

LISA BIANCO

"The Purple Ribbon Story"

Lisa Bianco married Alan Matheny in 1977. They lived in Mishawaka, Indiana in St. Joseph County. They had two daughters. Alan Matheny was described by his mother-in-law, Millie, as every woman's dream of a son-in-law. He was handsome and charming.

However, he was certainly not every woman's dream of a husband. For the first seven years of Lisa's marriage to Alan, Millie had no idea her daughter was living through a nightmare. Lisa divorced Alan in 1985 after enduring eight years of very serious abuse. Shortly after the divorce was finalized, Alan kidnapped their two daughters and fled out of state. Lisa agreed to not press charges if he brought the girls back home.

In 1987, Alan was charged with seriously beating and raping Lisa. He plea-bargained to a single felony charge of battery and was sentenced to the Pendleton Reformatory for eight years, with three years suspended. Lisa began to make a new life for herself. She attended a northern campus of Indiana University. She went to work at the Elkhart Shelter for victims of domestic violence. She told everyone she would have to leave the community when Alan was released from prison. She knew better than anyone how dangerous a man Alan Matheny was.

On March 04, 1989, after serving two years of his sentence, Alan was granted an 8-hour furlough for a trip to Indianapolis. He headed straight for St. Joseph County and parked two doors from Lisa's home. He kicked in the back door. Lisa fled through the front door. Alan pursued her throughout the neighborhood. When he caught her, he bludgeoned her to death with a shotgun he had stolen from a friend's home. He hit her so hard, the handle of the shotgun shattered. Lisa's brutal death took place in front of their six and ten year old daughters.

Alan Matheny was executed Wednesday, September 28, 2005 for Lisa's murder.

Lisa's death brought about much change in Indiana and the nation. We now have victim notification laws—where victims are notified when the perpetrator is being released and the "furlough" policy was revisited. We also have the purple ribbon—the symbol representing domestic violence awareness—so that we will not forget Lisa. Purple was Lisa's favorite color and her family and friends tied purple ribbons throughout St. Joseph County as they mourned her tragic and violent death. Today, the purple ribbon continues to be the symbol for domestic violence.