

Below is a copy of the **Victim Impact Statement** that I was permitted to give to the Judge prior to sentencing. I also read this statement in the courtroom in the presence of my rapist so that he and his family could hear just how deeply this crime affected us all.

Judge Adrien:

Writing an impact statement for a crime like that one that I was a victim of is certainly a daunting task. How does one briefly summarize all of the devastating effects kidnapping and rape have on one's life? Even more tragic to explain are the effects those acts have on one's children. I will do my best to explain what my family has been through and, in doing so, hopefully explain why I believe that Michael Seibert deserves the maximum sentence allowed for each of his 9 convictions.

The morning of October 16, 2002 started out like any other day for my family. My daughter went off happily to school, my husband to work and my son and I spent time doing errands. That was to be the last normal morning of our lives. From the moment Michael Seibert hit me over the head and kidnapped my family, nothing would ever be the same for any of us. The time that he spent threatening us, hurting us and robbing us has forever clouded the way we view the world. Neighborhoods no longer look safe, strangers look like potential attackers.

For me, the trauma of the rape has impacted every single day of my life since it happened. Even now, over four years later, I seldom go for more than a few minutes without some image or feeling from the rape popping into my mind. Whether it is the image of my rapist's face or the sound of my screaming children or the feeling of complete helplessness as he drove us into the middle of nowhere, I am a constant prisoner of my thoughts. I suffer from both an anxiety disorder and clinical depression as a result of what has happened to me. I am unable to sleep and, when sleep does come, it is often interrupted by horrifying nightmares. Sometimes I feel like I will never be normal again.

Although my children were not heard from at the trial, Michael Seibert's conviction is about what he did to each of them that day as well. My daughter Emily was only three when this terrible event happened. She lost her innocence that day in my van when she was physically hurt by Michael Seibert trying to escape abduction and, most importantly, when she was forced to watch every minute of the brutal rape and beating of her mother. Michael Seibert repeatedly threatened to kill Emily with a knife and to drown our family by sinking our van into the canal near where he parked. Although my daughter is a smart, beautiful little girl, she carries deep within her a constant reminder of how dark and terrifying the world can be. Emily experiences nightmares and other sleep problems. She has seen multiple therapists who specialize in trauma counseling and in treating victims of childhood sexual violence. She also suffered some behavioral regression as a result of her kidnapping including the fact that she did not give up diapers completely or use the bathroom at pre-school normally until after she was 4 years old.

My son was also traumatized that day. He was an eight month old infant who was forced to scream and cry for three hours without any comfort from his mother who was being raped right before his eyes. My son was wet and hungry and scared...too little to understand why his mommy wasn't helping him. The real problems for my son started after the rape when I stopped being able to mother him properly. I was too emotionally wrecked and traumatized to pay attention to everything he needed. More importantly, I was unable to even look at him for weeks because my rapist made sure I looked into Peter's eyes during the most intense parts of the rape. After the attack, every time I looked at my son, I remembered with crystal clear detail how it felt to be raped by Mr. Seibert.

After the rape and abduction, the impacts on our life could be felt in other ways as well. For my husband, he was unable to concentrate at work. He was always worried about our safety and suffering from his own bout with post-traumatic stress disorder. Our whole family dynamic changed after the rape with him having to take on more responsibilities at home while I fought to return to normal.

Because Michael Seibert was on the run for over 5 months after the rape, we lived in constant fear that he would come back to kill me and my children. After all, he knew where we lived, knew where we went to church and had threatened to come back for us and finish us off if I ever told anyone. I stayed locked in my house and never went anywhere alone. I had my mom come sit with my son and me everyday until my husband got home from work and I had friends do errands for me and take my daughter to school. I was a prisoner in my own house. My family and other caregivers were exhausted. At one point, to give my mom a break, I even hired someone to stay with me during the days to protect me and watch Peter so I could try to get some sleep. It finally became too much to bear and we made the painful decision to leave Miami.

The decision to leave was very difficult on all of us. I grew up in Miami and had my parents less than two miles away...a nice perk when you have two small children and are as emotionally close as my family is. My husband had a good job with an engineering firm where he had been for over 6 years. We loved our home and our neighborhood and planned on living in Miami forever. Unfortunately, the rape and kidnapping put our security in jeopardy and had replaced our good feelings about our neighborhood with frightening memories. We had no other choice; my husband quit his job and we put our house up for sale. We left Miami behind. Although our new community has provided us with a fresh start, we will always miss Miami and are sad we had to leave for such terrible reasons.

I could go on forever about the impact Michael Seibert's actions have had on the lives of every person in my family. He changed our whole world. He took away our notion of security, drove us from a life we loved, left us with emotional scars bigger than you can imagine and has made us his prisoners for life. I will never stop living in the shadow of what he has done. He forever changed the path for all of us and will always occupy a corner in my mind. I will never, ever be truly free! He broke my dreams and destroyed the life I wanted for my family. For that, forgiveness may never come.

During the time Michael Seibert held us hostage, he did his best to shake my faith in God. Throughout the entire ordeal he questioned my beliefs and spouted hateful things about religion and the church. He took an act as despicable as rape and tried to use that act to defile my God as well. Today I want to say out loud, in my attacker's presence, that one of the only positive things about this rape is that it has made my faith even stronger. I know God did not abandon me even for a second on that hot October day. He was right beside me through it all and I know that he will someday, in His time, find a way to bring something good from this situation. I will never lose faith.

And likewise, as determined as Michael Seibert was to destroy "women like me... innocent women with families... women he felt needed to pay for his miserable existence", he failed there as well. I am, deep down, too strong for that. And no matter what, my family will never fail to stick together. Like Ernest Hemingway once wrote, I feel that eventually this rape will make us **all** "stronger in the broken places".

In the end, I ask that Michael Seibert's reckless and violent disregard for the lives of my family be taken very seriously and that he is given all seven life sentences he is eligible to receive. **He needs to pay for all three lives he kidnapped and threatened to take that day** and for the beatings he gave me and for the money he stole from us. He needs to pay **separately** for each of the four times he raped me with a deadly weapon in front of my children and made me believe in my heart that I would die if I didn't comply with his every demand. He took away our lives that day in October 2002 and I plead with the court to take away his freedom forever in return.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie A. Weil