

# Placerville woman on trial for killing another husband

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Three hours earlier, an El Dorado County deputy peeled back covers in her master bedroom and recoiled at what he saw.

Colleen Harris' third husband, retired Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Forest Service Supervisor Robert Edward "Bob" Harris, 72, had been killed with a 12-gauge shotgun the first weekend of 2013. He was shot at close range from just beneath his left ear, leaving a gruesome exit wound on his face.

Yet Colleen Harris, in her interview with detectives, was relaxed and chatty. The Placerville land surveyor and outdoor enthusiast rested her right leg on a chair in front of her. She talked animatedly, in the present tense, about the man she loved. She spoke of him as if he were still alive, still in need of her affection, understanding and forgiveness.

Three decades earlier, Colleen, now 72, sat through a similar police interview. In 1985, her second husband, James Batten, 46, was killed in bed with another shotgun. She said he had been carrying on with a neighbor's wife. She was acquitted after her defense lawyer argued she was a victim of sexual violence at the hands of a husband who had also abused her daughter.

This week, as the prosecution presented its case against her in another murder trial, the highlight was the videotape of Colleen Harris' upbeat narrative provided to detectives after the killing of Bob Harris, a sheriff's seniors volunteer, renowned baseball umpire and globetrotting conservationist.

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