things worse for their relationship and ours. I would leave and come right back. I was like a lost child in the woods.

In early November of 1999, he was, and had been, in a tantrum for a week. I had had enough. I left and the neighbors called the police. I was bruised and bloody. I slipped back after the police had left and got my Ford Expedition. They said I could because my name was on the title. I went to town and rented myself a hotel room. The next morning, I called my hairdresser, Michelle, who I thought was my friend. She had been aware of my situation for weeks and directed me to the battered women's shelter. They allowed me to come after a screening at a restaurant. Little did I know, Michelle told her husband, who told my husband where I was and every move that I made. It took me awhile to figure that out. Jim harassed and stalked me almost every day. That was the end of ever trusting another woman or man.

I spent six weeks in the battered women's shelter and put him under a protection and restraining order. He broke it daily. I told the county attorney almost daily. When it came up that Jim had married me before his divorce was final, their ears perked up. Seems that they wanted to file charges for bigamy. There had never been a case tried in Wyoming. So, I hired a divorce lawyer, not sure why I needed a divorce, but I needed help legally. Jim was saying that I had nothing on his property, that he wasn't married to me, and that I had no rights. He would eventually prove that to be right in the State of Wyoming.

However, at the hearing for the restraining order, Jim showed up drunk and 30 minutes late. The old judge was not impressed by his sob story. He gave me \$1000.00 a month in spousal support, the Ford Expedition I was given for my birthday, and the 31-foot travel trailer, and Jim had to repay me for the tax, title, and transport from Arizona to Wyoming. I moved out of the shelter, but he continued to stalk me at work and at my home. I called the law—nothing! The county attorney said he would have an extra drive-by put on me. The last time I called, the deputy laughed when I told him that.

I went to a nightclub with a friend and met a guy, Tray. He didn't drink! Just coffee or orange juice. I wouldn't let him buy me my drink either. We both loved to dance, our reason for being there, and we made a good dancing couple. We went to the truck stop for a light dinner. He asked me for a date the next Saturday. I said yes. Tray was at my house a couple of times when Jim would drive around my trailer. He knew my story, and that Jim had not yet given up his guns. I didn't have one anymore; Jim had sold mine. Yes, I was afraid.

When Tray offered to move me in with him, so I'd be safer, I accepted. Yes, Jim found me within a couple days. He would sit across the street. I called the city police. They came but they said they could do nothing. Christmas came and Tray wanted to get out of the snow and cold. We went to Arizona, south of Tucson, I think Tombstone. The OK Corral was there. But it being Christmas, there wasn't much open. By that night, he had become grumpy and

somewhat moody. We had a bad argument in the motel. We were in the town where you turn off of I-40 for Las Vegas. The rest of the way to Vegas was awful. I was in another, "You can do as I say or else," situation. I tried to jump out of the car at 80 miles an hour. I had a bruised chest when I was arrested from where Tray had grabbed me to keep me in the car. I know now I was almost to the edge. We got back home to Wyoming on Sunday morning. On Monday, he went back to work. I had quit my job at his request.

That night Jim called. Michelle had given him the number apparently, or someone had. At first, he and Tray were going at it, arguing on the phone. I got the phone away from Tray. It wasn't his fight. Jim was drunk and angry. He said his usual line, that he needed me to come home or he would kill me. I finally hung up. Tray gave me a pill of something to "calm me," he said. I woke the next morning and everything, from then till I got to jail, was sketchy.

I usually never drank before 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I was told there was a 1.75 liter bottle of Crown Royal in the console of my truck that was nearly empty. I know I shot and killed my husband sometime that day, December 28, 1999. I have never denied that and I turned myself in.