

# Wife recounts life of suspected addict

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had no children.

An automotive service manager by profession, Wilson stayed clear of crack for almost a year before he apparently became hooked again after returning to Michigan Feb. 5. He came back to Michigan to resume work as a service dispatcher at Orson Coe Pontiac, Grand Rapids.

Lois theorizes he came in contact with crack on the trip back to Michigan and "didn't have the strength to resist."

People not familiar with crack don't realize "how wicked that stuff is," Lois said. "Once once told me he couldn't believe how this stuff had such control of him."

"Nobody is immune," she added. "From what I understand, one or two puffs and you're hooked. The success rate of recovery for an addict is less than 1 percent."

SHE AND her husband separated in fall 1987 because of his crack habit, Lois said.

A Vietnam Army veteran, Wilson spent five weeks receiving treatment at the Veteran's Administration hospital in Battle Creek for post-traumatic stress disorder.

He and Lois separated about a

year after he started using crack following their move to Westland from Bartlesville, Okla., where he lost his job at a car dealership.

In summer 1987, when the couple was living in a Westland townhouse while he worked at Les Stanford Chevrolet in Dearborn, Wilson took a medical leave to receive drug treatment at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Pontiac.

While Wilson lived in a Dearborn motel, Lois and her pastor tried to make sure he picked up his employment check for shelter and food, but he always managed to divert it for crack, she said.

In February 1988, after threatening suicide at the Dearborn motel, Wilson, unemployed, was treated at VA hospitals in Allen Park and Battle Creek. He also spent time in halfway houses, she said.

ALWAYS A hard-working manager, her husband at first experienced total denial to crack. "But I knew something was up," Lois said. "He'd be gone till 3 in the morning — totally atypical behavior. He'd always come right home from work."

At the height of his addiction, Wilson had exhausted the couple's financial resources.

"He hawked his toolbox and vari-

ous other things to get crack," Lois said. "I got to the point where I had no control over anything. I couldn't handle him being alone, not knowing if he'd take something out of the house to hawk it."

The couple separated when they couldn't pay the rent for their Westland townhouse. "If I was going to survive, we had to separate," Lois said.

After working last September and October at Orson Coe Pontiac, Wilson moved back to Marshall — a town of 12,000 between St. Louis and Kansas City. Lois is a speech therapist for Marshall Public Schools.

"We thought we could re-establish our marriage," Lois said. "But he was not able to get a job. He was getting rather depressed being here but providing no support for the family. It bothered him."

SO HE called Orson Coe Pontiac, which "told him they'd love to have him back," Lois said.

She said he left for Grand Rapids Sunday, Feb. 5. "He seemed excited. We loaded up the car Sunday morning and he took off. I never heard from him again."

Although one of the robberies he's a suspect in took place Jan. 29 in Dearborn Heights, Lois insists her

husband didn't leave Missouri until Feb. 5.

Wilson planned to stay in Grand Rapids long enough to establish a good work record. His wife planned to spend summer there.

He eventually hoped to return to Marshall and find a job "so we could be together again," Lois said.

"I honestly felt, with treatment and a job, he had good chance," she said. "I didn't think he'd go on the deep end so quick."

Wilson arrived in Grand Rapids Monday, Feb. 6. He received an advance in pay, rented the Grand Am because of car trouble and arranged to start work later in the week.

The next day, he called the car

dealership from Detroit, saying he'd contact them later in the week to start work, Farmington Hills police Inspector Thomas Godwin said.

ON THURSDAY, Feb. 9, Wilson checked into the Star Motel in Detroit under the name Lawrence Reed. In both his room at the motel and in the Grand Am, police found crack pipes and residue. No money was found on Wilson.

Lois pledges to devote part of her life to drug education in Marshall. She hopes to start a memorial fund in her husband's memory. "If we can keep even one kid from ever trying that stuff..."

Monday morning, Lois met with

her pastor. "I have a very deep religious faith. I've gotten great support through this whole thing from friends at church."

Wilson, raised on the West Coast, will be buried near Holden, Mo., his wife's hometown 90 miles southwest of Marshall. The Rev. Raynard Martin of First Church of the Nazarene, Marshall, Mo., will officiate.

In addition to his wife, Wilson loses his father, Cecil, of Monticello, Ky., his mother, Luretha Pilkington, of North Wilksboro, N.C.; two half-brothers, John and David Hillton; and his grandmothers, Isabelle Wilson of Helton, Ky., and Hazel Blatt, of North Wilksboro, N.C.

## 'Frustrated' judge again delays murder trial start

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred Mester adjourned the start of a Farmington Hills murder trial Monday because he had not received clarification from the state Supreme Court on a "spousal privilege" issue.

The action was not surprising. Mester was expected to postpone the trial if he did not receive the ruling, which will decide if Jon Allen Vermeulen's ex-wife can testify at his trial.

The trial for Vermeulen, 43, of Farmington Hills, was scheduled to begin Monday. Mester made a few remarks before adjourning the case, citing his own frustration with the system that has kept Vermeulen

waiting in jail for nearly 38 months.

A spokeswoman for the state Supreme Court said Tuesday she has no idea when a written opinion might come from the court. "At this stage of the game, it's still pending," she added.

The case was taken to the high court in 1987 and oral arguments were heard last April; the court normally takes 9-12 months after arguments to reach a decision.

VERMEULEN IS charged with

the fatal Dec. 26, 1985, shooting of Urime "Renae" Lewis at Mulrwood Apartments. He had married Lewis six weeks before the shooting, before a divorce from his first wife, Sharon Vermeulen, was final. Sharon and Jon Vermeulen are now divorced.

The defendant also shot himself twice in the chest during the 1985 incident.

He remains in jail because of conflicting lower court rulings about whether his first wife could testify for the prosecution.

## 2 panels to review death

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The final investigative report will be presented to the Oakland County prosecutor for review.

"BASED ON the preliminary investigation, it's our opinion at this time it was a justifiable shooting," police Chief William Dwyer said Sunday.

"The officer feared for his life not only from the accelerating vehicle but because the driver was a suspect in several armed robberies," Dwyer said.

Wilson had rented the car from Orson Coe Pontiac in Grand Rapids, where a job as a service dispatcher had been waiting for him all week, police said.

"Kill me, I want to die," Wilson yelled through the open driver's window moments before he was killed with a single shot from the officer's 12-gauge pump shotgun, police said.

The officer, standing outside his patrol car with shotgun in hand, three times ordered Wilson to surrender but fired when he feared the man would drive along side and either shoot him or pin him against his patrol car, police said.

The officer never saw Wilson brandishing a gun. But he knew the robbery suspect could be armed and he saw the man reaching with his right hand toward the passenger seat, police said.

A loaded black pellet gun, identical in appearance to a 9mm semi-

automatic pistol, was found on the passenger seat of Wilson's car, lying next to his outstretched right arm. A knife in a sheath was found on the front floor, police said.

THE FARMINGTON Hills officer had followed Wilson onto Albion after learning that a car matching Wilson's had been chased but lost by Livonia police.

A Livonia officer, trying to stop Wilson for a traffic signal violation, soon determined the car and driver matched the descriptions of the getaway car and robber involved in at least seven armed robberies, including a Saturday morning stickup in Livonia.

Wilson was dead on arrival shortly past 8 p.m. Saturday at Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills. He died of a gunshot wound to the chest, the Oakland County Medical Examiner said.

The officer involved in the shooting had never before fired a weapon in the line of duty, Dwyer said. He has been reassigned to administrative duty until the investigation is complete.

"He's doing as well as can be expected," Godwin said.

As in all such cases, the officer will be offered some sort of counseling, Godwin said.

It doesn't appear Wilson had a criminal record. Police theorize he pulled robberies to get money to feed a recently revived crack cocaine habit.

POLICE BELIEVE Wilson may be responsible for the following armed robberies:

- Feb. 6, Amoco gas station, 8008 Middlebelt, Westland.
- Feb. 6, Mr. Steak, Easton County.
- Feb. 7, Red Lobster, Wayne-Ford, Westland.
- Feb. 8, Amoco gas station, 13 Mile-Southfield Road, Beverly Hills.
- Feb. 9, 7-Eleven, Warren-Middlebelt, Garden City.
- Feb. 9, Super America gas station, Ford-Harrison, Garden City.
- Feb. 11, Total gas station, Plymouth-Farmington Road, Livonia.

THE RECOVERED pellet gun is the one believed used in the armed robberies. No gun was ever fired during the holdups and no one was hurt.

Although Wilson is a suspect in the Jan. 29 robbery at Little Caesar's Pizza, 25565 Joy, Dearborn Heights, his wife, Lois, insists he didn't leave for Michigan until Feb. 5. But police haven't yet eliminated him as a suspect in that robbery.

"It's not up to us to confirm each robbery. It's up to each police agency to clear their own cases," Godwin said.

"But for background, we want to determine the type of individual we were dealing with and what frame of mind he might have been in."

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