

Statement of Ms. Shari Ellithorpe
Before the United States Sentencing Commission
Hearing on 2023-2024 Proposed Amendments,
March 6-7, 2024
Proposed Amendment on Youthful Individuals
Panel VI – Victims’ Perspective

Sentences

Sentencing Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story.

My name is Shari Ellithorpe. I am a retired member of the San Diego police department. I spent 27 years in patrol, 20 of those years I spent in the canine unit. I am also a wife, a mother and a blessed grandmother.

I am writing about the murder of my father, Fred George. He was shot and killed over a burglary of a bicycle. He was shot, point blank in the back of the head, October 4, 1995. My mother witnessed this shooting. My father died of this single shot at 2:25 am October 5, 1995.

I would like to tell you a bit about my dad. He was one of eight children. He was the second born, the first son. He was close to all of his siblings. Throughout his life he was the one his siblings would call for help or advice. Dad went to school to be a X-ray technician. He met my mother in the hospital where she was a nurse. They married June of 1972. I was 10. Dad adopted me and I became his daughter. I was blessed with all the aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins. All whom embraced me as family. As I grew up dad always made time for me. We took horseback riding lessons together. He was there to help and guide. He had an array of interests. He would do bull riding and learned to drive semi trucks. He continued his education, expanding his knowledge in the X-ray technology. He was even a reserve deputy sheriff while I was in high school. I remember trying on his duty belt.

As I grew up and moved away, dad always called to check how I was doing. I married in 1981 and presented the first grandchild in 1983. He loved this grandbaby. He was there for the firsts! The first step and first word. He would make her mixed tapes she could listen to on our long drives. When she was old enough he bought kid sized golf clubs to teach her to golf. He embraced the second grandbaby with as much enthusiasm. When we would visit he would take them to pick pecans in the pecan grove that was next to their home. Even today this is one of my kids fondest memories of their grandpa.

Dad never stopped learning. He advanced into ultrasound technologies. He was part of a research team involving vein therapy through ultrasound. I honestly do not know what this involved. One of the doctors involved with this research came to the house after dad was murdered. He came to express sympathy and the loss of dad's devotion and enthusiasm towards their research project.

My father was devoted to his church, he served as a deacon in his church. He was also devoted to his community. He was hailed as a community leader. He was the president of the condominium HOA. He was an all-around , well respected, caring, loved individual.

The night of October 4, 1995, my parent heard a noise outside there condo. They had a walled in, gated patio. Dad got up to check the source of the noise. He found a young male just outside the wall. He did not recognize this young man. He wanted to back inside to get his shoes. He went back outside to talk to the young man. He found the young man with another male. These individuals were later identified as Gregory Valencia 17, the young man behind the wall. And Ronnie Vera 16. Valencia was taller than Vera. They were both described as young Hispanic

males. Valencia was walking away from the patio and met up with Vera who was pushing a bicycle. Dad confronted Valencia and Vera. As they were walking away Vera assaulted dad with the bicycle he was pushing. Dad leaned forward to avoid the blow. He was struck in the upper back. While he was bent forward, Valencia pulled a gun from his waistband and shot one round into the back of dad's head. Execution style. This action was deliberate and calculated. Valencia and Vera both had an opportunity to run away. Valencia made the decision to pull a loaded handgun from his waistband, aim it at the back of my father's head and pull the trigger. Cold and calculated. My mother witnessed this all from the condo patio. Mom identified the shooter as "the tall one". Vera and Valencia fled the area. They were seen running thru the parking lot and away from the complex. They went to a friend to dispose of the murder weapon. My father was rushed to the hospital where he died of his wound. It was later discovered that the bicycle Vera was pushing in the complex, had been stolen, by Vera, from a nearby condo.

Tucson police had both Valencia and Vera in custody the next day. Both Valencia and Vera claimed the other to be the shooter. Roughly a year later Valencia and Vera were tried as adults and both found guilty. Valencia was sentenced to Natural life, later reduced to life with the possibility of parole at 25 years. Vera was sentenced to 25 years to life with possibility of parole at 25 years. Vera was released on probation, due to the underhanded practices of the county attorney. May of 2022. After having been denied parole twice.

I sat with my mother thru these trials and all of the other court appearances. My mother lost her will, her drive. She lost her soul mate. I watched her fade. She never got over watching her soulmate die. She isolated herself. Cut herself off from family and friends. After a while she

stopped caring. She died March 8, 2019. Before she passed, she stated her life was over when dad was killed. This murder destroyed my mother.

Life didn't stop with dad's murder. I had to keep moving. I was a police officer and a parent. My world had been turned upside down. I had a very difficult time dealing. It made me a very angry person. I was hurt and lost. I was a police officer who sees these situations all the time. It has happened to me, I didn't know how to cope.

I do cope, I still break but I cope. These two juveniles broke my family. Took something irreplaceable. Valencia knew where to go to steal bicycles. He directed his friend, Vera to this complex. Valencia already had a juvenile record. Now he has escalated. He brought a gun. He brought a loaded gun and used it to erase a life. I believe with all my heart and soul, had he not been taken into custody he would have killed again. Vera has been released back into the community. He started a "GoFundMe" to fund a book about my father's murder and the corrupt system that kept him in prison. Both Valencia and Vera want the world to see them as victims. Neither one takes responsibility for what they have done. To date Valencia claims he wasn't even in the area when the shooting occurred. Each parole hearing, he removes himself further and further away from the scene of the murder. He's gone so far as to call my mother, the witness, a liar.

As a police officer I dealt with felons all the time. Personally, I dealt with a felon in my family. My brother has been in the system since he was a juvenile. He has continued to be in and out of prison and jail all his adult life. He is currently on parole.

This is my story. This is my pain. My heartfelt concern is, should my dad's murderers and my own brother continue to commit crimes, all of their records should come into play. The sentencing court should know who they are dealing with. Not just selected pieces. The whole picture. Each individual should be sentenced accordingly.

Thank you for your time,

Respectfully,

Shari L Ellithorpe



Ms. Ellithorpe's Parents Months before Her Dad's Murder