



Peggy Klinke (1970-2003)

A Tragic Murder:

A Powerful Force to Improve the Nation's Response to Stalking

In late February 2003, Debbie Riddle contacted the Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime seeking help. Peggy Klinke, Debbie's sister, had been brutally murdered two months earlier by a former boyfriend who had stalked her before killing her and then himself. Debbie wanted to translate her family's painful tragedy into a force for positive change. In particular, she wanted to find ways to improve law enforcement's response to stalking. She wanted to help save lives.

Debbie Riddle's call set into motion a series of remarkable events that within four months resulted in a Congressional briefing, a concurrent Congressional resolution, and a national television program featuring Peggy's story. On July 8, 2003, the National Center for Victims of Crime, in partnership with Representative Heather Wilson (R-NM) and Lifetime Television, brought Peggy's story to the attention of Congress at a briefing on Capitol Hill. Debbie Riddle and Mark Sparks (Peggy Klinke's boyfriend at the time of her murder) described the terror of Peggy's last months. They shared how Peggy worked

with the police, obtained restraining orders, and even succeeded in having the case set for trial. Yet six days before the trial date, Peggy was killed.

The briefing highlighted ways law enforcement can strengthen its response to stalking. Speakers included Erin Brockovich, host of Lifetime's *Final Justice*; Diane Stuart, director of the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice; Tracy Bahm, director of the Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime; and Mark Wynn, former police officer and stalking expert. Susan Herman, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, moderated the briefing.

That same day, Representative Wilson—sponsor of the briefing—introduced a resolution to support National Stalking Awareness Month, which will focus a national spotlight on stalking every January. (A copy of the resolution and more information about National Stalking Awareness Month are available at www.ncvc.org.)

Through their powerful statements, Debbie Riddle and Mark Sparks urged both increased awareness and immediate action to help save lives. And Mark Wynn outlined steps law enforcement can take to prevent more tragedies like Peggy Klinke's death. Below we present their remarks (edited for length).



Debbie Riddle

Peggy Klinke's sister

It all began in the fall of '98. At the age of 28, my sister Peggy began preparing for medical school with some undergraduate classes in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

She met and began dating a man named Patrick Kennedy. She brought him home to

meet the family that New Year's, and he was a little too nice to all of us, a little too overbearing, and wanted Peggy all to himself. When he brought a gun to the beach on a family vacation, we warned Peggy to be careful with him. After that, we only saw him a few more times.

Peggy and Patrick's relationship lasted about three years altogether. In March of 2002, Peggy cut all ties with him. From the day she left him, he began stalking her. He followed her everywhere that she went. He called her cell phone constantly. He waited for her outside of her work and gym, and finally used his young daughter as a way to get Peggy to return his phone calls.

When Peggy did not respond to any of this, he posted a vulgar flyer with Peggy's picture and her cell phone number on it

around the city of Albuquerque, mainly at the places where Peggy had visited.

That June, our family gathered in Orlando, Florida, for my brother's wedding. Peggy brought a new man she had begun dating, Mark Sparks. While we were in Florida... Patrick left my brother a message saying how sorry he was that he could not attend the family wedding. Patrick then flew to Ohio to spray-paint "P.K. is a whore" on my mother's garage. He then returned to Albuquerque to set fire to Mark's house.

This was the first time Patrick had reached beyond Peggy. I then had to tell my six-year-old daughter that if she ever saw him that she was to run away no matter what he said.

Patrick's behavior was escalating, and Peggy began to become terrified. She went

“Please tell my mother that I love her. Please tell my niece that she will now have a guardian angel watching over her... And tell my sister to name her baby after me.”

to the police and filed for stalking charges and got a restraining order. She began to keep a record of everything Patrick did from then on and reported it all to the police.

My family and I developed a false sense of security. Patrick was breaking the law, and we thought the law would now, in turn, protect Peggy.

When police searched Patrick's home and found a receipt for an assault rifle, we thought now that they would take action. There was a detective assigned to the arson case and a D.A. working on the stalking case.

Peggy soon left for Turlock, California, to begin a new life. She did everything she

could to leave no trace or trail, to protect herself. She notified local authorities about what had been happening. And she had an unlisted address, unlisted phone number, and got a new cell phone.

She told everyone she worked with and all of her new neighbors about Patrick, showed them his picture, and urged them to call the police if they ever heard from him or saw him anywhere in the area.

During this time, my family and I were very careful talking on the phone with Peggy, never revealing her exact location. We began using Caller ID. My mother reactivated a security system that she had not used in years. My husband double-checked the

neighborhood for strange cars while he was out running. I watched my girls like a hawk and kept our doors and windows locked at all times.

Even a car parked in front of my sister's home one evening led her to call the police to have it checked out. These are things that we never ever had to do during our daily lives.

Things were quiet for awhile. And in mid-November [2002], the terror started again. A box full of damaged family photos arrived at my mother's house. And two days before Thanksgiving, a phone call came to my mom's house.

When I answered it, I heard Patrick say, “I



**How can you help
your community
create a coordinated
multidisciplinary
response to stalking?**

BROWN BAG TOPIC

Many communities have resources for sexual assault or domestic violence victims—but do not for stalking victims. Can stalking victims get civil protection orders in your community? Do you have shelters for them? Do local agencies collaborate to protect stalking victims? As you prepare for National Stalking Awareness Month in January 2004, how can you help your community address stalking?

For help to answer these questions and additional resources visit

www.ncvc.org/src

know where she is, and in two minutes, there'll be death."

Peggy had just flown into Albuquerque that evening to visit Mark, and we called the Albuquerque police department to report the call and asked them to please check on Peggy and Mark. Peggy knew Patrick had watched Mark's home constantly, because Mark would start receiving strange phone calls the minute Peggy would arrive in town. My mother and I filed statements in Ohio, sent them to the Albuquerque police, and called the D.A. He never followed up with a phone call, and, at this point, Peggy asked the D.A., "Will it take a bullet to my head for you to do something about this?"

We saw Peggy again over the holidays in 2002..., but it's what I refer to as two weeks of living hell.

Patrick's sister-in-law called my mother's home just before the holidays to tell her they didn't know where Patrick was, and if Peggy was at home for the holidays, that we should keep an eye out for him. My mother called the Poland, Ohio, police to put her house on watch, and none of us felt safe knowing Patrick and his collection of guns.

Peggy returned to [California] in January. And two weeks later, six days before her stalking trial was to happen, Patrick found Peggy after months of searching. He caught up with her on her way out of the house early Saturday morning. He duct-taped her hands together. He choked her. And he beat her. He beat her so severely with his gun that her blonde hair turned bright red.

Despite all of this, Peggy managed to break free and flee to a neighbor's apartment, where she was able to call 911. He followed her, broke through the sliding glass door, smashed through the door in the bedroom, where she was hiding.

With the police now surrounding the building, he held Peggy to the floor at gunpoint.

I think Peggy knew at this point this was going to be the end of her life. And she called to the police officers outside the bedroom to get these messages to her family. "Please tell my mother that I love her. Please tell my niece that she will now have a guardian angel watching over her...And tell my sister to name her baby after me."

Patrick shot Peggy in the back of the neck, and then he killed himself.

Peggy was a wonderful, vibrant young woman. She loved life and everything about it. She loved her family, and especially her three young nieces. She loved traveling and exploring new things, and she was trying to build a life for herself.

To honor my sister's last request and a tribute to her memory, the daughter that I am now carrying will be named after her.

We can never have Peggy back, but maybe my testimony today can help keep other families from going through what my family has gone through. In America, no one should have to live the life of fear like Peggy did. And no one should have to experience the pain of losing a loved one the way we lost Peggy.



Mark Sparks

*Peggy Klinke's boyfriend
at time of her murder*

Peggy Klinke was my girlfriend up until the day that she was shot to death.

On my way to Peggy's funeral, I remember stopping at an airport gift shop, and I bought her a Valentine's Day card. And the clerk behind the counter complimented me and said, I'm amazed that you're buying this card weeks before Valentine's Day.

I didn't have the heart to tell her that I planned to place this card in my girlfriend's coffin to be buried with her.

I wrote in this card how sorry I was that I wasn't there to protect her, how I thought that, with the law's help, we would someday be free of her stalker. I wrote to her about the one-carat diamond ring that I had in my dresser to propose to her, and I hadn't because the stress of the upcoming stalking trial was just too much.

On January 24, Peggy and I were supposed to testify in court against her ex-boyfriend in a stalking trial, but instead of being in court on that particular day, I was in Ohio with Peggy's family. We walked into

the funeral home and we saw her body for the first time.

I held her hand, and I tucked the card in the sheath of her casket. I thought about all of the things that we had done to prevent this from happening and to protect her. And that this was the final result.

So how did this happen?

After paying a private investigator for information, Peggy's stalker drove to the Albuquerque airport and checked a handgun and a hunting rifle at the airline counter and flew to San Jose, California. He retrieved his bag with his weapons, rented a car and arrived at her neighborhood. He posed as a private investigator, approached a delivery driver, who recognized her photo and gave him her exact address.

After the police informed me of her murder, I just remember being confused and shocked. I got down on one knee in front of a photo of the two of us, and I proposed to Peggy, but obviously, it was too late.

One week later I met Peggy's mother and sister in California, and we stopped at the coroner's office to retrieve Peggy's earrings, her keys and to inquire about her autopsy report.

We then drove to Peggy's apartment in Turlock, California, to help pack up her belongings. And despite restraining orders, stalking charges and police reports, we saw where Peggy struggled for her life. And we saw blood on the carpet. And we saw where she died.

He posed as a private investigator,
approached a delivery driver,
who recognized her photo and
gave him her exact address.

Our final stop was at the Turlock Police Department, where we were given more details about Peggy's murder.

That night I talked with Peggy's mother at the hotel, and I held her hand. I tried to think of anything I could say to comfort a woman who has just lost her daughter in this fashion. And I couldn't think of anything.

...I think many problems need to be addressed.

Private investigators giving information to people with restraining orders filed against them.

Number two, allowing a man with a restraining order against him to check weapons on an airplane.

Number three, the need for experts in the field of psychology to serve as a resource to perform threat assessments so victims are more informed.

And finally, in my opinion, training for law enforcement, to help them see the bigger picture of what's going on, the continuum as I heard earlier of stalking.

Instead of just a series of isolated reports and getting a different officer to respond to each different call, because they just can't piece it all together. And making sure that law enforcement communicate across different jurisdictions.

Peggy's stalker made a loud statement. He sent the message that he owned Peggy's life, and he challenged the legal system, and he won. And this was a man that I never saw in my entire life.

So please help us to send a message of our own, a message that stalking will no longer be tolerated by our society. And my hope is that we develop systems to intervene at the earliest signs of potential violence.

Peggy was a beautiful person, as you can see, not just on the outside, but the inside. And I really loved her.

She deserved to live a life without fear, without constant harassment. And I trust that if we are all people of integrity and who do really value individual freedoms, that we'll increase our efforts to prevent this tragedy from happening to another family.

Strengthening Law Enforcement's Response to Stalking



According to Mark Wynn, former lieutenant of the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department and a nationally recognized stalking expert, all responsible elements in the criminal justice system—law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, probation, parole, corrections—should take responsibility to ensure that the law keeps its promise to victims of stalking

and domestic violence. During the Congressional briefing, he outlined a series of concrete recommendations for improving law enforcement's stalking response:

All stalking cases should be pursued vigorously. The law has to be the same for everyone in this country, not just some of means or standing, such as a celebrity or politician.

Every domestic violence case should be looked at as a potential stalking case. When dating Peggy Klinke, Patrick Kennedy had shown the kind of aggressive, controlling behavior that is typical of stalkers. Years of study show that there are common signs before a violent attack, a hostage situation, a murder. And stalking is at the top of that list of signs.

Safety planning should become a top priority before and after an arrest. Stalking victims don't report because they are afraid of the consequences of the report itself and what will happen to them. Every stalking victim in this country who walks into a police station, a sheriff's office, or a prosecutor's office should walk out with a safety plan or have contact with someone in that office who can work with the victim to develop a safety plan.

Victims should be active participants in safety planning. Stalking victims deal with an incredible amount of anxiety. Their active participation will help increase their trust in law enforcement.



As host of Lifetime's *Final Justice*, community activist Erin Brockovich brought Peggy Klinke's story to a national television audience. Brockovich (left) participated in the Congressional briefing with Stalking Resource Center Director Tracy Bahm (above) and National Center Executive Director Susan Herman.

Interagency agreements should be established between jurisdictions.

Stalkers frequently cross state and county lines, and even international borders, to reach their victims. Stalkers need to know that law enforcement agencies won't stop at jurisdictional lines, that they will be pursued wherever they go, wherever they repeat their stalking behavior. Police officers must be trained on violations of the federal stalking law, which makes it a federal offense to stalk someone across state lines or on tribal or federal lands. Federal prosecutors also must be involved in this educational effort.

Violators of orders of protection should be aggressively pursued. Protective order violations are strong pre-incident indicators before murder. Protective orders should be available to all stalking victims, not just in domestic violence cases, and weapons prohibitions must be enforced.

Police officers, prosecutors, and judges should receive training on how to identify stalking cases and the different types of stalkers. As with sex offenders, there are many different types of stalkers. All are potentially dangerous. All must get the message that their stalking behavior will not be tolerated.

Police officers should be trained in gathering evidence. Lack of evidence makes prosecuting stalkers very difficult. Stalking evidence is usually available, but officers are frequently not familiar with how to collect and integrate those pieces for prosecution.

Stalking protocols should be developed and implemented. Law enforcement agencies should implement stalking protocols, like those for high-speed pursuit, use of deadly force, and domestic violence. Stalking protocols should require timely and responsive incident investigations and include counter-stalking strategies. There is no margin of error, no time to wait when someone is being stalked.

National Stalking Awareness Month

*January 2004
Start planning now!*