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What Ever Happened To Anne Sluti

Posted: March 1, 2009 07:37 PM
Updated: March 1, 2009 08:46 PM



It's a story that made national headlines. 17 year old Anne Sluti, of Kearney, was abducted from the Hilltop Mall. Her parents, Don and Elaine Sluti were interviewed by Diane Sawyer on Good Morning America. John Walsh, from "America's Most Wanted," came to Kearney to interview them. Just this month, the made for T.V. movie "Taken in Broad Daylight" aired on the Lifetime Movie Network.

On April 6, 2001, Anne Sluti was walking to her car at the mall when a man grabbed her, forced her into his Suburban and hit her until she blacked out. Anthony Steven Wright, known as Tony Zappa, bound her with chains and duct tape and raped her repeatedly. Eventually, they ended up in Montana where Zappa broke into several cabins. Sluti left behind clues, including notes. She even pretended to call a friend and contacted her mother. Later she managed to call 9-1-1. Meanwhile, her parents pleaded for her safe return.

Don Sluti said on "Good Morning America" on April 11, 2001, "You've been with Anne for five days now. You know what a wonderful person she is. We need her home with us. Please."

That same day police tracked down Zappa and an eight hour standoff ensued. Finally, six days after the kidnapping, Zappa surrendered. Two days later, on April 14, 2001, Anne returned home to Kearney.

For the Sluti family, the phrase "time heals all wounds" rings true.

Don Sluti, Anne's dad, said "It's just a scar in there. It's part of living I guess like we all go through."

Now 25 years old, Anne's scar has faded. She graduated from the Rose Hulman Institute of Technology and lives in Indiana where she works as an engineer. It's a career that fits her matter-of-fact personality.

"She's very factual and she doesn't like to repeat herself and, if there's a right way to do it, that's the right way to do it," said Don.

Elaine Sluti, Anne's mom, added "She's concerned about others. She doesn't say mean things about people or anything. She's just a nice person, but she's not wishy washy."

Anne's logic and strength is part of what saved her life.

Don said, "She just thought it out to make it so he wouldn't get frustrated with her and still have the hope somebody was going to find her."

Even when they did find her, it wasn't over yet.

Elaine said, "I thought then we physically have her, but I hope we have her mentally too because you don't know."

Turns out she was okay and is able to maintain friendships and boyfriends. Anne's parents say her kidnapping hasn't affected the woman she has become.

"She didn't go through counseling nor did we. She says why would I talk to a stranger about something that happened to me?," explained Don.

Don and Elaine said they don't think about what happened eight years ago and they don't waste time thinking about Tony Zappa.

"No. Never. I never think about him," said Don.

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Elaine added, "I went through an angry period. A short one. I went through a lot of emotions and when it all comes out, I have decided that I don't want to be a hateful, bitter woman."

Anne too focuses on today.

"She's only worried now that people will identify her as a victim. And she doesn't want that. She says no, I want to live my life," said Don.

For them, it's a happy ending after all, with joy back in their lives.

"It's just wonderful to know we didn't lose her," said Don.

The Slutis said they're glad Tony Zappa is behind bars so he can't hurt anyone else. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2002.

They also thanked the police, victim assistance workers and community members who helped them heal.



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