

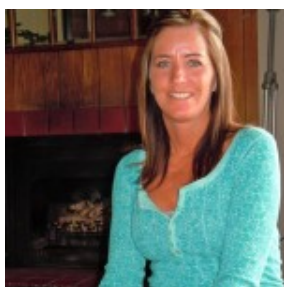
Slashing victim in another battle – perp up for parole

By Kathryn Reed

Susie Rizk Laney was nearly shredded to death at the hands of a former boyfriend. Looking at her and listening to her it would be hard to know the hell she has been through. That is, until she rolls up her sleeves, lifts her shirt above her waist and pushes aside her shoulder-length hair to show her neck.

Scars.

They are everywhere on her body.



Susie Rizk
Laney is
fighting to
keep the man
who tortured
her in prison.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

They are the physical reminders of what Steve Wasserman did to her on Oct. 25, 2005, with a 2-foot-long Samurai sword. Their daughter who was 4 at the time watched as daddy tried to kill mommy at their South Lake Tahoe home.

Laney had gotten a restraining order against Wasserman the day before the attack. But a piece of paper is little deterrent to a desperate, angry man with a freshly sharpened sword.

“The last thing my daughter saw was me bleeding to death and then she didn’t see me for four weeks,” Laney said. She was 35 when the incident occurred. Wasserman was 32.

She praises God for the strength to live, to carry on each day. Laney also believes it was the Lord’s intervention that led her to meet and marry Shannon Laney. Although he is a sergeant with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, the incident is not how they met.

The two started dating in 2007 and were married the following Valentine’s Day. Laney adopted Harmony after Wasserman agreed to give up his parental rights. Now it’s a family of five with Laney’s two children from a previous marriage.

“I was praying for protection over our lives after the attack. I never expected He would send me a police officer,” Laney said. “My God used something so tragic and turned it into something so beautiful. It is a perfect union. We are best friends.”

The Laney’s sat down with *Lake Tahoe News* to discuss the latest chapter in this ordeal and to bring the community up-to-date with where Susie Laney is since the near-fatal attack that left her with 19 cuts, requiring more than a dozen surgeries and how she is coping with losing the range of motion in her hands.

Emotionally, Laney is now confronted with Wasserman being eligible for parole. His hearing is July 25 at 1pm. If he were granted parole, he would be let out in October 2012.

Wasserman was given a seven-year to life sentence for burglary, aggravated mayhem and the use of a deadly weapon. He accepted the plea deal the day the jury was being interviewed.

He had threatened to plead insanity, which could have let him out on the streets sooner. This is why Laney didn't push for attempted murder.

What the Laney's want is for Wasserman to stay behind bars while Harmony is still a child. He could be put on a three-, five- or 15-year cycle for parole hearings. They want him on a 15-year cycle. That would put Harmony at age 24 before he were able to come up for parole again.

They have no intention of letting Harmony see Wasserman until she is an adult – assuming she wants to then.

“This guy needs to be stopped. He almost got away with murder,” Laney said. “It's not about revenge. It's not about payback. It's about protecting my family.”



Scars are a constant reminder of the ordeal Susie Rizk Laney went through.

Her husband says, “We believe in forgiveness, but we don't have to forget what a threat he is to us or anyone else.”

He believes Wasserman would be a repeat offender.

Worst-case scenario if Wasserman is let out next year, is the Laney's believe they would have to home school their children,

hire someone to stay at the house if the sergeant is working and be always looking over their shoulder.

For the most part, though, the Laney's lead a normal life. They do the typical family stuff – camp, wakeboard, go to church.

But Laney admits not a day goes by that she isn't reminded of what happened to her. She has to look at the scars every day. She knows it's her daughter's biological father who did it to her.

She spent 1½ years in physical and occupational therapy. Her right hand was nearly sawed off. Her knee plate was cut in half. She couldn't talk or walk. She wasn't able to comb her daughter's hair, let alone take care of some her own basic needs.

"It's not always easy, the recovery process," Laney said. "Certain things have been taken away, things I can't do. I get frustrated and mad."

While mother and daughter have been to counseling, both are in a stable mental state now. The nightmares have subsided. Harmony knows what happened, remembers the day vividly.

"She remembers her dog licking the blood off her mom's head," Shannon Laney said.

The Laney's say Wasserman knew what he was doing, that the attack was premeditated. Officers apparently found a hit list at his home with names of people he planned to kill.

Laney can't say enough good things about Officer Ric Martinez who stormed the San Francisco Avenue residence and saved her life.

"He's my hero," Laney said. Martinez arrived to find Wasserman over Laney with the sword on her heart. Blood was everywhere.

Laney is working for an orthopedic surgeon. She is able to

share her story with others, to bring them hope, to show them that life does go on.

A Facebook page has been set up to keep people informed about what is going on regarding Wasserman's parole hearing. Pictures of Laney when she was in the hospital show some of the gravity of her wounds.

Letters to the parole board are due July 4. Address letters to: Confidential, Classification and Parole Representative, Mule Creek State Prison, P.O. Box 409099, Ione, CA 95640; RE: BPT Hearing 7/25/11; Steven Wasserman-F41068.