

# Saved by grace



Phillip Harnden photo

Karen Lynn spreads out the contents of the evidence box onto her glass table and ponders the February night that she should have died at the hands of her boyfriend. The items include her handgun, a box of shells, the clip, a single bullet and the ring and buffalo necklace from their time together.

Douglas woman survives a bullet to face, leaving her on death's door. Her attacker is killed. Her survival is just beginning.

By Jen Kocher  
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**S**itting in her pajamas in a leather recliner in her Casper living room, Karen Lynn stared down the barrel of a .22 Colt handgun. Her boyfriend Brandon Machado – who she maintains was an alcoholic, abusive man – was demand-

ing her oxytocin pills.

She refused, so he put a bullet through her left tear duct. A hot, blast of pain flashed through her skull, causing her to slump over and vomit. It felt like the top of her head was missing. She feared she was throwing up her brains. Had the Douglas woman not inadvertently ducked, the second bullet might have hit its target. Instead it grazed her forehead, leaving a burn mark on her hairline, as it lodged into a bookshelf behind her head.

If the bullet had entered a millimeter off in either direction, Lynn's story would have had a different ending. Dead at age 46, she would have been just another victim.

Through the blur of blood she saw that 46-year-old Machado had left the room as she crawled across the floor and out the front door. She remembers waking up in the front yard on frozen grass, calling in vain for help. She quieted when she heard footsteps crackling behind her, praying it might

be a neighbor. Instead, Machado's familiar grip tightened on her waist as he dragged her across the frozen yard, her pants sliding down her thighs. Once inside, he propped her up on the mattress in the bedroom. She drifted in and out of conscientiousness with blood gushing into her eyes. Her heart froze when she heard the distant rattling of the tin can where she kept her .25 handgun.

She smelled his rum-drenched breath when he sat down.

"Shoot me," he told her, putting the gun to his head and covering her fingers on the trigger. Fingers squeezed. Once, twice. The thud of the heavy body on top of her made her scream.

She struggled to crawl out from underneath the limp body and drag herself through pools of blood onto the

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## The flame in the man

Luke Summers turns childhood dream into fire fighting passion



Phillip Harnden photos  
Driving the fire trucks is one of Luke Summers' favorite duties as a volunteer fire fighter, a love he developed early on.

By Jen Kocher  
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While a lot of boys hovered over a transistor radio listening to ballgames with their dads, lost in the play-by-plays and tell-tale thwacks of a line drive, young Luke Summers and his father Leonard were glued to the police scanner. Fire calls were their favorite, and they listened as far as Denver, where Leonard's cousin was a fireman.

Some of Luke's earliest memories are standing on 4th Street with sirens blaring as he raply watched the stream of fire engines zooming past en route to some emergency. At the time, Leonard, the first EMT in Douglas, owned and ran the ambulance service, which shared a garage with the fire department. Luke spent as much time as possible there. In the early 1980s, Leonard sold the service and headed to nursing school, later, becoming a physician's assistant. He told his son if he had to do it all over again, he'd probably be a fireman.

For Luke, it was just a matter of biding his time before he was old enough to sign up. Until then, he collected fire engines and dressed the part for Halloween, all the while listening to the distant sirens as he dreamed. Finally, at age 16, he was old enough to sign on as a cadet.

Today, at age 30, the thrill of fire engines has yet to wear off for Luke. If anything, it's grown stronger.

"I think every kid dreams of being behind the wheel of a fire engine," he smiles, as he pats the shiny red door of one of the department's two new engines parked side by side in the fire department station on North Second Street. "I guess I just never grew up."

Along with volunteering on the force, Luke works as a dispatcher for the Converse County Sheriff's Office, though he admits that he spends his days off at the fire hall doing repair work and maintenance on

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Ethan Brogan photo

Landfill and other city utility charges rose July 1, causing a stir on social media and host of illegal dumping issues around the city.

## Piling up

Landfill, utility costs rising as city combats recycling, illegal dumping

By Ethan Brogan  
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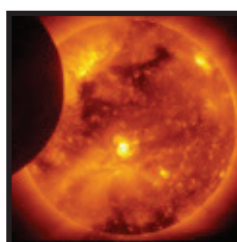
Residents all over Douglas have been buzzing this month about rates increasing on water, sewer, sanitation and landfill. These rate changes seem to stir up citizens every time they go into affect each July 1.

City Administrator Tony Tolstedt said he spends a lot of his time securing grants and working through other avenues

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### This week's weather

	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
High	98	91	95	90	88
Low	61	63	57	55	55



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# Grace

from the front page

## Jury finds ex-deputy guilty on drug charge

By Sandra Mudd  
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A jury has found former Converse County Sheriff's Deputy Michael Joe Martinez, 37, guilty of the charge of possession of a controlled substance with conspiracy to deliver.

His trial began in the late afternoon in Natrona County District Court July 12. The jury came back with their verdict in the late evening hours Thursday, July 13, according to the Natrona County Clerk of District Court's office.

In mid-March, Martinez was arrested in Casper after Natrona County detectives received a report from a "reliable but unnamed source," stating Martinez was planning on delivering 5-mg prescription oxycodone pills to him to a location at Wilkins Circle in Casper, according to court records.

While working out the details, Martinez sent the source a photo of a bottle of acne cleanser with the label "Oxy," on it after the source asked him what "favors" he had. One of the detectives involved in the report recognized the term "favors" as street slang often used to describe illegal drugs. When asked by the source if the dosage of the pills were 10 or 30-mg, Martinez replied he had 5, indicating a 5mg dosage, the affidavit states.

Martinez told the source he would bring the oxycodone to him and worked out a pre-determined location and time. He also told the source he would be driving a black truck and described himself as being 32 years old, 5'10" and weighing 180 lbs., records state.

Detectives went to the location and watched a single male occupant park a black truck matching the source's description at the address on Wilkins Circle shortly after 7 p.m. Martinez then sent a message to the source announcing his arrival, according to records.

Detectives searched Martinez and found a prescription pill bottle registered to him containing 10 oxycodone 5 mg. pills. They also found a black Glock 23 and an iPhone in the truck, police reported.

The gun was logged into evidence for safe-keeping and the phone was held as evidence to the crime, pending a search warrant at the time. The pills later weighed out at 4.5 grams, according to court records.

After his arrest, he was placed on administrative leave with the Converse County Sheriff's Office. His status later changed and he is no longer employed with them, according to Sheriff Clint Becker.

A presentence investigation report (PSI) will be filed in Natrona County District Court within the next few weeks. Martinez' sentencing hearing will be set once the PSI is received. He faces a maximum sentence of up to 20 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.



MICHAEL JOE MARTINEZ

## Veteran aides here Thursday

Veterans service officers from the Wyoming Veterans Commission will conduct community outreach services in Douglas July 20 at the Workforce Center, 311 N. Russell Ave., from 9 a.m. to noon.

Ivette Orozco, retired Army chief warrant officer, and Dave McDonnell, retired Army first sergeant, are available. Call Orozco at 307-315-4187 or McDonnell at 307-258-1100 to schedule an appointment.

front porch where she curled into a fetal position.

She fumbled with his cell phone that she managed to grab and pushed buttons randomly.

Machado's mother answered.

Lynn whispered out that she had been shot and her son was dead. She pleaded for help. Darkness descended and in the distance the faint shrill of a siren wailed.

As the only survivor of that night in February, Lynn's version of events cannot be refuted or corroborated. Natrona County prosecutors in June decided not to charge her.

Lynn moved back home to Douglas, seven years after she left her family to be with Machado.

### COMING HOME

Sitting on the edge of a sofa in the tidy, tastefully decorated living room in the family's west Douglas home, Lynn is still grappling with today's realities. Despite the seven years that she's been gone after leaving her husband and three daughters, the house is exactly how she left it, which she takes as an optimistic sign of forgiveness. She points to the clusters of bright yellow and orange flowers perched in vases on the tops of glossy coffee tables, among artful arrays of wooden hearts and knickknacks. The curtains have been pulled back to reveal a cloudless blue sky overhead a lush green yard on which the families' new black lab puppy leaps clumsily after a ball.

Nonetheless, the homey tidiness and order of the rooms belie the chaos the family has been through in the waning years since Lynn left.

She said she's been humbled by their reception. When she was hospitalized in Denver, the family dropped everything to be by her side.

It's a gift she does not take lightly, and one she doesn't believe she has earned. Her affair wrecked more than just her own life, she admits.

"They did nothing to deserve any of this. I was the one who created this mess, and it seems crazy to me that I could ever have been so dumb. I think I was having a mid-life crisis at 39," she laughs shyly, looking down at her bare knees as tears stream uncontrollably from her left eye, a result of her injuries. Surgery may fix that and her sinuses, which were shattered.

Most other signs of that horrific night are invisible. The hole next to her left eye was fixed, and a thin coating of foundation makes the scar



Karen Lynn's scar from the gun shot wound near her left eye is barely visible today as she continues to heal her invisible wounds.

barely discernible. The bullet will remain permanently lodged in the back of her skull; migraines and stabbing pain in her neck will serve as constant reminders.

Emotional wounds will take longer to heal.

Last Friday was the first night she'd been alone in the house. She didn't handle it well. The darkness of the driveway and house paralyzed her. Panting, she fled to her room and barricaded herself behind a locked door, crouching on the floor wide-eyed until daylight.

"It's not going to be easy," she realizes. "You can't just go through all that and expect that things are just going to be okay."

One major hurdle was the fear of criminal charges. In a June 20 letter, Natrona County District Attorney Michael Blonigen wrote to the Casper Police Department that "the State cannot disprove Mrs. Lynn's claim of self-defense," and baring any future evidence, no charges will be brought. The letter was a huge relief, even though Lynn said she was confident of her innocence.

Friday, Lynn opened an evidence box from the police. Inside, she slowly pulled out her gun, a blood-covered box

of ammo and Machado's blood-stained Wyoming Cowboy's ball cap. She stared silently at the contents.

"He was the one who pulled the gun, not me," she said later. "If he hadn't done that, then none of this would have happened in the first place."

In hindsight, Lynn now says their volatile relationship could never have ended peacefully. She believes he was a deeply troubled guy.

"He wanted us both to die," she said.

Machado's family disputes that version of events. In social media accounts, they firmly place the blame on Lynn. One person even claimed she shot herself after killing Machado or possibly had a friend shoot her later.

Forensic evidence discounts this claim of being self-inflicted. Blonigen states in his letter, noting that the shot was too far away to have been done on own's own. The letter doesn't address the claim that someone besides Machado may have shot her.

Diana Sanders, Machado's mother who lives in Cheyenne, said, "Brandon was just as much of a victim as she was."

She talked to her son and Lynn that night and had been worried because they were fighting, she said. He told her he was moving home to Cheyenne the next day without Lynn, who Sanders claimed "had bled him dry" and maxed out his credit cards.

Machado assured his mother they would be fine that night and would separate for the evening. That never happened.

In the end, Sanders said, she doesn't understand why Lynn didn't just leave. Lynn was free to go any time, her son had told his mother.

Lynn said his death has erased their life together.

"(His family) stripped me of the last seven years of my life, which isn't fair," she said. "I

loved this man just as much as they did."

### A LIFE UNRAVELED

Today, Lynn has a hard time making sense of her life with Machado.

It started with an affair, plain and simple, she said. "I'm not proud of this but I thought I was in love and so I left my husband to move to Casper to be with him."

The first couple years were great, according to Lynn. Later, it devolved into a volatile and abusive relationship ripe with heavy drinking arguing, physical abuse, and what Lynn asserts was "his excessive attempts to alienate her from her friends and family as a means of control." One night he knocked her tooth out.

"It was like a light was shut off inside of me," she said. "I look back and don't even know who that person was. If there's one thing I could say to my daughters and other women, don't give yourself and your life up for any man. It's not worth it."

Several images still haunt her as she continues to work through her grief. She can't shake the image of him holding the gun in her face and actually pulling the trigger.

"You shot me," she remembered saying that night. "How come you shot me?"

How could things have gone this far?

"You live in the cages you build for yourself," she said ruefully, her dimples denting her cheeks. "And I'm not going to do that anymore."

Nor is she going to allow herself to be a victim.

She carries a gun for protection even now.

"You can't keep reliving your mistakes," she said with a thoughtful smile as her eyes gaze out the window where the puppy gallops spiritedly on unsteady legs. "You owe it yourself to make the most of your life, no matter how bad you've screwed it up in the past."

"We deserve a second chance to try to get things right."

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The lasting evidence of the night that Lynn shot Machado serves as a reminder of her past mistakes and her desire to move past them as she continues to heal.



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Douglas Geisner, BSW  
Case Coordinator

BSW in Social Work from the University of Wyoming, currently in the MSW program  
• Over 10 years experience working with Children and Families with needs  
• Experienced in working with a variety of people including geriatric, developmentally disabled, children and adolescents  
• Experienced in work with Wraparound Case Management



Lois Bowen, MS, PAT  
Therapist

Master of Science in Addictionology, Grand Canyon University  
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