

Her 4-day nightmare ended with a rescue

(First of two parts)
By BRADLEY A. MARTIN
Shannon Beasley says it wasn't physical or verbal abuse that caused her to break off her engagement to David Lee Heakin in 2007. As their three-month relationship continued, she decided that he was just too controlling.

"He didn't like me going to work, he did not like me leaving the house," says the Hickman County woman.

"I would not get to my mother's house without him calling before I got to the door and asking my mom, 'Is she there?' and 'Tell her to call me back, I need to know where a pack of matches are.' And that's just an example of something silly he would ask."

She says there were no physical or verbal attacks on her during the time they lived together, but signs of his controlling nature were hard to miss, according to Beasley's mother.

"No makeup, no cleavage showing, no legs showing, loose clothes," says Barrie Bale.

"Very conservative," says Beasley, who lives with her mother.

By early March of 2007, the twice-divorced mother of three teenage boys decided that the relationship needed to end.

"We were sitting out on the porch in rocking chairs, it was nighttime, and he said that he had had a woman throw bleach in his face before. And I said, 'Why?' And he said because he had found out that she was sleeping around on him, and found negligees and stuff in the back of his truck, and he had to hold her down and just get the demons out of her, she just was evil."

"So that right there, that clicked in my head — he did a whole lot more than just that to her, for her to throw bleach in his face. She was trying to get away — in my mind, that's where she was going."

Helping out

So Shannon Beasley broke it off and moved to her mother's home, though she says Heakin kept contacting her, "begging me to come over every day."

Two weeks later, she relented because he had hurt his back in a fall, and needed a ride to a pharmacy so he could fill a prescription.

Beasley says she didn't tell her mother or anyone



DAVID L. HEAKIN

else where she was going. When they came back from the drug store to his home, they argued.

"When I tried to leave, I turned about and he grabbed my purse, which had my keys in it," she says. "He'd already hit me, and the beating commenced."

"It was just jealousy. He thought I was out sleeping around, and I was not. There was nothing other than the fact of his behavior and jealousy and possessiveness. He was so possessive."

And he was big. Beasley said Heakin had been a bodybuilder and claimed a Mr. Ohio title for it; his nickname, from school days, was "Mr. Big Man."

She says she was hit full force with fits "right in my face," and then was thrown down on a glass table, breaking it, she thinks.

"I get confused; you'll have to forgive me," she told an interviewer.

"She still has trouble coming out with everything that happened, even when she's talking about it now," says her mother, who accompanied her because she cannot travel anywhere alone. "She's a whole lot better now."

More of it

The beating was just beginning. She was hit in the head with a wood-stove shovel, attacked with a weightlifter's belt and beaten with a standard yellow broom — the latter event, she calls "the most vivid part":

"I can remember looking up at his face . . . blood red, his jaw, his teeth were clenched. His jaws were shaking, his eyes were black and his arms were coming up and coming down on me with that broom as hard as he could, over and over and over, until the bristles on the broom — this was a full

sweeping broom — the bristles broke off the broom handle. And then he commenced to beating me continuously with the broom after all of that."

At one point, Beasley remembers trying to get to her cellphone, to call for help — but Heakin stomped her right hand so hard that her middle finger "broke completely off, and then she took the phone and threw it through the window or the door, one."

She still works to straighten out the bent finger.

Beasley remembers going through a glass door, and being stuck under a recliner. Beasley choked up at the thought of that chair, one of the few times during an hour-long interview.

"He had taken the recliner and pushed it over on top of me and laid on it and, I can remember, I just couldn't breathe. I was being squished."

Mom's worry

Beasley had gone to Heakin's home for a prescription run on Wednesday, telling no one. Her mother figured out after a day or two that her daughter must be at the home of her former fiance. And then he called.

"He said that they were making up. And I said, 'I want to speak to Shannon,' and he said she's sleeping."

"Then he shows up at the door and tells me Shannon wants her makeup and her medicine. And I said, 'Where's Shannon?' And he said she's sleeping."

"Then he cuts the phones off; I can't get in contact no more. Well, then he finally calls, and he said, 'I'll bring her home this evening.'"

"And I asked him, 'Where's she at?' And he said, 'She's sleeping.' And I said, 'Let me speak to Shannon.'"

At some point, Bale said, Heakin told her that he had "shook the living hell" out of her daughter, and was livid. The mother told Heakin not to hit her, that she was coming to get her — and that she was going to call the police.

"That was my biggest mistake," the mother says now.

"He called James, her daddy, — 'I'm going to take the bitch and drown her.' And that's when he tried to drown her. . . ."

"Me and the kids went over there — I met the police — but they were gone. There was blood, the

windows were broken — it was a mess; it looked like a cyclone had gone through that house."

This was Thursday.

Nearly drowned

At some point, Heakin dragged a nude Beasley from his house down a 150-foot chert and rock incline, by her arm and her hair.

"And he took me down to the creek and he held my head under the water, and he said he was going to wash the stink of man off of me."

Beasley tried to resist. "I came up for air one time, and the second time he stuck my head down in the water, I just relaxed my body and I just felt if I could stay there relaxed, he'll think I'm dead."

"And he left. This was March; it was very cold; it was night time and it was dark."

Unable to walk, Beasley says she crawled to a nearby cabin on Heakin's property, where she found a blanket and a bed.

"I don't remember if I was on the bed or under the bed, but I remember getting under covers, because I was so cold."

Time passed; how much is unknown to her.

"The next thing I remember, I was being pulled again by my arms and hair, down out of the cabin, down the wooden stairs, up the gravel driveway, through the grass, chert and halfway up to the big house and dropped . . . he was dragging me."

Her mother said her daughter had bald spots from the hair-pulling: "I had to cut her hair off short because every time I'd comb it, it would just all fall out, where he had pulled it out."

Beasley says Heakin called her a cheater, a slut, a whore. She was either nude or wearing underwear for much of the four-day period, according to her recollection.

"Another vivid memory, I was on the couch and I must have been asleep because he had a Rottweiler, and this dog — the dog would always sleep with you. . . ."

"I woke up to a beating; he was beating me on the couch. And the dog had got up and straddled over top of me and was snapping at him — his own dog, which he had raised from a puppy, was snapping at him, trying to bite his hands from beating me. And he grabbed the dog by the collar and swung the dog off of me and continued beating me."

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Mom returns

The next morning, Bale went back to the Heakin home, on Friday. She was beyond worried, she hadn't liked the man much from early in her daughter's relationship.

"He cut the phones off — this was one of the signs — he'd cut them off without her knowing it, he would disconnect them. And I would call and call and call and keep on getting this, 'This line is out of order,' and all this kind of stuff."

"I said, 'Shannon, why don't you answer your phone,' and she said, 'Momma, it don't ring.' And she got to looking around and what he was doing, he was unplugging the phone."

Bale's arrival at the home this second time was heralded by a lot of noise.

"I kept blowing my horn and finally he came to the window with her. And he said, 'OK, Mrs. Barrie, you can quit blowing your horn,



Shannon Beasley, four years later.

I think everybody in the county has heard you,' or something like that.

"And I told Shannon to come on down, 'I'm going to take you home.' And he said, 'I'm going to bring her home later on this evening.'"

Beasley remembers the moment. She was, she said, kneeling on a bed at an upstairs window.

"And he told me, 'If you say anything, I will kill her and you too.' I told my mother to just go, just leave — 'Everything is fine, just go home.'"

"She couldn't see the distance, so she couldn't see where I had been beaten. . . . I'm so convinced that this man was going to kill me. There was no doubt in my mind. I can remember him looking for a gun, and I can remember praying to God that he not find the gun."

The rescue

When Heakin did not bring Beasley back home that Friday night, Bale called the police for the second time, on Saturday, March 24. Deputy Aaron Beasley — no relation — responded to the call, meeting Bale at the foot of Heakin's drive, on South Tatum Creek Road in Lyles; he no longer owns the home.

"He told me to stay down there," at the bottom of the hill, below Heakin's home. "I told Aaron, 'Aaron, you're going to need back-up, you're not going up against that big man.'"

The deputy proceeded up the hill, finding no one outside the home.

"From the blood I found in the house, I thought someone was dead," said deputy Beasley.

He found her upstairs, under a blanket; removing it, the deputy saw a naked, bruised body.

"It was the worst beating I'd seen where the victim survived," said Beasley, who is no longer a deputy. He says he was shown photos of her later, but did not need to see them.

"It's images that never leave," he said. The experience contributed to his decision to leave law enforcement, after three years with the Sheriff's Department here.

"It's gruesomeness and cases like that that made me not have a desire to do it anymore," he said of law enforcement work. "I decided I'd seen enough dead bodies and broken bodies."

The victim recalled the deputy.

"I remember him saying that my foot was swollen," says Shannon Beasley. "I remember him saying, he thought I was dead when he pulled the covers back."

Jimmy Barnett and Johnny Davis, detectives who investigated the case, reported that Beasley was unable to help herself.

"She was so weak from the beating that when (Heakin) left the house, she was unable to leave to get help," the detectives report-

You can get help from:

Columbia Legal Aid Society
931-381-5533

Legal Aid Society National Hotline
800-799-SAFH (7233)

Women Are Safe Hotline
931-729-5730

Women Are Safe Toll-Free Hotline
800-470-1117

ed at the time.

David Heakin arrived at his home as emergency medical technician Wesley Morgan and deputy Beasley prepared to bring Shannon Beasley to an ambulance.

"He pulls up just before they bring Shannon out," says the victim's mother, "and that's when he comes up through there and tells me, 'She broke my heart. Look what she's done.' And I went after him, and Aaron came after me and told me that if I didn't leave they wouldn't help Shannon."

"I actually had to pick her up and carry her," the former deputy said of Barrie Bale.

Heakin was drunk, the deputy said.

"He was very calm, very nonchalant — didn't seem to be agitated, expected us to be there," he said. "I wouldn't say he was relieved. It was almost like he didn't care."

Heakin was charged with attempted first-degree murder, especially aggravated kidnaping, aggravated assault and domestic assault. Within the week, General Sessions Court Judge Samuel H. Smith sent the attempted murder and kidnaping charges to the grand jury, dismissed the other two and set bond at \$1 million.

Shannon Beasley was carried by ambulance to Horizon Medical Center in Dickson and then to Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where a sunken left eye needed corrective work. A 14-stitch cut on the lower part of her back may have initiated chronic pain and nerve damage that continues. Her nose was broken, a tooth cut through her lip, a scar remains on her right shoulder, and one side of her face suffered from Bell's palsy, though it has improved.

But her physical struggles cannot be compared to her mental injuries. More than four years passed before she could attempt to explain what had happened to her during that four-day period in March of 2007.

"It's something that has taken a long time," she said during an interview on November 11, Veterans Day.

NEXT WEEK: Trials, and recovery.

15 SIGNS SOMEONE MIGHT BE DANGEROUS

Do they do one or more of these things?

Then it's time for you to get help or get out.

- 1. Wants to get involved fast:** Right away he wants you to promise to only be with him. Says, "No one's ever loved me like you do."
- 2. Jealous:** He wants to make sure you aren't with anyone else; call's all the time or shows up without telling you he's coming.
- 3. Wants to control you:** Wants to know who you talked to and where you were; checks mileage on your car; keeps all the money; makes you ask for his OK to go anywhere or do anything.
- 4. Expects you to be perfect:** He expects you to know what he wants and meet his every need.
- 5. Cuts you off from others:** Doesn't want you to see family and friends; won't let you have a phone or car; doesn't want you to work.
- 6. Blames you for problems:** If anything goes wrong, it's always someone else's fault — the boss, you. Everyone is out to get him.
- 7. Blames others for his feelings:** He says, "You're hurting me by not doing what I tell you" or "You make me mad" instead of "I'm mad."
- 8. Gets upset easily:** He gets mad about things that are just part of life.
- 9. Hurts animals or children:** Kills or punishes animals. Wants children to do things they can't or teases them until they cry.
- 10. Uses force during sex:** Enjoys throwing you down or holding you down against your will during sex; says he finds the idea of rape exciting.
- 11. Says things to hurt you:** Always criticizes you or says cruel things; puts you down, curses, calls you ugly names.
- 12. Thinks women should obey men:** Wants you to serve, obey and stay at home.
- 13. Sudden changes in mood:** Switches from sweet and loving to mad in a few minutes.
- 14. Has hit women before:** Says he hit women in the past.
- 15. Says he will hurt you:** Says things like "I'll break your neck," then says "I didn't really mean it."

SOURCE: Legal Aid Society

Beasley said Heakin showed all 15 signs before she was attacked.