

# REAL CRIME

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## Lisa McVey Talks About Outsmarting a Serial Killer When She Was 17

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Survivor Lisa McVey tells her story onstage at the 2013 Summer Television Critics Association tour on July 25, 2013 in Beverly Hills, California. Photo: Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images

*Warning: The following contains disturbing descriptions of violence, including graphic sexual violence. Reader discretion is advised.*

*On May 23, 2019, Lisa McVey sat in the witness room at Florida State Prison and watched Bobby Joe Long die of lethal injection. Long had murdered 10 women in the Tampa area in 1984 and repeatedly raped 17-year old McVey, who talked him into releasing her and aided in his capture. He then sat on death row for 34 years while attorneys appealed. To witness his execution, McVey wore a homemade T-shirt that read: "Long ... Overdue."*

*Now McVey is a master deputy in the Hillsborough County (Florida) Sheriff's Office, the same office that captured her rapist. She's married to another police officer and goes by her married name, Lisa Noland. She spoke with A&E Real Crime about how she outsmarted her abductor years ago and how she now helps school children find strength in themselves as well.*

**You were riding your bike home from work at a donut shop when Long grabbed you. What do you**

### **remember about the attack?**

I remember everything. I was living with my grandmother and her boyfriend, who'd been molesting me for three years. I had nowhere else to go. I wrote a suicide note and when I went to work that day, I felt exhilarated. I had a plan. I was going to put a bullet in my head when I got home.

I worked a double shift that night. I'm riding home at 2 a.m. and thinking, *it's awfully dark down this road*. I'm passing a church when I feel someone rip me off my bike from behind. I start screaming. He puts the cold steel barrel of a gun against my left temple and says, 'Shut up or I'll blow your brains out.' It was nothing new. My grandmother's boyfriend used to put a gun to my head, too.

I say the Lord's Prayer to myself and I say to him, 'I'll do whatever you want. Just don't kill me.' I had stopped feeling suicidal right then, and I wasn't going to let someone else kill me either.

He throws me into his car and ties me up with ligatures. He gags me and as he's blindfolding me, I tighten my jaw, so when I relax it, there's a little space below where I can see. I'm looking around for any identifying marks I can tell the police if I make it out alive. I see his car has white seats and a dark red carpet and I see the word *Magnum* on the dashboard.

### **How did you manage to think so clearly and notice all those details?**

I watched a lot of crime shows. You'd be surprised about the survival skills you have when you're in a position like that.

He orders me to strip, which I do. He asks me how old I am. I lie and say 19. He leans back and says as long as I do what he wants, he won't kill me. He forces me to perform oral sex on him. I figure, I've been sexually abused for three years, what's one more time? But I'm also thinking, if I make it out of this alive, *I'll never let anyone do this to me again*.

### **Then what happened?**

He starts driving and I know we're going north. The windows are down and I can tell we're on the Interstate from the wind velocity. I notice the car is rattling, like it needed an oil change. We drive for about 20 minutes, but it seems more like two hours. Then we stop by what seems to be some woods—I can see leaves beneath the blindfold—and he orders me to get dressed. He grabs my arm and we start walking. I feel a doorknob.

We enter a building. I can see the carpet is predominantly green with yellow and red specks. I count each step he makes me take. We go upstairs, 19 steps, and take a quick left turn, then a quick right. I realize it must be an apartment. I can see he's got a black revolver in his left hand.

He orders me to undress again and puts me in a shower. He takes the blindfold off and tells me not to look at him, but I can see he has short brown hair. He washes me, then he puts the blindfold back on and throws me onto the floor, and rapes me.

He puts the ligatures back around my arms and legs and puts me in a bed—a waterbed. I can smell that the apartment is very neat and has new paint. He climbs over me and drags the gun across my stomach to let me know he still has it. For the next 26 hours, he's raping me—every way you can imagine that a person could be raped. He slaps me and punches me a few times. Then he orders me to go to sleep. *Yeah, right*.

### **Did he talk to you at all?**

At one point, he asks me my name. I lie and say it's Carol. He asks me to describe the girls in my high school and what their bodies look like when they change for gym. I make things up just to get on his good side. I don't want to get him off. My grandmother's boyfriend was like that too. One little thing and I'd get beaten.

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He takes me into another room and fixes me a sandwich and a soda pop. I'm still blindfolded but I hear *Air Wolf* on TV. They interrupt to say that a 17-year-old named Lisa has been reported missing. That's when it became real for me that I'd been kidnapped. I start crying and screaming. He puts the gun to my head again and says, 'If you scream one more time, I'll be forced to put a bullet in your head. Stop crying.' But I notice he said *forced*. Right there and then, I think, *maybe he doesn't want to kill me*.

He takes me back to the bedroom and continues to rape me off and on. I lose count. At one point, he takes my hand and puts it on his face—*the idiot!* Now I know what he looks like. I can feel he has a small mustache, some pockmarks on his skin, a snub nose. He's not heavy. He feels very clean.

When he lets me go to the bathroom, I leave my fingerprints everywhere. In case he does kill me, I want the police to know I was there.

We talk some more, and I ask him, 'Why are you doing this to me?' He says, 'To get back at women in general because of a recent bad breakup.' That makes me think, *maybe he's raped other women too*. I gave him a lame story about my father being very ill, and I say he can't kill me because I'm my father's sole caregiver and he needs me.

Later on, he gives me another woman's shirt and tells me to get dressed. He asks me where I live and says he's going to take me home. I don't believe it. I think, *he's going to kill me*.

We get back in his car and he stops at an ATM. I'm still blindfolded but I can see he's wearing white sneakers and jeans and a white T-shirt. Then we stop at a gas station and he says if I try to yell, he'll kill the clerk and come back and kill me.

Finally, he pulls into the back of a business and tells me he's sorry. He says, 'Tell your father he's the reason why I didn't kill you.' Then he says, 'Give me five minutes and you can take the blindfold off.' I'm just frozen—but when I finally take it off, I'm in front of a beautiful oak tree. I think, *I'm going to have a new life, and it will be better*.

### **But your ordeal wasn't over, was it?**

I start running. It's about 4:30 a.m. and every time a car goes by, I'm afraid it's him coming back and hunting me down. I finally get back to my grandmother's house. I'm pounding on the door, and her boyfriend opens it up. He grabs my hair and throws me to the ground. He beats me and interrogates me for about five hours, he beats me, asking where I've been and why I'm 'cheating on him.'

My grandmother finally calls the Tampa police and says, 'Don't worry about that missing girl. She's home. She's making up some story about being kidnapped.' The police say they still have to do an investigation. If it weren't for that, I think I really would have killed myself.

At the police station, I tell my story to a female detective, and my demeanor is so calm, she thinks I'm lying. She wants to go over it again and again, and I finally say, 'No—bring in somebody more intelligent.'

The next day I go over the same story with Sgt. Larry Pinkerton, who's in charge of sexual crimes. I hear him tell one of the female detectives, 'I believe her. Call the FBI.'

### **When did you realize that your rapist was a serial killer?**

A couple of days later, I'm back home and I hear on my grandmother's boyfriend's TV that 'another dead body' has been found. (That made eight women found murdered in the area since that spring.) The hairs on the back of my neck stand up, and I think, *Oh my God, it has to be the same guy*. I call Larry and say, 'Come get me. There's

of my neck stand up, and I think, *On my God—it has to be the same guy.* I call Larry and say, 'Come get me. There's more I need to tell you.'

Larry calls the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, which is investigating the murders and says, 'We've got another body here. A *live* body. We think the guy who abducted Lisa McVey is your serial killer.'

Larry also asks if I'd like to be hypnotized. Maybe I did see his face, and it could help me remember. But since I'm 17, he needs my parents' permission. My grandmother's boyfriend refuses. Larry thinks that's odd, so I start crying and I tell him what's been going on at home. They arrest my grandmother's boyfriend and put me in a center for runaway teens so he can't find me.

### **Did the things you noticed help the police track down your rapist?**

Larry brings some photos for me to look at [while I'm at] the center, and the moment I see him, I say, 'That's the face I felt. I'm 110 percent sure.'

The police retraced the route I thought we took and found the ATM. They looked for Dodge Magnums in the Florida vehicle registration database and located his name, Robert Joseph Long, which they were also able to pull from the ATM transaction. Once they found out who he was, they started monitoring his comings and goings. They saw him stuffing things in a big green trash bin outside his home and draining his waterbed, like he was planning to leave town. They finally arrested him outside a movie theater. That was 12 days after he abducted me, but by then, he'd killed two more women.

An FBI lab found the same red carpet fibers on my clothes and on the murder victims. So they knew I wasn't lying. If it wasn't for me, he wouldn't have been caught.

I begged the detectives to let me see the photos of the other women. It was awful, but I needed to see them. I thought to myself, *I want to be a cop someday. I don't want this to happen to anyone else.*

### **You did eventually go into law enforcement. How did that happen?**

I was about to age out of the runaway center, and they asked if I had any other relatives I could live with. They found my mother in a crack house, and she said I was on my own. Then my Aunt Carol and Uncle Charlie came and got me. They were the only people who ever showed me love and, after that, there was no holding me back.

I worked some odd jobs, some secretarial jobs and in 1995, I got a job with the Hillsborough County Department of Parks and Recreation. I had to report a break-in at the office, and the deputy who came out said, 'You've got the attitude to be a cop. Ever thought of that?'

I was really interested, but I'd vowed that if I ever had kids, I'd never let them down. My daughter was 7 years old at the time, and I didn't want to risk getting shot and killed.

But in 1999, I got a lateral transfer to be a dispatcher in the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. I also became a reserve deputy. I wanted to make sure it was a good fit.

In 2004, I put myself through the police academy. I paid for it myself, which made me appreciate it all the more. I've been in the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office for 17 years and a School Resource Officer for seven years. I'm at a middle school now. They know I'm Mama Bear. Nobody messes with my kids, and my kids know that.

### **Do you tell your students about what happened to you?**

I've been telling my story all along, to anybody who'll listen. But I didn't talk about it at school for a long time. Then I was passed by at a lunch table one day, and a boy said, 'We watched some videos last night and you helped catch a bad guy. I'm sorry that happened, deputy, but you're a hero!'

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After that, I decided it was alright to tell the kids about it. I'm not embarrassed to say I was raped. I tell kids if somebody tries to grab them, scream as loud as you can. And if they get taken anyway, they should mind their Ps and Qs and do whatever they can to survive. I tell them to be strong and draw on their own sense of self-preservation.

And if a student is down in the dumps, I tell them a story about a girl whose family abandoned her and who was kidnapped and raped. And I say, 'Do you think she lost her way? No. She became a police officer. You're looking at her.'

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