

From Horror to Helping Others

Nearly killed, she speaks for crime victims

Abbotsford's Misty Cockerill says she can't forgive, but she can forget. The 31-year-old single mom was battered with a baseball bat by murderer Terry Driver and left for dead in 1995. "I don't forgive him," she said. "It's hard to forgive someone who doesn't feel remorse.

BY DAMIAN INWOOD, THE VANCOUVER PROVINCE APRIL 25, 2010



Misty Cockerill, a longtime victims' rights advocate who survived an attack by 'Abbotsford Killer' Terry Driver, is about to graduate from the University College of the Fraser Valley.

Arlen Redekop, PNG

"I just don't let him control my life. I let go, and I work with it."

In the 15 years since Driver launched his reign of terror on the Fraser Valley, Cockerill has become a victims' advocate.

She's about to graduate from the University College of the Fraser Valley and hopes to work with kids with behavioural problems.

Cockerill was bludgeoned by Driver, who sexually assaulted and murdered her friend, 16-year-old Tanya Smith, and then dumped Smith's body in the Vedder River.

Cockerill staggered to a nearby hospital, covered in blood, and collapsed in the arms of nurses. She underwent surgery to save her life. Then Driver taunted police with phone calls and vowed to kill again. He was caught after his mother recognized her son's voice on tape recordings that were released to the media, and alerted police.

Driver was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in jail without parole for 25 years.

He was later declared a dangerous offender for attacks on two other women in 1994 and 1995.

After moving away from Abbotsford for a few years, Cockerill is now

living back in the community where she was almost killed.

She's been studying for three years at UCFV and hopes to get work as a teacher's assistant, working with children with disabilities.

She looks after her two daughters, aged eight and three, but says returning to the scene of the horrendous crime has been a challenge.

"At first it wasn't such a big deal," she said of going back to live in Abbotsford. "But in time I found some things were coming back into my life -- things like encounters with certain family members of his."

The worst was about two years ago. Cockerill said she was on maternity leave when Driver's wife got a job working at the grocery store she'd planned to return to.

"I tried to say, 'You know what? I don't really want to work with her, it's still a reminder,'" said Cockerill. "But I had no rights and she got to stay and I had to leave my job. I felt I was victimized all over again."

Cockerill said that speaking out for other victims was a real struggle in the beginning.

"But I really liked my new role as a victims' advocate," she said. "It was very much better than being just a victim of a crime. If you're going to go through that kind of ordeal, it's important to take the positives out of it and do something that enriches the lives of other people."

Cockerill said her life as an advocate started at Driver's 1997 trial.

A woman came up to her in tears and explained that her daughter had been raped, beaten and left for dead. The victim was afraid to charge her attackers.

"The woman said, 'It's been watching you and your strength that has changed my daughter's mind,'" said Cockerill.

Since then, Cockerill has spoken out about victims' rights at high schools, rallies and public forums.