

**Texas After Violence Project
Interview with Pamela Watts**

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ABSTRACT: On June 10th, 2020, Pamela Watts and her partner Jennifer Miller were t-boned in Lockhart, Texas by off-duty San Marcos Police Sergeant Ryan Hartman. Watts was airlifted off the scene with multiple injuries, and Miller died while still trapped in the vehicle. Hartman had an open can of Dos Equis beer in his car, but refused a blood alcohol test. A blood test administered several hours later after a warrant was issued came back negative for alcohol. Lockhart Police Department investigated the crash and recommended charges of negligent homicide. The Caldwell County District Attorney recused himself due personal connections to Hartman, and the Bastrop County District Attorney Bryan Goertz, who took over the case, presented charges of distracted driving to a Grand Jury. The case did not go to trial. Since the accident, Watts has called for Hartman to step down from his position as an officer with SMPD, and vocally opposed the decisions of the Bastrop County District Attorney. In this interview, Watts discusses the night of the wreck and her activism to find justice for Jennifer Miller's death. She outlines the actions and responses of various individuals involved in the case, and once again calls for Ryan Hartman to leave the police force. Pamela Watts was interviewed by Amy Kamp for Texas After Violence Project on July 19th, 2021, in the offices of Mano Amiga in San Marcos, Hays County, Texas.

[00:00:23] AMY KAMP: Okay so we're recording?

JANE FIELD: Yeah.

KAMP: So, I'm going to get started. My name is Amy Kamp. I'm with the Texas After Violence Project. It is July 19th, 2021, and [00:00:36] I'm here with Jane Field, also Texas After Violence Project and we're interviewing Pamela Watts. Pam, do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself?

PAMELA WATTS: I appreciate the opportunity to have a voice. I'd like to tell my story. It's--it's just unbelievable. I used to live in a fairytale world where I thought our justice system worked. I have a brother who's in law enforcement--lifelong over 30 years--and [00:01:07] I looked at them as the good guys, here to Serve and Protect. And I had a rude awakening following a collision on June 10th, of '20, when we were t-boned by an off-duty San Marcos police officer in a two ton pickup truck. He had a full replacement, cattle guard bumper, he was traveling at 16 miles an hour over the speed limit. I would say 46 miles an hour over the speed [00:01:37] limit, 'cause he should have been stopped, but he went around a horseshoe-shaped gravel road that was full of potholes that had a speed limit of 30 posted. He went around that, drove recklessly. I--after I went on that road and had two journalists nearly get hit head on. I don't know how any sane person could have driven that road. It was a short loop--Boggy Creek Road Loop and he did it at 46 miles an hour while talking on the phone, [00:02:07] with a Dos Equis beer in his cup holder and with beer salts.

He went right past that 30 mile-an-hour sign, right past a junction, 130 Tollway sign, it warned him the tollway was coming up. We were traveling on the feeder road of that tollway. There was also a divided highway warning sign that he went past, he literally had two stop signs, one on [00:02:37] each side of his pickup truck.

His computer in his truck showed that he never even hit the brakes. He accelerated through that intersection, striking my vehicle. Jen was in the passenger side. He t-boned us and he killed Jen. Her name was Jennifer Miller. This is a picture of Jen.

He--I was life flighted out.

But I was told he [00:03:07] sat on that curb worried about what was going to happen to him. Drank water the entire time he was on the scene until they removed him and took him into custody, because he refused to prove his sobriety. He trains police officers for the San Marcos Police Department on how to conduct field sobriety tests. He trains them on DWI protocol. [00:03:37] He knew exactly what protocol was. He knew he would be taken into custody for the blood evidence that was within his body. He purposely drank as much water as he could and he

purposely never changed his mind during the period of time they were getting a blood search warrant to draw his blood--which, that process took over three hours.

And then at the end of that, he was successful because he knew [00:04:07] what he was doing, he weighs allegedly around 300 pounds so he knew exactly how much time he needed, how much water he needed to flush his system and he was successful in doing that. By the time they collected the blood evidence there was no alcohol in his system.

Now, the San Marcos Police Department almost--they've even tried through their inner office emails to leave out the element of alcohol as long--almost as if [00:04:37] it didn't exist, that they were proud that the tests showed up as zero. But they left out the part about--it was three hours later.

And it was in his cup holder in his truck.

They have pictures of it. There's evidence of it and there were beer salts with it. They didn't find it until about an hour into the investigation when the tow truck got there to upright his truck. He's sitting [00:05:07] on the curb worrying about him. I've already been life flighted out. Jennifer is still in my vehicle. They couldn't get her out. She died in that vehicle, but not immediately. It took some 40 minutes before they lost Jennifer. And he had the nerve to worry about himself at no point did he worry about Jennifer or show remorse or Jennifer's family, friends, and loved ones, or me. [00:05:37] He reacted as if he was concerned about how this was going to come down on him. Poor Pitiful him.

We had a memorial for Jen a year after we had that at City Hall in San Marcos, to draw attention to it and invited the media to show up. San Marcos Chief of Police sat in his car, I was told, for about 15 minutes until the television cameras showed [00:06:07] up and then he got up, sideswiped me and approached me and wanted to explain employment law to me and lied to my face on camera when he said, by the time he got here the 180 day clock had run out on his ability to effect any type of discipline on this officer. When, in fact, the hundred and eighty day clock had not run out, and he put him back to work before it did. [00:06:37] He didn't get here in San Marcos until November 16th. He called me on November 19th to tell me that he had made the decision to return Ryan Hartman to his job because he wasn't criminally prosecuted. There was a two-month investigation by the neighboring Lockhart Police Department.

They concluded criminal negligent homicide charges.

[00:07:08] Criminal negligent homicide charges. He should have immediately been terminated from the San Marcos police department at that point. My opinion, he should have been terminated the moment he chose not to cooperate and give blood evidence at the scene. If he had

been innocent. You or I, if we were in his place and had not been drinking, the first thing we would have done was prove our sobriety.

But this DA took [00:07:38] the packet given to him by the Lockhart Police Department, charging criminal negligent homicide--

KAMP: Can we clarify a little bit, because I know that the case is complicated. So, we have a San Marcos police officer. We have a Lockhart Police Department investigating, I assume because it was in Lockhart. But then, who was the DA that you were talking about?

WATTS: DA Weber out of Caldwell County initially would have [00:08:08] adjudicated it, but Jen's mother and I insisted that he recuse himself because he had previously worked with Ryan in San Marcos. And he knew his wife who is an attorney. Ryan's wife is an attorney, they all run in the same circles. So we were a little uncomfortable with him adjudicating the case. So he passed it over to DA Bryan Goertz in Bastrop. Come to find out, [00:08:38] you know, they trade cases when one has to recuse themselves, so they have a ongoing working relationship and I don't know why, I thought I would get justice. Again, I was naive. Our justice system is broken. This district attorney, I'm not even sure he reviewed all the evidence but I am quite sure--but I can't prove it because grand jury is sealed. And if a grand jury person comes forward, and tells me what they were [00:09:08] not told they can get fined or jailed. The police officer wasn't, but a grand jurist can. This DA said, on KXAN TV, he admitted that he saw this more as distracted driving and that's how he presented it to the Grand Jury. So I doubt, seriously--there's no doubt in my mind. He did not present it with the element of alcohol.

[00:09:38] He did not present the element of reckless driving. I don't think he even introduced the speed element. He simply said he was talking on the phone and ran the stop signs and killed someone. And he said, just because somebody dies, that doesn't make it criminal.

Well, I think it's criminal when you've got a packet handed to you from a two-month-long investigation that is saying [00:10:08] we can prove criminal negligent homicide. He didn't even try. In our legal system, he is supposed to be the one protecting the victims. The victims here were Jennifer Miller, and me. He was supposed to be our attorney.

He didn't do anything and I guarantee--and then he said, it had nothing to do with Ryan Hartman being a police officer. It had everything to do with Ryan Hart--Hartman being a police officer. There's no doubt in my mind [00:10:38] if this had happened to a member of Bryan Goertz's family, or someone he cared about, it would have been criminal negligent homicide. You know, there's evidence and the evidence packet where Hartman immediately hired some high-powered attorneys here in San Marcos. The Erwins. There's an email in that packet from Josh Erwin. He's drawing stars all around pushing his case that this is not criminal negligent homicide.

[00:11:08] Good for him. I couldn't even get a return phone call. I couldn't even get a victim statement entered into evidence. I didn't even get to weigh in on it. I made it clear I wanted to be highly involved. I wasn't considered at all, nobody asked me anything. As a matter of fact, they told me it wasn't going to Grand Jury that day. They go once a month and it wasn't going.

And then all of a sudden I guess San Marcos called [00:11:38] and wanted to know the disposition of their police officer. So all of a sudden he grabs the file and takes it to Grand Jury when he hadn't scheduled it to do that and they make a hurried phone call to me saying he changed his mind, he's taking it today.

What is that? We got no prior notice. None whatsoever. This is prosecutorial misconduct. This is absolutely an illusion of justice. Nothing that's happened in this case [00:12:08] has been anything but pro-police bias and an illusion of justice. Those grand jury members did not hear the whole story and under our system, they aren't required to. The Attorney General's office told me that a district attorney has full discretion on what evidence to show a grand jury and what evidence not to show them. He can withhold anything he wants to. So technically he can [00:12:38] walk them to whatever decision he wants in a case, and he wanted distracted driving. The only thing that has happened to Ryan Hartman has been, he got a ticket for running a stop sign.

There were two stop signs. He didn't even get two tickets. But I went to court to try to get the ticket for an open container on his driving record. I went to court to try to get a speeding ticket [00:13:08] on his driving record, I couldn't even get that done. The Municipal Court of Lockhart turned us down, turn me down. So I had my attorney do it the second time. Turned him down to saying, we don't write tickets after a no bill. They have covered for this police officer at every turn and then they wonder why the public does not trust law enforcement. I'm seeing it firsthand now.

I've always given law enforcement the benefit [00:13:38] of the doubt. And I'm not one that's going to quickly judge because I'm totally aware that I, on whatever subject you're talking about, may not have all the facts. There's always more to a story when you dig deep. So I'm one of those people that does not pass immediate judgment, you know, I I just think that that's wrong. But the Lockhart Police Department looked at this for two months and they called it, criminal negligent homicide without [00:14:08] a doubt. They had the facts and they presented it as such. The DA totally halted that, changed it to distracted driving. So this police officer has been let off the hook by our justice system. And the San Marcos Police Department has not held him accountable because they have their hands tied by employment law, which is a Civil Service Police Department, one of very few in Texas. I'm going to try to get a voter referendum [00:14:38] on the San Marcos ballot that would allow the citizens of San Marcos to vote that

civil service out and go back to a right-to-work state. I mean, they have a police chief who cannot hold his own officers accountable when they do wrong. You've got to ask a police Union, mother may I?

What? Again, it's an illusion. That's ridiculous.

KAMP: Pam, can we take [00:15:08] a minute to talk a little bit about Jen, and your relationship with her?

WATTS: It's going to get emotional.

KAMP: It's okay with me if it's okay with you. Totally up to you.

WATTS: I'll try. You know, we spent just eight months together, little over. We were introduced by a mutual friend, we had both fought that for two years. Amy wanted to introduce this two years earlier and I'm one [00:15:38] that--I don't do drama. I don't want to say I'm happily single, you know. But I've always been--I may not be totally happy but I'm not unhappy and I'm okay with that. I've got good family and good friends and but Amy didn't give up. She kept saying you guys are perfect for each other.

Jen had just gotten out of a 25-year relationship. And [00:16:08] you know, that's tough for anybody to spend that much time and it fail. So Jen was also reluctant but we both finally agreed to have dinner and I told Amy, only if I can fix it and y'all come to my house [laughter] and they did and I fixed dinner. I'm not sure anybody ate much, you know, but everybody was nervous and Amy tried to [00:16:38] leave halfway through the evening and I'm like, oh no, you got to stay for dessert. Both, both of us wanted to grab her with an umbrella and dragged her back in, but she wanted to leave us alone and--it didn't go well, you know, and Amy called me the next day and she said, well, what do you think? And I said, Amy, I don't know. I said she's been through a lot in life and I said, I don't know that she's ready, you know. And I said I can't tell you that [00:17:08] I can't even judge sense of humor, or personality. The woman was scared to death and she said, Pam, you were 90% yourself. You were--I could tell you were a little nervous, but I don't know who that woman was sitting in your living room, she said, but that wasn't Jennifer and I'm like, okay. She said, don't give up, you know, give it another shot. and I said, well maybe it was just the wrong environment, you know, I had home field advantage.

So I emailed [00:17:38] Jen and said, you know, you want to meet at the park and just sit and talk like normal people with no stress, you know, and so we met at the park in San Marcos and we just talked for a couple of hours, you know. And I had--I brought a picnic lunch and we enjoyed--that's one of the things I enjoy doing and it became one of the things that we shared and that she like to do is go to the park and and particularly, if there's a water [00:18:08] element,

feed the ducks and we got busted by the park rangers in Landa Park, for feeding ducks, and then the next thing, you know, we get busted for feeding deer. I didn't know you couldn't feed the animals, but you know, we enjoyed doing that. That was a stress relief thing I've always--when I was working, I used to always keep a big bag of deer corn in my car and would go to the park. And I just love feeding the animals, and Jen shared [00:18:38] that.

But we had a remarkable day. We went around to some of my favorite places and neither one of us wanted the day to end, and I think both of us knew from that point forward we were hooked, you know, and it really couldn't have been any more perfect. As a matter of fact, my neighbor next door, who needed to find a place to live because the owners of the house were going to want their house back, so he was going to have to move. Just [00:19:08] so Jen and I could be together and live together, he took over Jen's lease on the house she had and we talked her landlord into it. And he had to agree to sign a two-year lease instead of a one-year lease, but he's a good friend and he did that for us. So, you know, that time that we spent quarantined together, she basically lived with me from March and our best two days were probably our last [00:19:38] two days, but I didn't know it was going to be our last two days.

Jen loved gardening. And I don't have a green thumb and, you know, I'm the one that said, well, send me a picture, you know, she she thought every plant needed a different variety of dirt [laughter] and I'm like, I don't know what I'm looking for, you know, and I said can you send me a picture or what color is the bag? Can you give me a hint? You know? I'm at Home Depot walking around like, I don't know what I'm doing. And [00:20:09] so, she learned to talk in code that made sense to me, but she had been gardening, and I don't know. She colorized me. I don't know how many pots, spray pots, we sprayed and how many things that we changed the color--we even changed the color of the wicker furniture. And, you know, I didn't care, whatever made her happy because I even told her I said, if you can't be comfortable, here, I'll sell it, you know, and we can start over again because I can't imagine moving [00:20:39] into someone else's world and being comfortable. But she said, no, it's on the river and she, you know, we both loved it and I said, well, make it yours. There's nothing in here that I'm that attached to. I want you to be happy. And we had made decisions on Decor or what was going to go and what was going to stay and I told her what I liked and what I didn't really care either way about.

Our biggest obstacle was, she had a cat and I'm allergic but I made, you know, [00:21:09] that wasn't even an issue. There was one end of the house. I built a barn door to contain the cat because my concern was, I also have a dog, that's not catified. Actually, I have one and a half dogs, I have a Chihuahua and a lab and Rhodesian Ridgeback mix, and the Rhodesian. Ridgeback lab is not mine. It's a neighborhood dog that's at my house eighty percent of the time but the dog doesn't like cats. But anyway, we worked [00:21:39] it out. And, you know, everything was just so easy and it fits so well. But those last two days, I had told Jen I said, look, can you stop planting plants? Can we just go have some fun? That was fun to her, she's just like

my sister, she's got the green thumb and nature and beauty and plants and decorating. That was her jam.

And I said, can we go float the river? Can we do something that [00:22:09] you haven't done yet? And she said, yeah sure, you know, and we went and I didn't know how she was going to react because it's something she hadn't done. So we took the chair floats up to one of my neighbors, just a little, it was just a little half an hour float, she loved it, then what we got back in a half an hour. So I said, well, why don't we put the life vest on and her dog was a cocker spaniel named Edison and I said, let's take Edison and her face just [00:22:39] lit up and she's like, really because I had become Edison's pack leader. You know, I remember when we first met that she thought her dogs were heathens and I told her your dogs aren't the problem. I said that one-year-old--at that time--I said, He's in charge and he knows it. I said, but he's got so much anxiety because he doesn't know what he's supposed to be doing. And you're not telling him, I said they need [00:23:09] structure. They need a firm hand but Edison had kind of become my dog. And would listen to me but not Jen, but we were teaching Dog Whispering lessons.

And anyway, we put--I duct-taped a life vest--a toddler vest--on Edison and we went upstream, and jumped in again with just the vest on and she was snapping pictures and everything before we left and she was just totally elated that you know not only going tubing but now we're going [00:23:39] to go in the water and she didn't even know she had a water dog. That dog loved the water. He'd chase a stick as long as you throw it. And she never even knew that he was a water dog. And then the next day Wednesday we had decided, you know, I wanted her to get to know my friends a little better, she'd met them at the Christmas party and here and there, but not really [00:24:10] that much.

It's always hard when your friends are, you know, one of them was an ex, you know. And so the both of them were probably looking at each other with, you know, not knowing what to do, you know? And it was awkward and I wanted it not to because they are tremendous people. And so, anyway, we met one friend. She had suggested meeting at a--was actually a Mennonite restaurant. I don't even remember the town, but I thought [00:24:40] that was such a cool idea that's something we hadn't done. So, both of us were like, yeah, let's go do that. We were on a road trip and so we went and did that. And then there's Texan pie and restaurant in Hutto, Texas had become our favorite go-to place for a dessert that they have, that is hot apple pie with ice cream and a caramel bourbon sauce on top of it. So we were going to go there for dessert and I said let's see if Cheryl can meet us there [00:25:10] and Jen's looking at the phone and she said you're going to cause her--based on where she's currently at--to have to backtrack and then go back to where she's at. She said, why don't we just go to her, because she hasn't eaten lunch. And so we deviated, stopped and picked up some pastries for her to drop with her. And we met Cheryl for lunch while Cheryl ate, and we just hung out with her and talked and visited for 45

minutes [00:25:40] to an hour. And then we let her go on about her business and we went to the Texan Restaurant and Pie Company and then we started home.

And I didn't want the day to end, and I wanted to go into Lockhart, and introduce her to my river mom that had since moved away, you know. Her husband had died and she tried it for a couple of years out there without him, but she'd moved to Lockhart and I said, let's go meet Mama Dot, [00:26:10] you know, Mom Dot hasn't met you yet. And she had gotten a text message from Amazon that some George Jetson automatic cat litter box had been delivered that she had been waiting for that, I don't know if they sent a butler to empty the cat litter with it or you know, but it was something automated that she had always really wanted and had gotten and it was there. So instead of going into Lockhart we made [00:26:40] the fatal turn on the feeder road to the tollway. Tollway 130. And you know, weren't in a hurry. Wish I'd been going the speed limit. You know, you always second-guess everything but, I was driving slower. If I had been going faster maybe it wouldn't have happened. If I had got there, you [00:27:10] know, gone on by there quicker you know and you think about all those things but they're--that wasn't the way it went down.

And it's just hard. To see our criminal justice system so broken--and I've been raising Cain ever since, because I just cannot rest until we get some accountability. He thinks he gets to wear the uniform and just go back to work. A week after that [00:27:41] year reunion that we were doing the vigil, the remembrance event for Jen, that the police chief came up to me--

I guess it wasn't very comfortable the next day when that didn't go so well for the police chief. And I don't know if he said something to Mr. Hartman the next day at work, but I heard that he took some time off. He [00:28:11]--the kitchen got a little hot, so Mr. Hartman is running from accountability and I don't know if he's taken vacation time or leave of absence but this picture [gestures to photo of Ryan Hartman and his wife holding a large halibut fish] was taken six days after I lambasted his boss.

He's out halibut fishing on the coast of Alaska.

They've got financial means for him to do what I've offered for him to do, and [00:28:41] all I've ever asked for was him to resign his peace officer's license for life.

He nullified himself, he doesn't deserve to wear the badge, he doesn't deserve to stand with the men and women who really do know what serve and protect means and who don't go around driving around breaking the law that they expect other people to adhere to. It's not right that those officers have [00:29:11] to work with him. It's not right that they're put in that position, it's not right that the city of San Marcos leaders have to listen to me--I'm still talking about it 13 months later, but it's because nobody has done anything. He hasn't put his badge on the table and

that's all I ask of him. I know he can't bring Jen back. I know he didn't do it on purpose, but he was negligent in so many ways he has yet to show any remorse. He's out enjoying [00:29:41] life, living life, and me and Jen's mother cannot even lay her to rest. We haven't buried Jen. How do you say rest in peace? How do you do that?

You know, and as much as I've talked and as much as I put it out there, I'm not a techie person, I'm not a Facebook person, but I've asked everybody to share it on Facebook and tell Jen's story and still nothing has happened. I mean, I'm doing something every day in an effort [00:30:11] to get enough people to care. Is our society that cold that nobody has time for anybody else anymore. Nobody cares about whether our system is broken or not, these people that are out there telling their stories, they're hurting. We need each other. It's time for this society to come together as a human race and stop all the harsh language [00:30:41] that's been smacked back and forth in the name of politics. We're going to be on this planet for a very short time. We're going to come and go.

But we need to stick together and get through it as best we can and as positively as we can and we're not ever going to have true peace or know the meaning of life if we can't at least listen to one another, respect one [00:31:11] another, be able to conversate and understand. You don't have to agree, but what happened to agreeing to disagree? You know, this world and us as a people, we need to be better. We need to do better, you know, and I feel guilty for--my solution was just turn off the TV unplug. Create your own little happy bubble and Jen kind of had the same attitude. Neither one of us were particularly [00:31:41] political, we just wanted to be happy. Create our happiness bubble, do the things that made us smile.

And let everybody else fight it out.

I grew to realize that, that's not the answer, you know? That's not the answer. That did protect me in my world until June 10th.

But we're broken and we need to collectively [00:32:11] find a way to fix it and we start by caring. When somebody tells you something's wrong, the least you can do is listen. The mayor of San Marcos couldn't even bring herself to respond to Jen's mother who had just lost her only daughter, her only child at the hands of a San Marcos police officer. Chief Standridge and the city manager did nothing and they should have. And [00:32:41] they know they should have. There is nobody--I'm convinced--in the city leadership and within the Police Department that doesn't know that what happened was wrong.

But not one of them has stood up and said we should have done this.

We should have done this. I mean that's the very meaning of accountability, we all make mistakes. [00:33:11] But when you do, you're supposed to own them, you're supposed to admit that. You're supposed to have personal integrity. You're supposed to do the right thing, and not one member of leadership in the San Marcos City has done that. Not one is reached out.

I did talk with one city council member, Maxfield [00:33:41] Baker, who seems to have the right heart, and there's another one I think named, Alyssa that I've heard that also is of the mindset that some wrong has been done and they should have done something but nobody can do anything alone, [phone alarm rings] the entire city council, the entire [00:34:11] city of San Marcos needs to speak up together in one voice and something needs to happen. The only downside of that would be fear of a wrongful termination lawsuit from Hartman. They would not lose that. Right now, how are they going to litigate any DWI cases, or any alcohol related offenses in this city, or this county? How are they going to be able to [00:34:41] do that?

Because all of this information is public knowledge. It's covered by Brady--the Brady act, the Michael Morton act, I guess it's the Brady Doctrine--but it's going to be available to any and every defense attorney. That is going to hurt prosecution in all of those cases. I've made that abundantly clear. My lawyers made that abundantly clear and threw that out there very [00:35:11] early on. [Hays County District Attorney] Wes Mau I guess doesn't care.

KAMP: Pam, can we talk a little bit about the initial aftermath of the accident? Both what your injuries were and what your initial reaction was? I think you told me in the past that you were worried they were going to punish Ryan Hartman more severely than you thought was appropriate, right?

WATTS: You know, that just shows how naive I was.

[00:35:43] I feel as though that there's such a--you know, defund the police, and all the anti-police rhetoric that's out there. Well, anybody with common sense knows that we need the police, but we've got to find a way to alter police forces where they do serve and protect. You know, there's been so many cases out there that I've learned of [00:36:13] since this happened. You know, you can look up the Rusty incident¹ that happened with the chief of chiefs Chase Stapp back--I think it was in 1998 where a young college kid was shot and killed from my understanding over less than an ounce of marijuana. You know, at what point did a police department think it was a good idea in a college town to employ a criminal informant and put them on a college [00:36:43] campus asking them to go get marijuana for them. This kid didn't even take any money, it's my understanding, for the marijuana--less than an ounce--that he gave to the criminal informant but yet he ended up dead.

¹<https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/1999-11-05/74560/>

And then there's a blind man, that was arguing with his wife in a parking lot somewhere--not blind, deaf--and talking emphatically with his hands because they were arguing, but they were both deaf, [00:37:14] he got tased three times and I think ended up in the hospital. I mean, there's so many cases like that out there over and you start, once you plug in, you start to hear them over and over and over again that at some point there needs to be more oversight. There absolutely needs to be oversight on DAs offices. These DA's, basically one in every County across this country and they're an elected [00:37:44] official for God sakes. They're elected. They could be beholden to anybody that successfully got them into that office. They are very corruptible. Not saying they all are, but the possibility exists, because that's an elected official.

And they get to make all the rules. Why do we even have grand juries? If you can leave out evidence and tell them what you want them to know and leave out what you don't. I mean, [00:38:15] it's all a farce. It's all an illusion, and it needs to be changed. It needs to stop. And, you know, when I was a kid, you'd go in stores and on the typewriters, somebody would always practice and they'd say now is the time for all good men--I'll add women--to come to the aid of their country. Now is the time for people to plug back in. We've gotten so far off the mark.

[00:38:45] That there needs to be fundamental change across the board, and people need to start demanding it. And they need to start by listening to one another. You know, if we could find a way to get so many factions in the same room, lock the door, throw away the key. Don't even give them water until they find out that they have more in common than they think.

KAMP: Can we go back to--at the accident, you were airlifted out, right?

WATTS: Mm-hmm.

KAMP: And so, what happened? You were in the hospital? What were your injuries?

WATTS: [00:39:28] You know, that whole first two weeks is a bit of a blur. Particularly after my brother, I don't even know at what point I got my phone, but I do know at 8:16 that evening I texted Jen because I kept asking for her and they said, well, she might have gone to a different hospital. I didn't even know that they were, considering me a Jane Doe at the time. But [00:39:58] at 8:16 I texted Jen, Are you okay?

And I didn't get an answer.

My brother came in, so I'm confused with time when all of that happened but I do know at 8:16 I had my phone and I do know no one ever--no one was giving me answers about Jen and, [00:40:29] that she had died. My brother had to do that and one of my friends, that usually calls at night had called him while he was pacing the halls of the hospital and he said I don't know

how to tell her, I don't know who to call. And said, Janie can you help me? And it broke Janie's heart. He was so lost.

[00:40:59] So upset personally, you know, it was back when Covid was rampant and [sniffles]--sorry--they were pretty much throwing people out of the hospital as soon as they could get them out. I mean, I was released two days later and they don't tell you but concussion symptoms don't come on immediately. Everything's a blur and, you know, nothing [00:41:30]--it appears to register, but it doesn't register, you appear to converse, but you don't retain it and it's just really a strange thing. But all of my testing had to be done in follow-up because they wanted you out of there because of Covid. Because you're already at a weakened state and compromised and, you know, there was just great fear going on back then but if it hadn't been for the help of friends and family, I don't know.

I [00:42:00] couldn't even walk. Both knees were cracked. I have disc damage in three places in my spine and back. That's something I've got to manage for life, now. I had a severe concussion, mild traumatic brain injury. And I ended up with a staph infection in my elbow because I had like 25 stitches in [00:42:30] my in my face and another seven in my elbow and I got a staph infection from that. I almost immediately upon getting home got pneumonia, had to deal with that, had two broken ribs. [00:43:00] And I'm probably leaving things out because but it's just, you know, I had a my hope this whole side was [00:43:01] ot black and blue. Black from the seatbelt. I still face a surgery. We've got a soft tissue--I've got a soft tissue injury that they're watching and I'm dragging my feet on it because they say, there's no harm in waiting, but I'm eventually going to have to have surgery and have a calcified hematoma removed.

And I'm just not ready to do that yet if there's no harm in [00:43:31] waiting. But, you know, it just--I'm so focused on trying to get justice and trying to, I'm just a person who--it's a right and wrong thing. And this is wrong and I will fight for the principle of the thing. And I will fight for Jen 'til death, if need be. You know, I once told her--because she was a very emotional [00:44:01] person. She wrote in a journal and she had a lot of emotions that she needed to express and get out, but we were wired differently. And sometimes she would say things to me, and I would look at her and I would say, I don't know what to do with that. And she would say, I know, I know. You don't have to. Just listen. And I'm like, I can do that. And then I explained to her, I said, Jen, [00:44:31] I'm hard wired a little differently. I said, don't wait for words with me. I'm not one that's going to use them. I said too many people have hurt me and I'm single, have been single for a reason. I said, I'm not very trusting and it's very important to me that someone's words line up with their actions. So I try not to use words until I really, [00:45:01] really mean them. I said, but watch my actions. Watch what I'm willing to do for you. I said, that's how you'll know how much I care. I did eventually use words and I thank goodness. I had the opportunity to tell her that I loved her but those aren't words that I just throw out there, you know, too quickly. Because when I say it, I mean it. And I guess she knows now how much. But--[00:45:32] this is

one, I'll never get over. Because when people talk about soul mates--I waited my entire life to find this one. To find the one that I could commit to. The one who was who she said she was and Jennifer Miller was truly an angel on Earth and he removed her in such a negligent manner and has shown no remorse. Hasn't even apologized.

You know, [00:46:02] I tried, I tried to settle this. All he had to do was put his badge permanently on a table and go find something else to do for a living. His wife's an attorney. Her family has plenty. He could choose to do that but he chooses not to, which is just traumatizing me and Jen's family and everybody who cares about Jen. All I asked was for him not to be a police officer [00:46:32] anymore and pay the legal expenses and this could be over. This has never been about money for me. But he's to the point where I look forward--because at this point, January, 2020 to is not going to be that far away. That is the civil court date, January 31st of 2022. There's no way in hell I'm not going to face that man in court with what he's drug us through [00:47:02] in these 13 plus months. It's just truly unforgivable.

KAMP: You mentioned that he hasn't apologized. Seems like there hasn't really been any effort on the part of him or anybody else to apologize. I know we went to that event together and there was one female police officer who seemed sympathetic, but it seems [00:47:32] like, I don't know. Do you feel like there's been anybody within the government who's been more basic human towards you and more and more willing to say, like I'm sorry.

WATTS: No, I mean, there's been people--when I first started sitting out with my banner the first place I went was behind the police department, where the police officers park their personal cars. And I did that on purpose. [00:48:02] I wasn't trying to be that high profile, but I wanted to get my point across that I wasn't going to stand for this. And I did have a couple of officers walk over to me and I had a little fear of doing what I was doing. So I bought a body camera and as they approached, I definitely clicked it on. But I really believe they said what they said with heart. And they basically gave their condolences. And I don't think it was because [00:48:32] I turn the body camera on, you know, I know a lot of police officers. They're good and decent people. Like I said, he didn't do this on purpose, I know that. But what he's done since then has just been deplorable. And I just shake my head because I don't understand why he thinks he still deserves to wear the uniform. [00:49:02] Why he thinks he still deserves to stand in judgment of others and why he thinks I'm ever going to go away. Because I won't. Not while he is a police officer for anybody. It just can't end this way.

KAMP: Can you talk a little bit more about the signs? Because you've had them around at different locations. And you said that memorial was taken down?

WATTS: [00:49:32] Evidently there's a policy within TxDOT that they don't allow road signs, but I talked--I had to chase that down through different--through the city, through the county and

ended up with the SH 130. I guess that's a contractor to maintain the toll road, and--very nice gentleman that really brought me to tears when he told me that they still had it, that [00:50:02] they hadn't thrown it away, that it was, he had it in his office and he knew that I would be looking for it. And I went down that morning that I talked to him and actually took them some bakery items and he didn't want to take them. He said, you know, we know. He said, I'm familiar with the case he gave his condolences and was totally aware and he said, listen, here's a name of somebody at TxDOT, you know? Maybe you could get a [00:50:32] special waiver to put it up, but he said, they don't allow it. And then after talking to the guy at TxDOT, you know, I'm not a rule breaker and a lawbreaker, nothing, so I didn't want to push it. If that's their policy then I wanted to respect that because I am a respectful person full of integrity. And I put it up in the garden at home for Jen and I told her mother about [00:51:02] it and I said, you know, that way it can be revered. I said, I was having to go out to the location and weed eat it and I said, you know, I want it maintained and I feel better about it being at her home.

KAMP: Right.

WATTS: So that's all right.

KAMP: So with the sign, that's something that you put out at different places. The last time I saw it in the parking lot of the event.

WATTS: [00:51:33] I had been driving around in San Marcos. Like I said, the first time I told those officers look, I'm not aiming this at the entire police force, you know? I want one person to see it and know I want justice, I want accountability, and I'm not going anywhere.

KAMP: It's a pretty big sign.

WATTS: It's a pretty big sign, and I knew that they would tell Ryan, she's out there. And I [00:52:03] made sure I caught the change of shifts where many of them would see it, in hopes of putting peer pressure on him. Not much peer pressure has worked, but to get him to do the right thing and hold himself accountable, which I don't think I should have even had to ask.

KAMP: Yeah, absolutely.

WATTS: But then, when that didn't do anything, I started moving different places around town. [00:52:34] Then somebody--somebody thought there were ten signs. I said, No. It's just me. I said what I do is I stay in one location until two cop cars have passed me and then I move to another location until two cop cars pass me and I continue to do that until I quit for the day.

Then that's what began to get it noticed. Somebody had taken a picture of it and Mano [00:53:04] Amiga had gotten wind of it and really they had been talking to Jen's mother. Somebody--I don't do Facebook, but Jen's mother did and there were a few people that work with Jen that did. I, at that time, had the attitude that I didn't know who Mano Amiga was, but I knew it was very personal issue for me [00:53:34] and I wanted to move a mountain by myself. I wanted to do it. I was on a justice mission for Jen and it was very personal, and I didn't want to share it. But here we are, we're still here, you know? And thank goodness. Mano Amiga has been such a blessing. And so helpful, and I love all you guys that have been so supportive that have given me a voice.

[00:54:04] But Stephanie Gates was the one who wrote the first story and she met with me when my sign was at Target and we talked. And she put it out there and it began to grow but it hadn't grown nearly enough, you know? I'd hope that everybody would be touched by it and share it on Facebook or do Twitter or whatever other social media vehicles that are out there that I also do not do. [laughter] I tried today to figure out how to do the LinkedIn thing, because [00:54:34] I was I was looking up other social justice warriors and thinking about spreading it to Austin. But you can't do anything and contact anybody that's on any of these sites without joining them and I was a little unsuccessful in doing that. Facebook I tried to do that and they want you to take a picture of yourself and I just--I don't know. It just seems like it's too intrusive to me.

KAMP: Yeah, absolutely.

WATTS: it seems a little big brother-ish, you know, and [00:55:04] I don't want to be forced to do that and that's where I need other people's help in spreading the word, because I don't really want to give in to the social media culture. I just--I still am a very private person that wants to live in my bubble, you know, but willing to step out of it until I can get something done. But I don't know if I can ever go back [00:55:34] in the bubble and put sunglasses on and act like it's not there because that's part of the problem.

KAMP: Right.

WATTS: So I keep talking. I was on a radio station, I guess I did that Friday. We're doing this today. You know, I'll speak before city council tomorrow, Wednesday, we're going to City Hall. I mean, I keep it up in the air as much as I can, you know? But I'm really [00:56:04] A little saddened by it not growing in viral proportions, because this is so wrong.

KAMP: Yeah, absolutely. Um, let me see what time it is. [inaudible] not that bad. Jane, do you have any questions you want to ask?

JANE FIELD: No, I just--thank you for everything, for sharing and continuing.

WATTS: I will continue to share it every opportunity. Anybody that gives me [00:56:34] voice. I'm thanking y'all for giving me that opportunity because, you know, there's nothing I wouldn't do for Jen. And I'm just--I'm just perplexed. I mean, I'm grabbing at straws here, I just don't get it. I don't understand, there's not got to be much of a support group to keep him here in San Marcos beyond a Police Officers Union. And I know by this time, everybody's ashamed of what he's done. [00:57:04] He's a bad influence on the department, you know, it's just another huge brick thrown at law enforcement and I will continue to throw those bricks. Not because I want to, but because I have to. We'll dance for as long as we need to dance. I'm not going anywhere. I want accountability and I want justice. Everybody [00:57:34] screwed up here, nobody can back up what they did and feel good about it. Everybody should be absolutely ashamed of their behavior and their stance and they need to start standing up. They need to hold themselves accountable. People need to hold this community accountable. And they need to vote out a labor union. That's caused a lot of this to happen.

KAMP: Yeah, absolutely. Are there other things that you wanted to cover? [00:58:12] I feel like we covered a lot, but there might be stuff that I'm not thinking about.

WATTS: No, I think this case is so cut and dry. He killed somebody, and there's been no accountability. DA didn't care, Chief Stapp didn't care, city manager didn't care. The mayor didn't care. [00:58:43] City council hasn't done anything. And very few people in San Marcos have a problem with it. I'm just blown away that I'm still trying to get some accountability more than 13 months after Jen was killed in such a negligent matter. There's been stories, there's been radio, there's been TV. [00:59:14] And still, that badge is so precious to him. I guarantee you, Jen was more precious to me and a lot more people. And no way in hell, am I going to allow him to wear that badge. Can't do it. Just can't rest. And I'd like to be able to put Jennifer to rest sooner rather than later. [00:59:46] But I'm glad Ryan's out there having a good time, enjoying life. He's already put it behind him.

KAMP: Yeah, it's really callous.

WATTS: I very much look forward to seeing him January, 31st in court. Very much.

KAMP: Thank you so much for talking with us, Pam.

WATTS: Thank y'all,

KAMP: For answering all those questions. I know some of them were very personal, but I appreciate you being willing to do it.

WATTS: [01:00:24] I appreciate you allowing me to.

[INTERVIEW ENDS]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]