

Death By Hollywood

There has been a rash of celebrity deaths lately – Art Linkletter, Gary Coleman, Dennis Hopper, and Rue McClanahan (second to last survivor of the Golden Girls) to name a few. As with many celebrities, circumstances surrounding some of these deaths have been quite out of the ordinary.

Dennis Hopper was in the midst of a frantic and nasty divorce when he lost his battle to cancer. His wife is currently battling for her share of the estate – seems the pre-nup stipulated that the couple be married AND living together at the time of his death. She contends that living in the guest house on the same property IS living together...

I listened to the 911 call from Gary Coleman's wife, and it's creepy to say the least. I've never heard a person so cold – “send someone quick because I don't know if he's going to, like, be alive.” And that she can't help him because she “doesn't want to be traumatized right now...” and “I've got blood on myself, I'm gagging, I can't deal.” Me, me, me. So WOW. Does Shannon (aka Mrs. Coleman – well, not really... as it turns out, there was a secret divorce back in '08) have something to hide? My guess is that she is digging herself a deeper hole with every press conference, er, day that goes by... It's especially interesting how she is quick to do press conferences, shooting a video for tmz.com just one day after her ~~husband's~~ er, roommate's death. You can listen to Shannon's refusal to help Gary [here in the sad 911 call](#), and [here is a link to the video](#) shot a day later when she contradicts herself – in the 911 call, she says she can't help Gary because she has seizures so she can't drive, whereas in the video, she says that Gary has done nice things for her, like buy her a car. So... why would he buy her a car if she can't drive? Oh, and not a tear has fallen from Shannon's eyes publicly since Gary's death. Something's fishy here, and Ms. Price's penchant for being in the spotlight is going to be

the catalyst to her unraveling, it seems.

Last night was the first night I was able to spend at home in a long time. I was excited to see that the Cubs had a night game, and I was looking forward to getting to sit and watch my first entire baseball game since opening day... but I had read the schedule wrong – actually I've been a day off all week. My husband being off work on Memorial Day got me a day behind, and then somehow I overcompensated and got a day ahead in the later part of the week. Just the latest on a lengthening list of stupid things I've done lately – where is my brain? So anyway, baseball-gameless, I decided to watch some “junk tv” – whatever I could find in useless reality shows or documentaries. I was looking for “Fantastic Houseboats”, but I couldn't find the Travel Channel (have I mentioned that I never watch tv? I don't even know what our channels are! Well, I know Noggin, PBS, and Nickleodeon by heart, but nothing other than kids' channels...), so I ended up watching something called “Jail” that was really a Cops knock-off and then an interesting show on E! – 20 Most Horrifying Hollywood Murders. Ah, celebrity gossip meets true crime = perfect junk tv! It was quite interesting; though I had already known about most of the cases which included: Nicole Brown Simpson, Bonnie Lee Bakley, Rebecca Shaeffer (an 80s tv star that was murdered by a stalker, how sad), Dominique Dunne, Bob Crane, Sharon Tate, Black Dahlia, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, and Jose and Kitty Menendez. I did miss a little bit of the show, but I kept waiting for the Phil Hartman case to come on – I thought that would be considered ‘horrifying’ as he was unexpectedly murdered by his cocaine-addicted wife Brynn who then committed suicide. Perhaps it was one of the 20 on the show and I just missed it? And the show also spotlighted something I'd like to try if I ever find myself in Hollywood again: the [Dearly Departed Tours](#). The name speaks for itself. I have a macabre sense of curiosity that way, which is also why I'd like time someday to delve into Steven Bochó's (famous producer who gave us NYPD Blue, Hill Street Blues, and

Doogie Howser, MD) first attempt at a novel – where I got the title of this post. Found Death By Hollywood at the Dollar Store and it looked worth a buck to sit on my shelf for years until I had the time to read it.

So anyway, lots of death in Hollywood lately, and it's sad. Even for those of us with somewhat morbid curiosities; there were still people behind the celebrity facades, and their loved ones left behind are hurting. No matter to what degree of fame they rose, they were all human beings, so how could their deaths be anything but sad?

Learning The HARD Way

This guy learned the hard way that there was no escape from Lake County Illinois Sheriff's deputies. He fled from a courtroom, trying to escape, and well, it didn't go quite as planned...

Oops, I didn't have the time to try to figure out how to embed this video, so [click here to see it](#).

Lincoln Legends

Just in time for the Halloween season, as I mull over costume choices for myself and my two youngest, haunted places have come up in conversations recently. These recent topics have reminded me of a few such places in Lincoln Nebraska...

Back when we were a little family with only one toddler, we

lived in Lincoln for a year. It was a great city – large yet rurally isolated and without the sprawling suburbs we had grown accustomed to after growing up in the Chicago area. After a few months in Lincoln, I was charmed by the city and began reading up on local history, which is where I found out about the interesting stories of Charles Starkweather and Robber's Cave.



(Caril Fugate and Charles Starkweather before the murder spree)

Charles Starkweather was a young, lower-class, James Dean wannabe who dated a younger girl named Caril Fugate in Lincoln in the 1950's. There is some debate about Caril's role in the horrific events for which the pair is known, but Starkweather was convicted of the murders of 11 people in Nebraska and Wyoming during a 1958 eight-day-long murder spree. Starkweather was executed by the state in 1959 at the age of 20, while Caril served some time and is now presumably living a quiet life. I think it would be interesting to see an interview with the now 68-year-old Fugate, but like everyone else involved in the horror, she deserves her privacy and probably guards it. So anyway, Starkweather is buried in a large, beautiful cemetery nestled amongst rolling hills in the heart of Lincoln called Wyuka Cemetery, and has the unusual (however macabre) distinction of being buried in the same cemetery as some of his victims. Caril's dilapidated house (where the first murders, those of her family, took place) no

longer stands. But Starkweather had a huge grudge against upper class folks, and the beautiful house of the Ward family, a wealthy couple who along with their maid fell victim to Starkweather's massacre, still stands. Also interesting are the many works of pop culture inspired by the rampage; movies such as *Natural Born Killers* (though this one is very loosely based), *Badlands*, and books: characters in both Stephen King's *The Stand* as well as *Outside Valentine* are based upon Starkweather, Caril and some of the victims. Interestingly, the author of *Outside Valentine*, Liza Ward, is the granddaughter of the wealthy couple that were victims of Starkweather in 1958.

So anyway, if you're into that kind of thing, plenty to see in Lincoln based upon the Starkweather case alone, but that was actually a super-huge tangent that took me away from the original reason I wanted to write this post! Guess I'll save Robber's Cave for my next post...

Black Sheep

About 2 years ago now, we found out a "family secret" about my husband's aunt's husband, Uncle Marc. Marc is in his 40's, and 2 years ago, he was arrested for having an inappropriate relationship with his teenage neighbor, which is alleged to have taken place between 2002 and 2006. The story made front page news where he lives because Marc was a college campus police officer, although shortly after the charges were brought against him, he lost his job. But the media has loved covering his story because of his former profession, and for any updates on the story, we have looked to the newspaper – it's not like my husband's aunt wants to call up all her family and friends and say, hey, guess what we've been up to?

Which brings me to the reason I'm writing about this now. The other day as I was checking headlines in the newspaper (which I often do because I used to live in the area), I came across Uncle Marc on the front page – again. But let me back up a little bit...

It's not like we saw my husband's Aunt Gerry and Uncle Marc all that often. They live in Illinois and we live in Ohio. But at least once a year, we would gather at my husband's grandmother's house, and they would be there with their two adorable children. They seemed to be the perfect family; always doing things together, taking really cool family vacations and bringing their photos to the family gatherings to share. As my husband and I started growing a family of our own, our daughters began to play with their cousins at the family get-togethers, and I remember Gerry admonishing us for staying in a hotel for Christmas 2006 (just months before Marc was charged!). She said, next time, you don't have to stay in a hotel when you visit Illinois, you can stay with us! I thought that was so nice at the time, but looking back, I can't be more thankful we didn't take her up on that offer.

Let me clarify – Gerry is one of the nicest people. Marc was always kind of quiet, but despite his shyness, we felt he was also nice. When the news broke that he was charged with sexual assault of a minor, we were shocked – and immediately sympathetic toward Gerry. But she stayed by her husband's side, even getting herself into legal trouble in the process. We all thought she was being naive, although I can't really blame her for the 'stand by her man' attitude. In this case though, she was wrong, and she definitely should have put her children first. So anyway, Marc had somehow convinced her that the "rumors" about him and this young girl were untrue. There was video evidence, however, which is how the police became involved – seems the girl's father found the videos on their home computer. As I said, I like to be a person who gives others the benefit of the doubt. We met Marc and Gerry

for Christmas at a restaurant in 2007 when no other family members would have any part of him. I felt weird when I didn't want him near my kids, and although we all dined together, we did maintain a safe distance. But even then, I was thinking that I didn't know the whole story. If what Marc is accused of really did happen, I told myself, then he is sick, and he needs help. But Gerry and the kids need some normalcy, and especially because the rest of the family is shunning them, the best thing I can do for her is to let her see my kids, and at the same time, I really wanted to see her kids.

And then, months ago, my husband and I were curious about why this was not going to trial. We did a simple search on the internet, and what we found was extremely disturbing. It seemed that Marc's young neighbor had posted their wedding registry, their baby registry (all fictional), as well as an 'I love you' message on Myspace. The text was extremely crudely disturbing, and based upon what we read, we thought this girl was very sick as well as Marc, to say the least. It was reminiscent of the movie *The Crush*, if you've seen it. Clearly the adult man is at fault, but at the same time, he is a victim because the teenage girl is a stalker who will stop at nothing to get what she wants. So that's what we thought... And we thought that maybe her sickness is why the case was not going to trial...

As I said before, Marc was on the local newspaper's front page the other day – again. It's the only update we've received about his case. And what I read shocked me to the core – I guess that's why I'm writing about it now. As reported in the newspaper, *Marc* is the one who wrote those things on the registries and Myspace. Marc, who had us believing that this young girl was crazy and stalking him and everything else, is really the one who wrote these horrible, crude, and graphic remarks about their relationship on the internet. He fooled his friends and family yet again, and by doing so, he found a

way to abuse his victim – yet again. How is this girl ever going to find a job? If you read the things that are on the internet about her, supposedly written by her, you can see that she doesn't stand a chance. It's horrible. And why am I sharing all this? Every family has its 'black sheep', I guess. Writing about it is a form of therapy for me, I suppose. In a way, I'm mad at myself for giving him the benefit of the doubt, even though I used to be proud of that aspect of my personality – I always try to give people a chance. It kills me to think that other judgemental family members can tell me "I told you so" when they shunned Marc and his family early on when I thought they were wrong.

I hate the fact that we tried to give this man the benefit of the doubt, and he messed it up, yet again. I hate what he is doing to his wife, his children, his extended family, and most of all, to his victim. His actions are victimizing her over and over again.

It's interesting for me to read the newspaper readers' comments on the stories about Marc. They all like to talk about how he'll "get it" in prison and things like that. I read these statements, but because I know the person, it's different for me. I don't usually like to see people go to prison for non-violent offenses. And I'm a big believer in innocent until proven guilty, which I think is a concept most often left behind in the United States justice system. But in this case, I'm kind of wondering why it's taken so long to go to trial. I can't help but wonder how much damage could have been prevented if they had sent Marc to prison already. He is obviously a very sick individual, and I pray he gets the help he needs. Most of all, I pray for the healing of his family, which I don't see happening until he is out of their lives.