

Amanda Hamm statement at her February 2007 sentencing hearing in DeWitt County

Your Honor,

Since September second, 2003, I have tried to cope with the loss of Christopher, Austin and Kyleigh, my three children who were the most important people in my life. As we all do, I have looked back on that day every day since their deaths and wished with all my heart that I could change what exactly happened and that I had been able to do something, anything, different to change what actually occurred. Some memories have returned to me but I do not have a clear recall of the exact sequence of those events and am not sure that I have, every today, all the pieces to that puzzle.

I want you and every person who wants to listen to know that I loved each of my kids every day of their lives and tried very hard to provide them with what they needed to grow, develop and thrive at home and in school. I admit that I was not perfect at this but I never quit trying to do what was right for them. Some of the testimony you heard indicated that I called my children names and did not value them; I want to tell you that that statement is a total lie. As every parent knows, children can sometimes be frustrating but there was never a moment that I let that frustration interfere with my love and care for them.

I regret that I formed a relationship with Maurice LaGrone, not because he was or is an evil person but because he was immature and unwilling to be a responsible partner. He contributed little to our "family" financially and was more concerned about his wants and needs than those of others. This wasn't always the case as he seemed to care for my children, played with them and usually treated them with respect. He was not physically abusive to my kids in my presence although he did do things which I believe he thought were pranks or jokes and of which I did not approve. Looking back, I should have ended our relationship because of these things. I didn't because I believed that he would develop maturity, responsibility and work ethic. I thought that my plans to further my education would encourage Maurice LaGrone to take similar actions and that we could improve our financial situation and work as a team to improve our lives in general as well as the lives of my children. I can't tell you how sorry I am to not have the opportunity to do that.

I am now faced with a life that holds promise for me and my future and realize how ironic this must sound because Christopher, Austin and Kyleigh no longer have similar horizons to look forward to. I can't change what was occurred but I can, and will, try to live my life in a way which will be pleasing to them- a life in which I try every day to do the right thing, to treat others with respect and courtesy, to live with dignity and self respect. A large part of being successful in reaching these goals will be to learn to value myself enough to refuse to be involved in any relationship not based on mutual respect. I owe it to myself and my children to carefully select any partner and to avoid anyone who displays personality traits which are similar to several men I have known in the past. Cycles can be broken and new, positive habits can be formed. I look forward to having the opportunity to take those steps in my life.

I want to thank all the people who have stood by me during this ordeal. Without the support given to me by my mom and so many others, I don't believe I would have been able to cope with the depression that held me for so long without their love and support. I will try to repay their kindness by living a life that they can be proud of.

Judge Peters, you have a very serious and important decision to make today, a decision that could have a lasting impact on my life. Three years ago you asked me how I wanted to plead to the charges of first degree murder filed against me. I told you then that I was not guilty and I tell you again today that I am not guilty of any offense that involves me wanting to cause harm to my children or agreeing to cause harm to them. That simply did not happen.

As every person who appears before you for sentencing, I want to return to freedom as soon as I can. I can only pledge to you what I said earlier and hope that you accept these words as truthful because they are.

Thank you for your attention.