

Victims Impact Statement of Brenda Yancey Gillespie

It would be impossible for me to talk about the impact losing Dean has had on me without first telling you what she meant to me. She meant everything. Although our personalities were as different as night and day, she was a calm and gentle spirit while I tend to be a bit more outspoken and regimented. Her serenity and calm tempered my high strung nature, while my outspoken resolve drove her to learn how to stand firm and insist on making any situation work for her. She had an awesome reserve of strength and an amazing degree of character under that gentle exterior. So precious—she was a perfect example of a woman who brought herself out of impossible circumstances with only the strength of her character and her abiding faith to guide her. That was the way she lived her life. She never gave up on anything or anyone that was important to her. She made her living as a nurse's aide taking care of elderly people who needed constant care. Her "ladies", that's what she called her patients, were always the ones that won the costume contest at Halloween or the spring bonnet contest at Easter. Dean would work like crazy to make this happen—sewing and painting and hunting down the perfect treasure to make her ladies stand out and feel special. All this, and \$400. a week, what else could a girl ask for?!

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She was the same way about the people she loved. She loved stubbornly and with purpose and with passion. She never gave up on anyone. You may hurt her, you may make her angry, but she was able to separate that from her degree of love. This remarkable woman was my sister. My Issy; and she meant the world to me. Her love and friendship has probably meant more to me in my life than any other human being I have known. She was the constant, the one thing that did not change. Day always followed night, what goes up must come down, and I have a sister that is always there and always on my side no matter what.

My name is Brenda Kaye Yancey Gillespie and I am very proud to stand up and tell you that Elizabeth Dean Yancey Uptagrafft was my big sister.

On January 7, 2007 you decided that since you had spent all of your money on Christmas and you wanted to go to New York, you would just go into this house and take from whoever lived there. That decision, and the circumstances that

followed, took this beautiful soul from this world and caused more pain and heartache to me and my family than you can imagine.

It has been over two years since my sister's murder and I still don't get it. Why would you even consider doing the things that you did? You have a loving family—couldn't you think far enough to see that my sister had one too? One of the hardest parts for me is all the opportunities you had to save Dean's life. You had every opportunity in the world to step in and stop this. At the house—you could have taken the gun and left—at the motel—at the bank—for heaven's sake.

We sat in here a few months ago and listened to Cornelius Baker's family testify to his abominable back ground. ..his lack of role models and the fact that he had to shop at Wal-Mart, and I wonder what your explanation is. It's very obvious that you have a loving family. You are young and attractive , a woman who is capable of bringing life and energy and good things into this world; so how do you become someone who can be so casual about seeing one die?

In all the appearances that I have seen you in this court, not one time have I seen you cry. You dabbed your eyes on when you took the stand at the trial—but it was when they played your own phone call home—not at any testimony having to do with your victims. The pictures of my mothers bruised body elicited not one tear—the pictures or evidence of my sister blood on your clothes nor my sisters body laying in the woods did not seem to bother you one bit.. Not one time have you looked at us—through us maybe but not at us, until you took the stand. Then you wept and wailed, but Patricia, as soon as you were asked a different question, the tears dried up like magic. I have seen your own mother sit in this court room and cry until I thought surely she would die from the pain of knowing for sure what her daughter had done. I have seen her so broken and overcome with her pain and weeping that someone had to help her from the courtroom, yet not one tear from you. Not even for your own mother.

No one lived through more adversity than my sister. She had been broke and homeless with four children to feed. She had lived out of her car; been drunk, got sober, been abused, survived cancer, been widowed, been hungry and saw her kids go hungry, but never, never, never did she allow her pain or failures to

become someone else's tragedy. She was never mean, never cruel, and never a thief. She did what she could do with what she had and what she knew, and she retained her dignity and self respect and earned the love of every one who met her because of it.

When you and Cornelius killed her you killed something in me that was so much a part of me that I don't really know how to pick up and go on without it. To you, and I'm sure to other people she is dead and buried and that part is over. But I am here to tell you that for me, it hasn't changed that much from the first week. For me I can't even begin to rebuild what is left of my life until we get justice for her...it's almost impossible to think beyond that day.

When this happened I was a newly-wed with a wonderful new groom and all of the excitement that implies going on in my life. We were blending our families—my two children, his three. Instead of the wonderful homecoming we had planned however, our children's first meeting was all about Dean's funeral. All I remember about it without a reminder is riding down US-1 behind the hearse and having the shopkeepers and customers come out of the stores and line the funeral route. They prayed and wept and waved or sank to their knees in prayer to show their love and concern and horror at what had happened in our lives. I don't remember our children meeting, only that they were here along with my sister's children and all the grand children. I remember wondering what I should be doing to make it all right for them. I still wonder.

The psychologist that I have been seeing since this happens tells me that I must begin to live again or you will have killed both us. I know she is right—I'm just not sure I know how. That question just keeps going around and around in my head. Why did you make the decision you made? Why wasn't I on time—I was supposed to be there... If I had been on time could I have stopped you? helped her? Is it my fault? In my wallet there is a note that my sister wrote me not long before she was killed. I think it was written after her cancer recovery was in full swing. It says, "Issy, thank you for always having my back. I love you very much." Can you imagine how deep that cuts me—knowing I wasn't there to fight for her?

You have virtually decimated my family. My mother, my sister's children and grand- children; my own children and grand children. You and Cornelius have darkened the rest of our lives like some sort of evil specters. Besides our grief at losing Dean, we know things that people don't rest easy knowing. There is no such thing as the safety of your own home; daytime doesn't mean safety; and a murderous heart is not male or female. Someone who doesn't care about other people can change your world on a whim. That is a bitter pill to swallow.

You are a cruel and cold woman; an admitted thief, robber and kidnapper, and yes, Patricia, in my heart, I believe, a murderer. You belong where all people like you belong...Isolated from people that you can either hurt or influence.

I take no pleasure in your sentence nor do I have anything but sympathy for your family. It would purely kill me to know that anyone I loved and had nurtured could be capable of such things as you have admitted to.