

SHAKEN TO THE CORE

A widow's journey

Mary Lee's 63-year-old husband Pat
Died from a stroke in 2013

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I had a pretty good radar

In the first few years after Pat died, I've never, ever felt more vulnerable. That's really saying something. I was single for a great many years. I've always lived in the safest places I could afford, yet I've been mugged, assaulted and had several break-in attempts while I was at home in a variety of homes, sometimes in nice neighborhoods.

I'm an Army Reserves Vet, and not inclined to let fear stop me much. I married Pat and at long last felt like I could exhale and relax. He was six-foot two-inches tall, and assumed the role of chief of security of our home.

When Pat died, we lived in a community with very few homes yet built. My nearest neighbor was quarter of a mile away and could neither hear my alarm nor see my house. There was all kinds of traffic on my street at night, unnerving because ours was the only house there. It shook my husband, too. Kids looking for a lover's land, drug dealers, some of the area construction workers would roam at all hours. I didn't get much sleep for a few years.



It got better as houses were built nearby and I began to have neighbors, but at about a year after Pat was gone, someone did try to breach or break in my fence one summer evening about 10 p.m. By that time, I'd acquired my next love, my rottweiler, and she was having a fit.

It was obvious I was home, I clearly had a big dog, she was outside barking at the intruders, and yet somebody was brazen enough to try. I got her inside and they left, but I was shaken to the core.

There were also the scammers who tried to get money. Those came from some unexpected sources, acquaintances who never would have otherwise had the nerve to ask for large sums of money. I never fell for any of those, or for the online scammers, but I know friends who nearly did. What makes that so evil is that words are insufficient to describe the emotional vulnerability and fragility of the newly widowed. There's a special place in hell for those folks, because our normal defenses are down.

For physical security, I have several things in place, some new, some not. I am well-versed in gun use and safety and have always had one. Many won't like that, but also weren't here when someone was trying to get in and the police are twenty minutes away. Unless you've lived it, you have zero room to judge. Don't message me, because I'm not having it.



I also bought a rottweiler, who is my sunshine as well as protector. I have an alarm system and

now have neighbors close enough to hear it. I added security cameras after the break in at this house. I use a lot of exterior lights and keep my bushes trimmed to eliminate hiding spots.

For the scammers, I had pretty good radar for the people around me that I already knew. Online I am very, very careful. I don't connect with anyone directly who I haven't met in person or who I haven't talked to online for years. I belong to some interest groups and got around to exchanging personal connections with a few I've been talking to for five years or more. There's just no need to do that, usually. If you are not ever going to meet them in person, why do they need full access?

I know several people who use online dating. In fact, I met Pat that way. I don't discourage anyone from doing so if they wish to date, but be extremely careful if you choose to. Widows have a big money target on their foreheads and I sometimes think the dating sites are populated by more scammers than legitimate prospects.

All security measures and suggestions can be found online and a great many of them on Pinterest. I advise new widows to race to start doing some research on it. There's plenty of help out there, but it's up to us to find it. Each situation is different.