


Sacramento's 'Sex Slave Murders' Killer Discovered Living In Area; Speaks After Years Of Silence

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Local News

SACRAMENTO (CBS13) - Young girls were hunted and turned into sex slaves. Ten victims would die before investigators captured the serial killer couple behind the crime spree.

Charlene Williams served her time, and now CBS13 has learned she's returned to the Sacramento area and is living among us.

Williams is now opening up about the murders after years of living a new life.

Williams, now in her 50s, is soft-spoken and focused on her future. Ask her about the past and she has a hard time saying her real name and Gerald Gallego's name, the man who had her kidnap girls for his sexual fantasies.

Even after more than 30 years, the memories haven't faded away and neither has the pain for Hal Sowers, who lost his only daughter.

"She always had a smile," said Sowers of his daughter Mary Beth. "She's with us everyday."

Williams says she didn't kill Mary Beth, but pleaded guilty to the kidnap and murder of Sowers' only daughter.

Mary Beth wasn't the only victim.

"I did not kill any of them," said Williams of the 10 victims.

She says she never even wanted to be a part of the killings.

"No, for God's sake no. No I never did. I wouldn't be sitting here right now if I did," she said.

Williams is sticking with the story she told on the stand three decades ago, claiming it was all Gallego, her boyfriend at the time.

"He is just one sick bastard, he was," Williams said. "I would've done anything I could if I could've stopped him. I know I couldn't have stopped him; I tried to stop him."

Williams agreed to speak to CBS13 if her identity was hidden. For the last 15 years, she's lived among us under a new name. She says she changed it to hide from Gallego and his family, fearing for the safety of her family.

"I put him on death row. Am I proud of that? Yes I am," said Williams.

Gallego died of cancer awaiting his execution. Williams' confession to the crimes and plea deal earned her a second chance at life, but while she was freed after 17 years behind bars, Williams says, her past keeps her prisoner.

"I see it everyday. I always see it; it never goes away. There isn't one more than the other. They're all horrible, horrible memories, every single one," said Williams.

The couple would hunt for many of their victims at Sacramento-area malls. Williams testified in court she was the one who lured girls into their van where Gallego waited with a gun. The victims, half of them teens, were bound, repeatedly raped, murdered, and then dumped or buried.

Williams insists she never agreed to Gallego's plans. Yet, the couple's trail of terror, which began in 1978, continued for two years, in three different states, and claimed 10 victims as well as an unborn child. The crime spree was dubbed the "Sex Slave Murders."

"You know, I tried; I tried to save some of their lives," said Williams.

She says Gallego controlled her with fear, threatening to kill her family, raping and abusing her.

"I tried to get away. I tried, and people, especially women, will say, 'well, if you want to get away you can always get away.' It's not that easy; it's not that easy at all," she said. "I don't know (why Gallego didn't kill me), because he sure tried."

Many believe Gallego never killed Williams because she was his partner in crime.

"She was just as guilty as he was," said Sowers.

In 1997, as part of her plea agreement, Williams was released.

Sowers never cared to know where Williams had disappeared.

"Didn't want to know really," he said.

All that mattered is Williams seemed to disappear, until now.

"I mean, it's bad enough I have to deal with Mary Beth," said Williams.

For years, Williams lived undetected in the Sacramento area. But instead of returning to a life of crime, Williams says she turned to charity work.

"I'd say 100 percent of my life," Williams said of dedicating her life to charity.

Now more than ever, Williams says she's dedicated to giving back, especially to the military after losing a family member to war.

"He was a very special, special person," Williams said. "I've always wanted to make up for the past one way or the other, but that isn't why I'm doing it. It'd be a lie to say that isn't part of it, because I'd do anything in the world to make up for it, anything in the world."

Williams never told investigators where she and Gallego dumped Mary Beth. Three weeks after her disappearance, Mary Beth's body would be found in Placer County near Loomis.

The 21-year-old was bound, shot three times and still wearing the same dress she wore on her last night alive with her fiancé, Craig Miller, who was also shot three times.

Williams says while she can't undo the past, she's determined to prove she belongs among the very same people, who decades ago, feared they would be her next victim.

"It isn't so much that I really changed, it's just so much that I was finally able to be myself," she said.

So, does Sowers think that there is a possibility that Williams has changed her life?

The answer to that question and Williams' emotional reaction, along with why she thinks Gallego could be connected to a terrifying and unsolved crime spree that left Sacramento County paralyzed in fear will air on CBS13 News Sunday after Super Bowl XLVII.