

# Family of one local abused child speaks out

By SCOTT A. DAVIS  
Post Staff

*Editor's note: Because of the sensitive nature of this story, the names of the subjects have been changed. They are, however, real people who live in the Back Mountain.*

It was about 4:30 in the morning when the phone rang. Jane glanced over at her sleeping husband John. She was glad the phone did not wake him—he had to be up for work at 6:30.

"I answered the phone and the person said he was a police officer," Jane recalled Friday afternoon. "I knew right away that was wrong."

Jane squeezed her husband's hand as the officer confirmed her fears. Her 22-year-old daughter and her infant granddaughter were in the hospital. "It seemed they fell down the basement steps," Jane recalled the officer saying.

15 minutes later, Jane and John were at the hospital waiting room. "I remember the police car parked outside the emergency room," Jane said. "I knew that if my daughter had actually just fallen down the steps, my son-in-law would have been the one to call me."

But Jane does not have the best relationship with her son-in-law. Soon after her daughter's 1987 marriage, Jane said she could see her daughter was being abused.

"She would come to our house crying in the middle of the night," Jane said. "She would tell how her husband hit her, kicked her, and often raped her."

Each time her daughter came to her home crying, Jane said she would call the police. "The



officer would come and fill out a report," she said. "But there was nothing he could do unless he saw the attack or if she was abused. My son-in-law was always careful not to leave bruises."

Then Jane's daughter had a child in 1988. "We were so happy to have a new little girl in the family," Jane recalled. "We were sure this new responsibility would stop the beatings."

But the beatings did not stop, instead they became worse Jane said. "After she was born, he started beating both of them."

Jane said she and her husband both tried several times to take their daughter and granddaughter to women's shelters, but her daughter would always go back home.

"She told us he loved her and she deserved the beatings," Jane recalled with tears welling up in her eyes. "I do not understand how my own daughter could say that."

Fearing for the safety of the child, Jane called the Luzerne County Children and Youth Services. "They sent a social worker to the home occasionally to check on the child, but they always called about a week

**The social service agency would call ahead when planning to visit, so the beatings would stop until after they came**

ahead of time," Jane explained. "So he would stop hitting them when the service was coming. When they were gone, my daughter and granddaughter suffered!"

"And then there we were in the hospital emergency room almost three years after the beatings began," Jane said. Jane and John waited for about two hours before anyone came to speak with them. "The doctor came out with a solemn look on his face," Jane said with a slight shiver. "I remember thinking, 'It is all over, they're dead.'"

But they were not dead. The child was taken to a hospital in Philadelphia for head injuries. Their daughter would soon be released with broken ribs and a broken forearm.

Jane asked the doctor where her son-in-law was. "He told us he was in police custody charged with assaulting our daughter," Jane recalled. "I was so glad he was finally arrested. Maybe now he would pay for what he has done."

Her son-in-law was released after her daughter dropped the charges that night. "We have given up on her," Jane said. "I think maybe she likes being

beaten somehow. But I will not allow my granddaughter to return to that home."

Jane has been fighting for custody of the child since the night at the hospital. Children and Youth Services, however, has informed her she is unlikely to win, she said.

"They told me the child will be placed in a foster home for a few months while my daughter works things out with her husband," Jane said. "Then they plan to return the child to them. We have been told there is nothing we can do."

John had not spoken to the reporter throughout the entire interview. But he had something to say at the end.

"This so-called man attempted to suffocate an infant because she would not stop crying. My daughter took the baby in her arms and ran for the door. He grabbed her and punched her with a closed fist. Then this tough guy threw my daughter and granddaughter down 12 steps."

"And now the state is saying they cannot prove it happened that way so they are going to give this man a few months to cool off."

"My granddaughter is going to die because nobody wants to do anything to stop it."

**"My granddaughter is going to die because nobody wants to do anything to stop it."**

## Zoning

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the municipalities on how to go about this.

"We have composed some common ordinances for the member municipalities but we need assistance from the community officials on what we do with these. Recently, Jackson Township has indicated they want to join the Commission."

Council president Tim Carroll told Molski council would discuss the problems and get back to the Commission members.

Council also approved Police Chief John Fowler's request to increase the cost of investigating private burglar alarms from \$15 to \$25, the same as the fire alarm charge. Members also approved increasing the parking violation fine from \$5 to \$10.

Police committee chairman Cooper also reported that as funds become available, a new police cruiser will be purchased through the Pennsylvania state contract at a cost of \$13,233.

Carroll explained that he and vice-chairman Russell Eyet had drawn up a list of committee members for the 1990 year. "We are trying something different this year," Carroll explained. "Instead of three member committees we

**The Council also formed committees on recycling and future planning**

are having two men on a committee. We believe this will make it more convenient for the committees to meet. Russ and I will be interested in meeting with the committees."

Carroll named the committees as follows: Police-Don Cooper, chairman; Don Shaffer; Roads, Shaffer, chairman; Cooper; Building, Harold Brobst, chairman; Russ Eyet; Parks & Recreation, Eyet, chairman; Brobst; Future Planning, Jerry Machell, chairman; Patricia Peiffer; Recycling, Peiffer, chairperson and Machell.

Carroll explained that the last two are new committees and important ones since recycling and solid waste are hot issues now and in the future and now is the time that the council should start looking ahead.

Eyet took time to explain that looking into the future, the time might come for the consolidation of police and road departments throughout the Back Mountain.

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## Abuse

(continued from page 1)

eral times her mother was in jail charged with suspicious deaths," said her foster mother.

A third Back Mountain family has had three children removed from them due to both mental and physical abuse, but primarily neglect, according to the foster mother. One, the oldest, was recently returned to the biological parents.

"The six-year-old is being used as a guinea pig, but under the law, the agency has to give the parents another chance," the foster mother explained. "It's a shame; it's the children who suffer. It scars them and it hurts us to see the children returned to the other environment."

The mother of the foster family said they had often discussed taking such children because they were blessed with healthy children. "We decided when our children got older that we would take in some younger children so ours could be role models," the foster mother explained. "We hadn't planned on three at one time, but we took them since they were from

one family. "The children were neglected physically and emotionally and had suffered physical abuse but no sexual abuse."

The foster mother explained that the children's home was filthy and that the children had animalistic eating habits. They were unable to communicate because they had no exposure to books. She said the eldest had been enrolled in Head-start but had very poor attendance.

"All three of them made major progress while they were with us. The three and four-year-olds are

still with us but they have to spend the weekends with their parents and the six-year-old is now at home all of the time.

"Each time they come back from their parents, we have to start training all over again. The agency has to give the parents another chance, the parents are set up to fail again," the foster mother said.

"They have been with us for two years and they have improved but I don't believe they will ever be college material unless it is the youngest one."

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