

DEFENDING LISL

Prosecutor: Politics was never a factor in Auman case

DEFENSE from 5A

you have the flight away from it."

It all started after Lisl Auman and her boyfriend broke up.

On Nov. 12, 1997, she and four others, including a 25-year-old skinhead named Matthaues Jaehnig whom she had met the night before, drove to Pine. Auman had once lived in a boardinghouse there with 27-year-old Shawn Cheever.

Auman, then 21, wanted revenge, according to prosecutors, who say her plan was to burglarize her ex-boyfriend's room.

But one witness said Auman wanted to retrieve her own belongings.

And Jaehnig wanted to have sex with Auman, the witness added.

While the group was removing things from the room, someone called police.

Auman and Jaehnig fled in a stolen red Trans Am, Jaehnig behind the wheel. The other three left in another car.

Police chased Auman and Jaehnig as they drove down U.S. 285. At one point, Auman took the wheel as Jaehnig grabbed a gun and shot at police.

Jaehnig and Auman ended up at the Monaco Place condominiums in Denver, 30 miles from the original crime scene.

Auman surrendered when confronted by police. She was cuffed and put into a police cruiser.

VanderJagt, 47, was a twice-decorated officer with a toddler girl.

Jaehnig was a white supremacist with a rap sheet, whose body was peppered with Third Reich tattoos.

VanderJagt was more than halfway through his doctoral dissertation at the University of Colorado in a multidisciplinary program that included philosophy and education.

Jaehnig was high on methamphetamine, pot and cocaine.

VanderJagt peeked his head around a corner.

Jaehnig shot him 10 times, four of those in the head, with a Chinese SKS semiautomatic assault rifle.

Jaehnig then took VanderJagt's gun, placed it under his chin, and shot himself dead.

Critics say the political details are as important as the legal ones.

One week after VanderJagt was killed, skinhead Nathan Thill killed West African immigrant Oumar Dia in downtown Denver. Three hours later, a dead pig was found in the parking lot of the District 3 police station in south Denver where VanderJagt had worked.

VanderJagt's name was written in marker on the pig's hide.

Then-Gov. Roy Romer lashed out at hate crimes.

Days later, then-President Clinton was in Denver for a fund-raiser. He met with Anna VanderJagt, and he spoke publicly about the Dia and VanderJagt shootings.

"We must not tolerate violence and hatred targeted against police officers, the people who put their lives on the line for us every day," Clinton said.

Auman was held initially for investigation of second-degree burglary, felony menacing and first-



Joe Mahoney/News Staff Photographer

Linda Chin, a juror in Lisl Auman's trial, holds a bumper sticker supporting the movement to free Auman. Chin voted to convict Auman but later regretted her vote. Chin has donated money to Auman's fund.

Juror who voted guilty joins cause for Auman

By Jeff Kass

News Staff Writer

Linda Chin is one of the 12 jurors who unanimously convicted Lisl Auman of felony murder.

She's also one of the financial contributors to the Lisl Auman Information Project.

Chin, who regrets casting her guilty vote, contributed \$2,000 to Auman's cause shortly after the trial.

The money was a way for Chin to help with Auman's post-trial life, whether it was an appeal, or broadcasting her story.

Chin said she voted guilty because she was unaware of the sentence.

And, she adds, she went along with the 11 other jurors "rather than face the whole city of Denver and the reporters in the hall for being the only one to vote not guilty. Basically, I was a chicken."

Chin may give more money, possibly to help pay for the college correspondence course Auman is doing from prison. She doesn't want to say how much more she may pony up.

"I don't want to put my husband in shock," says the 57-year-old grandmother and product service coordinator for a software company.

Chin exchanges e-mails with Auman's parents, and they have had dinner together. She and Au-

man have written about a half-dozen letters back and forth.

They have talked about a visit. "I apologized to her in my first letter," Chin said. "She has been very understanding. She didn't want me to feel guilty."

Chin has given cards proclaiming Auman's innocence to her grandchildren to pass out at elementary school. An Auman bumper sticker decorates her office cubicle. She put Auman's father in touch with a designer for a Web site dedicated to Auman's case.

Auman calls Chin "courageous."

"Of course, she helped put me away here," Auman says. "I know she feels horrible about it."

degree assault. Days later, Ritter charged her with first-degree murder.

Somebody had to pay in such a politically charged atmosphere, says Rob Auerbach, Auman's stepfather.

"After Matthaues Jaehnig killed himself, there was nobody to go after," he said.

Ritter said he weighed his ethical duty with the letter of the law and his ability to convince a jury before deciding to prosecute Auman for felony murder.

Politics had nothing to do with it, he says.

"If Jaehnig was still alive, Lisl Auman would have been prosecuted along with him for felony first-degree murder."

Auman went on trial in July 1998,

eight months after the shooting.

Prosecutors said Auman set the events in motion that led to VanderJagt's death. She then aided Jaehnig by taking the wheel of the car.

Her defenders said it was an act of self-preservation to prevent the car from crashing, done under Jaehnig's orders.

Also under scrutiny was the testimony of two officers who arrested Auman.

Their first statements did not mention that they had seen Auman dip down before surrendering. That detail was added later.

She was helping Jaehnig grab the assault rifle, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Tim Twining, a co-prosecutor on the case.

Auman's attorneys argued that the new statements were orches-

trated to help ensure Auman's conviction. Her fingerprints were not found on the gun.

Twining said the district attorney requested the revised statements when other testimony pointed to a bigger role for Auman.

A jury unanimously found Auman guilty of felony murder, which is considered first-degree murder and carries a mandatory penalty of life without parole or, on rare occasions, death.

The jury also found Auman guilty of other crimes, including second-degree burglary.

The letter was dated Jan. 4, 2001, addressed to Hunter S. Thompson in Woody Creek. It came from the women's prison in Canon City.

"I laughed out loud while reading *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* dur-

THE CRIME:
WEDNESDAY,
NOV. 12, 1997

■ 2:30 p.m.: Jefferson County Sheriff's Department receives report of burglary in Pine, 30 miles southwest of Denver.

■ 2:34: Deputy spots red Trans Am on U.S. 285 near Conifer. Chase ensues. Matthaues Jaehnig and Lisl Auman speed away in stolen Trans Am.

■ 3:02: Denver police are notified chase is entering their city.

■ 3:05: Chase is called off after deputies lose sight of vehicle.

■ 3:08: Deputy spots vehicle on East Hampden Avenue, and Jaehnig fires three shots at him near Yale Avenue and Monaco Parkway.

■ 3:10: Officers lose sight of vehicle again. Red Trans Am spotted soon after in parking lot of Monaco Place complex, 3300 block of South Monaco Parkway. Auman, 21, surrenders and is arrested near a condominium door. She is handcuffed and placed in the back seat of a squad car. At the same time, Denver police officers Bruce VanderJagt, Dean Jones and Don Bowling approach the complex.

■ 3:23: Jaehnig shoots VanderJagt 10 times in head and torso. The shooting sets off a furious gun battle between Jaehnig and police.

■ 3:38: Denver Metro SWAT officer Mark Haney sneaks up and pulls VanderJagt out of the line of fire. SWAT officers Andy Ramirez and Reuben Gomez provide cover fire. The shooting stops.

■ 3:58: VanderJagt is pronounced dead at Denver Health Medical Center.

■ About 6 p.m.: Authorities find Jaehnig's body in stainwell.

— Source: Denver and Jefferson County authorities

ing my stay (13 months) at the Denver County Jail." Lisl Auman wrote on yellow legal-size paper in looping, blue ink. "Thank you for helping to bring a smile to my face. During that time."

Auman told Thompson that she was in prison for felony murder. She maintained her innocence. She wrote down her Web site.

"I didn't know what to make of it when I opened the letter," Thompson says. "My attitude is, 'What the f--- are you so cheerful about?' If I were you, I'd slit my wrists."

But something made it stand out for Thompson, who had followed the case when it was front-page news.

"I liked her language," he says.

And she didn't ask for anything. She was just thanking Thompson for the laughs.

He wrote back Jan. 17, typing on a piece of blue-edged stationery with his name across the top.

"Thanks for yr. kind note & yr. Art and yr. joke. 'Ho ho... I remember following yr. case in the newspapers and being horrified by it."

"Maybe I can write a story about it & stir up some interest. We'll see."

Auman responded to Thompson on Jan. 28:

See DEFENSE on 37A

DEFENDING LISL



▲ Anna Marie VanderJagt contemplates jigsaw puzzles assembled by her daughter Hayley, 6. VanderJagt is trying to put together the pieces of a life shattered by the murder of her husband, Denver police officer Bruce VanderJagt.

Photos by Ellen Jaskot/News Staff Photographer



► VanderJagt helps Hayley put on her ice skates before a class on a recent Saturday morning at the Joy Burns Arena at the University of Denver.

Officer's wife tries to put life together

Daughter Hayley, 6, 'realizes she doesn't have a daddy living with us like other kids'

By Jeff Kass
News Staff Writer

Anna VanderJagt walks over to the Furby puzzle on her living room coffee table. She crumbles up a large section of the puzzle that her 6-year-old daughter, Hayley, has completed.

"When we had Hayley, the pieces of our lives were falling together," says VanderJagt, 40, dressed in black pants and a black, short-sleeve cotton turtleneck.

"Now I feel one-third of them is gone, which is Bruce, and what's left is Hayley and I, and I have to put them together in a different configuration."

VanderJagt has been reworking those pieces over the past 3 1/2 years through an extended leave from her job as an elementary school teacher.

She advises the police on improving the process for officer death notifications and is taking graduate classes toward a Ph.D. in psychology.

VanderJagt expects to attend any oral arguments on Lisl Auman's appeal.

"I am there to represent Bruce," she says. "He's not here anymore in a physical manner, so I feel a huge determination to be there for him and Hayley."

She believes justice was served by Auman's conviction.

"She (Auman) made choices that day. She is the one that got the ball rolling."

Anna VanderJagt dismisses the notion that the Auman trial was political because someone had to pay for the killing of a police officer.

"I don't feel I personally was ever given the message 'Mrs. VanderJagt, this is what we're going to do for you: Because Bruce was a

police officer we're going to attack this more aggressively,'" she said of police and the district attorney.

Anna VanderJagt is aware of the attention surrounding Auman, and has seen printouts of the Web site.

"I won't go there to add to their numbers," she said.

VanderJagt remembers explaining the court proceedings to Hayley during the trial.

"It's a room where these people are and they're talking about what happened when your daddy was killed, and the bad girl is there, and the lawyers want to put the bad girl in jail," she said.

Today, VanderJagt describes Hayley as a bright, energetic and sociable girl who enjoys soccer, ice skating and gymnastics.

But VanderJagt was "unnerved" when Hayley put Bruce VanderJagt's picture in a family mobile.

"Well, mom, Bruce is my daddy and he always will be my daddy," Hayley said.

"But she realizes she doesn't have a daddy living with us like the other kids," VanderJagt said. "I think she really feels like I do; the aloneness of the two of us."

Friday, for a St. Patrick's Day school project, Hayley wrote a list of three wishes for a leprechaun to grant her.

Her wishes?

Good luck, \$100, and "I wish I had my dad!"

"I get very angry when I hear Lisl Auman and her family are seeking support and sympathy from others. She gets to talk to her parents, they get to touch her, and Hayley and I get nothing. We have our memories and our photos. That's all we walked away with."

Anna Marie VanderJagt

DEFENDING LISL

Lawyers debate centuries-old legal concept

By Jeff Kass

News Staff Writer

She didn't pull the trigger, but it didn't matter. The legal theory under which Lisl Auman was convicted evolved under British common law, which dates to the 12th century. It held people responsible for unintended deaths that occurred in the course of other serious crimes.

If someone died of a heart attack during a robbery, for example, the robber was guilty of what was known as felony murder.

England abolished felony murder in 1957, in part because of an outcry over the harsh punishment, including death, handed out to those who did not mean to kill.

But in the United States, supporters argue that felony murder laws are useful for holding people accountable, and deterring crime.

"The public policy behind it is that a criminal is to be held liable for all their actions," says Peter Weir, executive director of the Colorado District Attorneys Council.

He used Auman's case as an example, while emphasizing that he did not mean to take a stand on the specifics.

"But for that burglary, the death would not have occurred."

Most states have basic statutes similar to Colorado's felony murder law.

Colorado lists six underlying crimes — arson, robbery, burglary, kidnapping, sexual assault and escape — that subject people to felony murder charges.

Once a jury found Auman guilty of a felony such as second-degree burglary, it didn't matter whether she had no intention of killing a police officer, under the law. Or if she didn't pull the trigger.

Auman was handcuffed and in a police cruiser when officer Bruce VanderJagt was shot.

"I think that's the real harm of felony murder," said University of Colorado law professor William Pizzi. "It can make you responsible for consequences that are unforeseen or unlikely in the extreme."

People are also subject to felony murder if the death occurs during the "immediate flight" from the underlying crime.

That is another point in Auman's case.

Defense attorneys critical of the law say the definition of "immediate flight" can be unfairly long, especially in Auman's case, where the original burglary and final shooting lasted through an extended police chase and two counties.

It is an issue Public Defender Kathleen Lord, Auman's attorney, said she will take up on appeal.

"Even if you assume there was a burglary in Buffalo Creek, it's over" by the time police catch up with Auman on the highway, Lord said.

"At the beginning it's not immediate flight, and at the end when she's in custody it's not immediate flight."

Other attorneys amplify that argument.

"I can't say I've heard of a case where the individual is in custody at the time of the murder and held responsible," said Cynthia Orr, an attorney with the San Antonio firm of Goldstein, Goldstein and Hilley, who is helping draft a National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers brief on Auman's behalf.

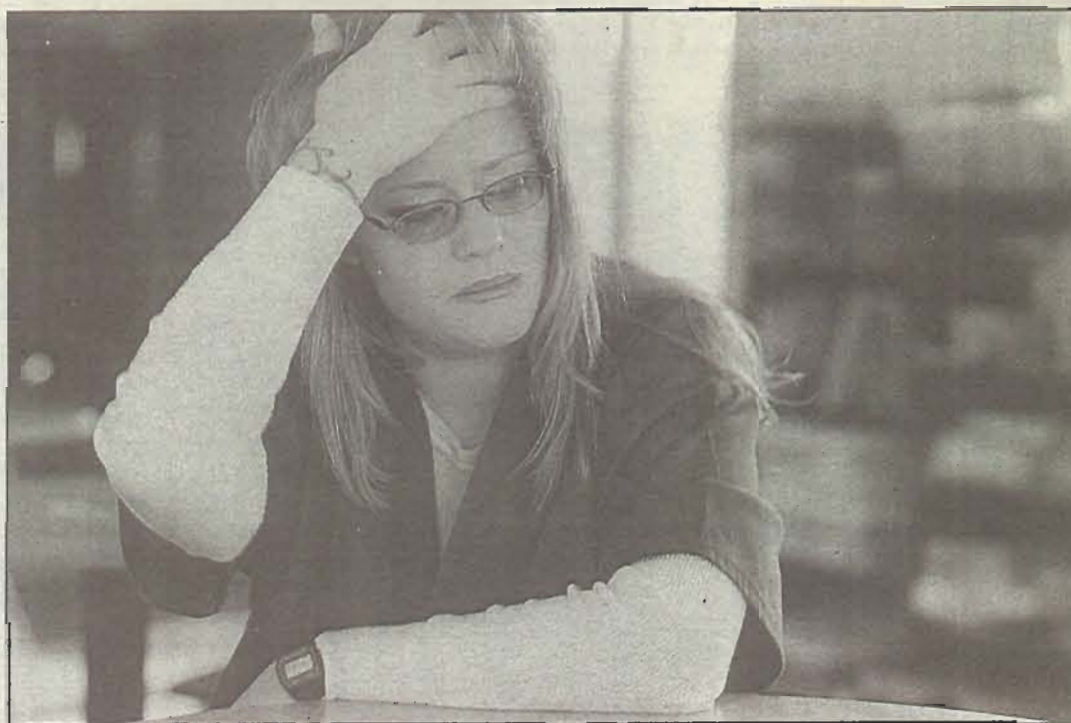
Lord said she may also use the "choice of evils" defense because she contends that Matthaues Jaehnig ordered Auman to take the car's wheel while he shot at police.

Supporters of the law say the events Auman set in motion were still spinning when VanderJagt was shot.

"The prosecution will argue it was a continuous chain of events, and the prosecution will no doubt argue for an expansive definition of what immediate means," said Denver criminal defense attorney Nathan Chambers, who represents convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

Denver defense attorney Scott Robinson says of Auman's case: "It's not necessarily an unfair stretching of the facts, but it's not two guys holding up a store and someone gets shot."

The state attorney general's office, which will speak for the prosecution on appeal, declined comment until the first brief is filed.



Lisl Auman runs the gamut of emotions as she recounts the events of Nov. 12, 1997, which ended in the death of Denver police officer Bruce VanderJagt. She says if she were given the chance to be free, she would never return to prison. "I promise you I would never come back."

Ellen Jasko/News Staff Photographer

'I feel for her, and I feel for her little girl'

Excerpts from an interview with Lisl Auman at the Cañon City women's prison:

■ **On skinhead Matthaues Jaehnig:** "He, basically I think he had a death wish. From the minute his foot hit the pedal and we were going down the mountain, I think that he didn't care anymore."

■ **On the "dip" she is alleged to have made before surrendering to police, allegedly to give Jaehnig a weapon:** "I never dipped, but I never had the so-called gun they said I had in my hands. It never happened."

■ **On any role she had that day:** "I surrendered as soon as I could. I did not think I could have done anything to Matthaues Jaehnig that could have changed the war-path he was on. He was in another world."

■ **On how she convinced Denver County Jail inmates she was not a skinhead:** "I would tell some of them, but it's not like that would really make a difference. I had to just be myself and let them decide. Am I your typical racist white female? Am I just your typical down-to-earth — which I believe myself to be — down-to-earth chick?"



■ **On being found guilty:** "I just couldn't believe it. I had no idea that was going to happen. I thought that for sure they weren't going to find me guilty of first-degree murder. I was devastated. I'm still devastated about it. I'm devastated about the whole thing that happened on Nov. 12 up until now. I probably always will be."

■ **On any regrets for refusing a plea bargain:** "Maybe I considered it for a split second. Now I'm like well, no, because no, I didn't do anything. I guess it's a sense of self-honor I have for myself."

■ **On her arrival in prison:** "When I first got here, a couple days later I had to celebrate my 23rd birthday. Depressing, very depressing. I didn't feel like I had any friends; I have a few friends now. I could probably have more, but you're not dealing with the cream of the crop. I remember going to the dining hall and somebody started singing *Happy Birthday*, and everyone just kind of chimed in."

■ **On whether she has to work in prison:** "I had a roommate who wouldn't work. She got on my nerves. She was always home. She wouldn't even go to church or anything. All she did was read romance novels. You could not work, I suppose. I'd rather work. If I don't work, I think that I'd just get really depressed."

■ **On inmates who find their way back to prison:** "If I was given that chance (to get out) I don't know what I would do. I would give my arm, or my leg, or my eye, or something to be given that chance. I promise you I would never come back."

■ **On what she might say to Anna Marie VanderJagt:** "I don't think that she wants to hear anything from me, and it's also hard because I'm not responsible for her husband's death. I feel for her, and I feel for her little girl."

■ **On optimism:** "I have hope. It comes and goes. Some days it's very little. Some days I can't even imagine the light at the end of the tunnel. But other days, I can see I've got a lot of hope."



■ **On whether she is an angry person:** "I am pretty much a hippie. But yeah, I am angry, too. Not all the time. I'm into what's right. I know what's being done (to me) is wrong."

■ **On anger:** "I think that's what got me in part of this mess, because I'm too trusting. But that's one thing I don't want to have happen to me is for me to become bitter and angry, because that's not the person who I am."

■ **On her appeal becoming a national test case for felony murder law:** "It makes me nervous. It could go either way. I suppose it's a good thing though, no matter what happens eventually, because I think it needs to be looked at."

■ **On her life if the shooting had never occurred:** "I'd probably be living in a dumpy house or something and trying to make ends meet. Probably still partying here and there. It doesn't sound very good. But you know, I think in a lot of ways, I think this whole thing has saved me from becoming less than I have potential for. Now I want to give it all I got and push for the best and be the best person I can be."

DEFENDING LISL

Thompson's columns bring in flood of support

DEFENSE from 38A

"Writing to you, for me, was like a shot in the dark and it was the first time that I had ever just 'reached out' to anybody in such a way. What a surprise (sic) it was for me that you actually wrote back!"

"How cool is that? It's even cooler still that you looked into my web site and then proceeded to write something about me in your column for ESPN."

Since then, Thompson has mentioned Auman's case three times in his weekly ESPN.com column, a gonzo mix of politics and sports titled *hey rube!*

"In all my experience with Courts & Crimes & downright Evil behavior by the Law & the Sometimes criminal cops who enforce it, this is the Worst & most Reprehensible miscarriage of 'Justice' I've ever encountered," Thompson wrote Feb. 5.

Visits to Auman's Web site have shot up from 7,000 over almost two years to more than 45,000 in the two months since Thompson first mentioned her. Auman's stepfather thought the site's counter had gone haywire.

"He has done more in a month's time than we've been able to do in three years," said Colleen Auerbach, Auman's mother.

Thompson was soon talking on the phone with Auman's father, the plumbing shop foreman at the University of Denver.

He has also spoken by phone with Auman.

Thompson soon turned to his friends at the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, attorneys such as Gerald Goldstein, Hal Haddon and Abe Hutt, who had come to his aid in the past.

The felony murder law had long troubled the NACDL, says the San Antonio-based Goldstein, a past president.

Thompson began talking to the NACDL in January.

Some of the lawyers had gathered at Thompson's home for Super Bowl Sunday while in Aspen or at a legal seminar.

Thompson ushered them around the fire in his study.

"We convened a meeting at halftime," said Thompson, who is known as the poet laureate of the NACDL.

The NACDL has agreed to file an amicus, or friend of the court, brief on Auman's behalf.

It is the first time in recent memory, and possibly ever, that the organization has taken on the concept of felony murder.

"It is an issue that affects more than this case, and has nationwide consequences," said Goldstein. This (Auman) case represents probably the outer limits of what anyone's ripe imagination could conjure up."

Goldstein said the NACDL files amicus briefs on behalf of 15 cases a year, out of hundreds that are considered.



Robert and Colleen Auerbach of Littleton hold a picture of their daughter Lisl Auman that was taken in 1996. Robert Auerbach, Auman's stepfather, says a politically charged atmosphere led to Auman's murder conviction.

Ahmad Terry/News Staff Photographer

Uncle: Officer wouldn't have backed verdict

By Jeff Kass
News Staff Writer

Bruce VanderJagt would have been troubled by Lisl Auman's conviction, according to his uncle.

Wallace VanderJagt helped raise Bruce VanderJagt during part of his teen-age years after his parents divorced and his father died.

Wallace VanderJagt pointed to his nephew's study of philosophy as one reason he might have taken issue with the jury's decision.

"The conviction of Auman was

vengeful, which was arguably very human in this kind of situation," said VanderJagt, 75, a retired businessman who lives in Denver.

"Everybody was extremely angry. The villain was dead, so they got whoever was there. I don't think Bruce would have gone along with it."

He is also troubled by the interpretation of the law.

"I'm not thrilled at the idea of someone being convicted of murder while they were in police custody," he said.

Wallace VanderJagt supports a "substantial commutation" of Auman's sentence.

"As Bruce's uncle, I don't think that justice was served here," he said. "I'm not necessarily a rabid opponent of her success on appeal."

Wallace VanderJagt acknowledges he had little contact with Bruce once he was on the police force, and understands that Bruce's widow may feel differently. He says he is "most sympathetic" with her and her 6-year-old girl, Hayley.

Dees, of the Southern Poverty Law Center, recently called Auman's attorney to wish her well. Dees is a longtime Thompson friend and a NACDL member.

Thompson says a benefit concert with Lyle Lovett, Warren Zevon, Bonnie Raitt and Little Feat is possible.

His battle cry is a quote from 18th century British statesman Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Thompson adds: "Very seldom in your lifetime do you get a chance to right a wrong while it still matters."

He likens Auman to a political prisoner.

"When a cop is killed, somebody must go down," he says.

"I call it a lynch mob. It was a lynching in Denver. It was viciously handled by the district attorney, who claimed he was only responding to public opinion."

"He's in for a jiggly ride."

Ritter is aware of Thompson's interest.

"The price you pay for the First Amendment is that people like Hunter S. Thompson get to say what they want about police and prosecutors," he says.

"We have to keep our eyes focused on what our ultimate goal is — that's justice. We can't be distracted by a group of celebrities."

Don Auman sits in a booth at Piccolo's Italian restaurant near the University of Denver.

Drawings of shop tools float across his wide, tan suspenders — a red crescent wrench, a yellow welding torch, blue pipes. The suspenders also carry a black-and-white Lisl.com button with a red rose.

Auman launched the Web site in March 1999. Visitors can click on icons such as "Why?" "Jaehnig Rap Sheet" and "Facts."

Also in his PR arsenal are glossy business cards and postcards.

"Why is Lisl Auman in prison for the rest of her life?" read the

cards. "Who is really to blame for Denver Police Officer Bruce VanderJagt's death? Certainly not Lisl Auman, who was handcuffed and in police custody for ten minutes before the officer was murdered."

Auman has passed out the cards at concerts and political rallies featuring Raitt, Bob Dylan and Jackson Browne. He pressed them into the hands of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who was freed from prison after a federal judge found racial bias in the case against him. Jane Fonda has received a press packet.

Auman has been there when O.J. Simpson attorney Barry Scheck spoke in Denver, and during the Martin Luther King Day parade.

Auman recalls running into Ritter at one event. He introduced himself.

"This is a justice issue I'm going to keep working on," Auman says he told Ritter.

Ritter's reaction?

"He just looked really uncomfortable," Auman says.

Don Auman knew VanderJagt. Auman wrote a March 9, 1999, letter to DU friends and associates.

"When I started my employment at DU in 1984, Bruce was a DU security guard," Auman wrote. "I had many encounters with him in the course of my job and came to like and respect him."

□

Lisl Auman says she wanted to go to college after graduating from Littleton High School.

Instead, she went to nightclubs, stayed up late and partied.

Before the shooting, she was earning \$15 an hour doing flood prevention in Buffalo Creek. She enjoyed the hard work outdoors — digging trenches and filling sandbags.

When that job ended, she was bundling firewood in exchange for free room and board in Pine.

She was easygoing, but not really going anywhere.

Until she went to prison in 1998.

During a recent interview, she is in the visitor's center of the Cañon City women's prison. It has the sparse look and feel of a cafeteria, with industrial carpet, some two dozen small, round tables and blue plastic chairs. Vending machines sell candy bars and coffee.

Auman wears lip liner and mascara. Her ash blond hair falls to her shoulders. Her oval glasses are stylish.

She wears white, long-sleeve thermals to hide the pre-prison tribal vine tattoo snaking up her right arm, but it peeks out from under the cuff. A curlicue, Celtic tattoo rings her left middle finger.

She works on the prison electrical crew, takes college correspondence courses, and reads *Man's Search for Meaning* by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankel.

Reading about a man who chooses to give away his last piece of bread, Auman says she has learned that everyone has choices.

"That was basically the only thing he had left, was his choice," she said. "Like my choice to be angry or not angry."

But she had no choice on Nov. 12, 1997, Auman says.

And that is why she maintains her innocence.

"I didn't have anything to do with VanderJagt's murder," she says. "It was beyond my control."

It is a message she takes to the sweat lodge.

"I pray for justice, and that the truth be heard," she says.

"And I believe that so many things are happening now. I believe it has a lot to do with my prayers and the prayers of other people, too."

Contact Jeff Kass at (303) 892-2406, or kassj@rockymountainnews.com.