

- An Ordeal -

Jim a prisoner serving consecutive life terms here in Washington State. Jim also a Christian. In the late 1980's another inmate, who was serving life without the possibility of parole, told me about two rape/murders that he'd committed that he'd never been caught for. This inmates name was Michael. I asked him if anyone had been charged or convicted for the crimes. He told me not that he knew of. I thought about what Michael had shared with me. He professed to be a Christian, too. He'd told me that he'd confessed his crimes to God and didn't think it needed to go any further than God.

As time passed, I'd kept wondering if someone innocent might have been convicted for the crimes. If someone was in prison or on death row for the crimes it would be a terrible injustice. I also thought about the relatives of the victims and their need for closure. I thought about how painful it must be to live with the knowledge and loss of a family member, relative or friend to murder. How they must long for justice to be served a right. I struggled with this information that he'd given me for a couple of years. I prayed many times and was prompted by God to step forward. I'd promised Michael that I'd never tell anyone his secret. I couldn't keep his confidence in good conscience.

In the early 1990's I finally contacted the authorities in California where the rape/murders had occurred. I immediately got a reply and they asked for more information and for Michael's name. They knew Michael and quickly connected him to one of the rape/murders. They charged him after matching his DNA to the victim and took him from the Washington Department of Corrections to California to face his actions.

The victim's name was Lisa she was 17 years old when she was raped and murdered. She had over come obstacles in her life and was planning to join the Navy after high school. She was very active in her school drama club, too. She was also the niece of a police officer. She was sick and on her way home.

from the doctor's office when Michael viciously raped and strangled her to death. He left her buried under a bunch of garbage. She was later found, and the case went unsolved until I came forward. Lisa was a very beautiful teenager with her whole life ahead of her. It's so very sad that she was taken before her time and in such an evil way.

California authorities came to Washington State to interview me. They asked me if I'd be willing to go to California and testify in the preliminary proceedings. I agreed. Michael had several friends I who were also serving life. They lived in the same unit that I was in. Once they found out via Michael that I'd informed on him it became very difficult for me to live around them. The prison administration placed me in the Intensive Management Unit on Protective Custody status. I remained in that unit until the trial was over.

After testifying in the preliminary hearing I was sent back to Washington and told that the trial would be in a year or longer. I knew what I was doing was right, but I also knew that there would be struggles to overcome. I'd made enemies in the prison system by my stance. I was branded a "rat" by some. Others could care less because rape is a bad crime. In the mid 1990's I was returned to California to testify as a state's witness. A few of Michael's friends "lifers" were also sent to testify on his behalf and against me. Before returning to California, Michael's attorney illegally gained access to my psychological records and these, despite my protest, were revealed during the trial. I was subjected to a fierce cross examination by Michael's defense attorney.

During the trial I had to be transferred to a different jail for my safety. Authorities had uncovered a plot that was to be played against me by other prisoners. I was moved and the trial continued. During my stay in the California jail I was in isolation so I read

a lot and prayed. I was under a lot of stress and used exercise and prayer to cope. My grandparents, aunt and a cousin came to the jail to visit me, too. It was a wonderful treat to be able to visit with them. I hadn't seen them for almost 25 years. After testifying I was sent back to Washington State.

Michael was convicted and the penalty phase of the trial would determine his fate. I'm apposed to the death penalty. I prayed and asked God not to allow them to kill Michael. I also wrote the judge asking him to have mercy on Michael. He was sentenced to death. The case had mainly been made on DNA evidence. The prosecutor, after the trial, went on the circuit lecturing on DNA evidence, and he later became a Superior Court Judge. Michael died of lung cancer on death row about 4 years after his conviction. My grandparents have since died, and I remain serving my sentence here in Washington State.

In retrospect, what helped me get through the situation was my Christian faith and dependence upon God. I couldn't have done it otherwise. I'm almost 53 years old now. I was 21 years old when I came to prison. I may not see the free world again. I live each day by faith in God. I'm just a pilgrim passing through on this earth. Life is brief. I live with the future in mind. The future that's after death.

"... All things work together for good to those who love God ..."

Washington State.