



Escaping the Arroyo

Joyce Nance

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On April 5, 1981, two college coeds were kidnapped from a residential street of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The next morning, the girls were found in a desolate mountain arroyo; one raped and murdered, the other savagely stabbed 33 times and left for dead. As fear engulfed the University of New Mexico's quiet campus, police had few clues to assist them in tracking down the vicious killer. This book is based on the true story of what happened that night in the Sandia Mountains, a shockingly brutal crime that changed the city of Albuquerque forever. It is a gritty tale of unspeakable violence and the relentless search for justice, but it is also the story of a young woman's incredible will to live ... and her life-long struggle to escape the legacy of that deadly arroyo.

Escaping the Arroyo Details

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From Reader Review Escaping the Arroyo for online ebook

Georgia Roybal says

This book and I were meant to be together. First of all, I won it as a First Reads book. That always makes me happy. Then, when I got it, the author Joyce Nance said I had a copy with some errors; would I like a cleaner copy? After 20 years of writing educational materials, a few small typos doesn't bother me much. Another reason the book and I were meant for each other is that I moved to New Mexico a few months after the murder and attempted murder happened. Not only that, the murder happened near the Carnuel Land Grant Hall. I have attended scores of meetings and events at the Land Grant Hall. Above all, I LOVE TRUE CRIME STORIES. Why, I don't know, but I do.

The book was very interesting, exciting and inspiring, demonstrating with Colene Bush what people can endure just to remain alive. The short sections which were labeled with times, dates, places were very helpful. I almost couldn't stand to stop reading the book for even a few minutes.

As a teacher, I always think how could this book be used in school? I think it would be a wonderful book for New Mexico high-schoolers to read and then discuss. Some topics might be: child abuse, how racism in its various forms affects people, the insanity defense as a plea, the will to live, were there things that could have prevented this happening. Maybe a research paper on other New Mexico young people murdered, such as Ricky Martinez and Karen Castañon while on a pilgrimage to Chimayo for Easter.

The one thing I would like to see added as an appendix would be a tribute to Julie Jackson and Colene Bush.

Kudos to you, Joyce, for a wonderful book. I only hope someday you can write a similar book about the three teens Kevin Shirley, Matthew Hunt and Luis Garcia murdered in the East Mountains in 1999.

Ellie says

This is the gripping story of a young woman victimized in a vicious attack that left her best friend dead and her own life changed in ways she would never have chosen. Colene Bush was stabbed 33 times, her throat slashed, and yet she climbed up two embankments and across three highway lanes until she was seen and saved. Eventually, her attacker was caught (he turned himself in), tried and found guilty.

The writing in the book is serviceable and the story of the abduction powerful. The trial is less so but the most interesting, in many ways, part is the end in which Colene's efforts to overcome what happened to her are documented. Sadly, this young woman who overcame so much was not able to create a new life--nor have others supported her in so doing. Stunningly, she is often penalized for being the victim while her attacker had his death sentence commuted and went on to marry while in jail and father four children.

This book is well worth reading and I hope someday Jolene Bush writes her own accounting as a complement to this one.

Lady ♥ Belleza says

Forced to review

I freaking hate! Being forced to review books here. I much prefer reviewing books on GR orl my blog. Fork u amazon!

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Drawing on court documents, interviews, five years of research and Colene Bush's first hand account, Escaping the Arroyo combines fact with considered conjecture to create a compelling account of an unspeakable crime.

Escaping the Arroyo is based on the tragic true story of college coeds, Julie Jackson and Colene Bush who were kidnapped at knife point by Michael Guzman from Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1981. Nineteen year old Julie was raped and murdered while twenty year old Colene was stabbed 33 times and left for dead by her callous attacker. Exhibiting an extraordinary instinct for survival, Colene crawled more than 150ft, negotiating two steep embankments, in search of help and survived to identify the young man who nearly destroyed her.

The book begins with a harrowing account of the moment Colene Bush was discovered, bloody and barely breathing, on the side of the I-40 by two young men who glimpsed her pale, partially nude body in the glare of their headlights.

The story then shifts to illustrate the personal histories of Michael Guzman, Julie Jackson and Colene Bush in short vignettes. I found this a little disorientating initially, often only two or three pages in length and the perspective identified by date and place rather than name, I found the changes abrupt but eventually a rhythm emerged, leading to the moment the lives of Michael, Julie and Colene collide.

The next section of the book covers the trial of Michael Guzman, who was sentenced to death for the murder of Julie and the attempted murder of Colene, despite his attempt at an insanity defense.

But for Colene, and Julie's fiance, James, Guzman's conviction was little comfort as they tried to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives.

The story of Escaping The Arroyo is compelling though the writing could do with a little more polish. I felt instances of awkward syntax and the intrusion of the authorial voice interrupted the flow of the narrative at times.

While I think Nance covers the case well, I would have liked to know a bit more about Colene's life post attack. It can be inferred that Colene struggled badly after her experience but Nance only relates incidents, such as the inexplicable discrimination against Colene by the police and paramedic training institutions, without sharing any real insight into why they occurred.

A tribute to the victims of a vicious killer, Escaping the Arroyo is a fascinating account of a terrible crime and its aftermath, and it is a story I am glad Joyce Nance decided to tell. To Colene Bush, I extend my sympathy and my heartfelt admiration for her incredible bravery.

Charlene says

True story, great read, very fast, and personal. Made you feel like you were right there with her through everything. I would recommend this book to others.

Joan says

A True Story

Two young men on a trip found a half nude girl bleeding to death on highway I-40 east of Albuquerque near Tijeras canyon. Because she felt so cold, the men wrapped her in their heavy sleeping bag and then attempted to flag down someone for help. This was before the days of cellphones. Finally a trucker stopped and radioed on his CB to other truckers until one said he could call 911. The medics finding the girl covered with multiple stab wounds and a very faint pulse quickly loaded her onto a gurney, hooked her up to an IV and took off for the Presbyterian Hospital. A trauma team awaited their patient. After ER treatments to slow down the blood loss, she spent several hours in surgery while her wounds were sewed up and pints of blood were pumped into her.

The story then flashes back to a woman named Linda with a two year old son who perpetually beat on him because he reminded her of her ex whom she hated and for so long as her son Michael Guzman resided with her, this is the environment in which he lived, which caused him to retaliate in kind whenever he could. As a teenager he attempted to commit suicide off of a bridge because his mother said not to do it at home and mess up her house. Mike was just a little older than Colene Bush and Julie when they were attending the University of New Mexico. Mike had a girlfriend Monica whom he had impregnated. They lived together and Mike worked in a restaurant washing dishes. Mike had a volatile temper and became violent easily. Most of his co-workers stayed out of his way.

The story then flashed back to Colene Bush as a child who loved horses and her being in the school band in the eighth grade. Colene was an extremely good athlete and worked hard at pushing herself and getting stronger and faster all of the time. She played volleyball, track and basketball, the last being her favorite. When she started at the University of New Mexico, she met short, blond beautiful Julie.

Because of Mike's temperament and being Mexican, whites often called him names or treated him badly, which was like lighting a fuse, and especially one blond white girl called him names, which he never forgot. In time, Mike grabbed a woman Gwen when she was locking her car and forced her with a screwdriver to her throat to the side of his truck, threatening to kill her. When she wanted to know what he wanted, he said just to talk and when she told him her son was a captain in the police force, he eventually let her go, complaining that no one wanted to talk to him.

Mike saw a young blond-haired, blue-eyed white girl near UNM whom he wanted. He kept driving by the school trying to see her. He was still mad about the blond white girl who had insulted him prior and awhile back. He wanted to get back at all those bitches. Colene and Julie both moved out of the dorms, Julie now living with her boyfriend James. One night Julie went to Colene's house so they could walk down to the Frontier Restaurant across from the UNM for a bite. This particular day Mike really experienced a bad time

by whites at his place of work and he quit. Feeling particularly upset and intent on finding this blond white girl, he spotted Julie and Colene in the restaurant. He parked and waited. When the girls were walking home, this man in a dark heavy coat walked towards them and grabbed both girls tightly around their neck. Towering more than a foot over them, he had a knife blade at Julie's throat. He claimed he was just lonely and wanted to talk. He forced the girls into his parked car and thus began an evening of terror, torture and murder.

The author spent hours researching this story, which was in the newspapers for months. She interviewed people, listened to all of the court trial tapes and read the newspapers. The effects of this night lasted for forty years and all of this is included in this book. There are many facets of this story, which open up the personalities and psyches of the many personalities. Although the author describes the viciousness of this man, it is not so dramatized as to make it difficult for the reader to absorb. This story is well written and worth reading. I recommend it.

Vicki Willis says

This was a horrific tale of true crime. It is amazing anyone could have the will to live through this kind of attack. The book was very fast paced and had short chapters. It did tend to jump around from person to person and place to place in the beginning which made it hard to figure out what was going on. It was very descriptive and graphic which really made me feel for the victims in this crime. The book moved quickly through the crime, the trial and the punishment, but still had enough detail to put the reader at the scene. A good read for lovers of true crime.

William says

Good book. As a sociologist, I found it a wonderful insight into the criminal tendencies of an individual as well as the victim. It is too often that we focus on the crime and the criminal and not the victim. This book tells the story of the crime but more importantly the victim. Overall a good read. A great start for an author I personally hope to see more out of in the future.

Laura says

Most of this didn't seem too much like a book to me. It seems like a recounting of actual events. Some of it was tough to get through and not because it was gory. I actually think that maybe the part about the stabbings and killings should have affected me more, but what really got to me was the last chapter about what happened after the Guzman's trial. Julie's fiance got no help and just turned in on himself. Colene was outcast and picked on by members of the community. She tried to do something purposeful with her life and just kept getting shut down in all she tried to do. I understand that the Police Academy couldn't cut her any slack, but as far as her EMT training was going she seemed to be doing well. Then she has an off day and they drag her to a psych hospital for an evaluation. Also, the diagram of Colene's cuts sickened me a little because I could just see what was done to her.

The other really interesting thing is that some of this (the latter parts where Guzman tried to get out on bail) happened while I lived in Albuquerque and I don't remember hearing anything about it. Yes it was 30 years

or so after the actual incident, but I feel like something that big in the UNM area where I was near, I would have heard something about it.

This quote was near the end of the book. "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome." It does show Colene embracing the life she had now, even though she was working in retail. Though I admit, if I were her, I wouldn't feel successful either. I almost feel that if this incident happened today she would almost be given a job and given more credit for picking up where she left off. Trying to get back into basketball. Graduating, going to the Police Academy, taking EMT classes. For a person who went through what she did I feel she deserved a little more.

The book talks through each of the individuals so the reader gets a sense of them. I do believe that some of this was made up, but it is based on facts. It then goes through the kidnapping of Colene and Julie and then through Colene's physical healing, the capture of Guzman, his 3 confessions (and then non-confessions, since he seemed to try to take things back) the trial and his guilty on all counts verdict. It then talks about the after math. How he was sentenced to death, but then the governor at the time, Toney something, didn't believe in the death penalty and then Guzman became a lifer. After 30 years he could apply for an appeal and he also tried habeus corpus. He somehow, got married 4 times and divorced while in prison, he also fathered 4 children. He got a prison tattoo of an angelic scene and his victim's names on his back. It was basically for show.

His life was threatened by other inmates so he was moved to several correctional facilities. He was then taken down by 15 inmates and was in a coma, however he did eventually heal. As far as I could find out, he is still alive today. All these appeals hurt Colene more and she has pushed for NM laws to be changed regarding them.

I was happy to learn at the end of the book that Colene reconnected with James, Julie's fiance. I always wondered why they didn't stick together from that terrible day on. They both roughly knew what the other was feeling, but they went different ways. Glad to know they came back together.

Sboysen says

Interesting account of a horrific crime and a sad tale of the aftermath. However, I did not like the writing style and the author did not seem to be able to decide on a documentary-style or novel. It read almost like a police report at times and at others like amateur fiction with a smattering of bad metaphors.

Tammy Caceres says

The true story is gripping, but the writing wasn't up to it. Additionally, the book is riddled with typos that should be corrected. The aftermath story of Colene's life for the 30 plus years since the attempt on her life is glossed over. It doesn't make much sense because crucial details were left out. This is a letdown because after reading what she went through you come to care about her story. I have read much better true crime authors.

Karen says

I enjoyed this book as I live in the area where everything took place. What happened to those women was awful and I can't believe that guy wasn't put to death.

Samantha says

Escaping the Arroyo is based on a true crime committed in 1981 and is a dramatization of events that occurred before, during and after the crime. This story is told in four parts and focuses on the surviving victim. Escaping the Arroyo was a bland read for me. I'm usually interested in any true crime book. This one was just tedious and I couldn't wait to be done with it. I downloaded this onto my Kindle a while ago and recently decided to read it. I just have to say that I was not satisfied. The Kindle format punctuation of this book was just terrible. Misspelling of character names, missing words, and added words that were not needed. There was some frustration while reading I must say! About the only interesting part in the book that did grab my attention was the actual crime taking place. I'm not sure how the author gained that much detailed information but it was as if the killer Guzman was writing the book himself. I do have to say Colene Bush is a very strong women and I applaud her strength to have survived that terrible ordeal. If you're up for reading any true crime maybe give it a shot because it may be your cup of tea. But for me I would not recommend anyone to hurry and read this!

Lynda Kelly says

This was an amazing and shocking true story but was marred by the amount of mistakes through it, many of them very sloppy indeed which spoilt it. I do hope she'll revise all the errors and tidy it up. It doesn't seem respectful putting it out like this.....

Jody foster is spelt Jodie for starters and the dates were wrong in a couple of places stating it was April 6th 1981 when it was still the 5th. That was pretty careless, I thought. Then 1981 ended up written as 198 !! The most common mistakes were words missed out of sentences. This was highly annoying-like was/of/the/a/to.....all the way through the book. There were also quite a lot of apostrophes misused, too. Wherewithal was spelt as where-with-all, there was a random n in front of Monica's name in one place and a random fullstop put in front of Suddenly, driver was used in the same sentence twice needlessly and the same in another with him being repeated. This was a true gem—"Do theses photographs essentially depict...." as was a mention of Julie being found at 8.45pm when it was in the morning !! Later on Colene was spelt as Colleen twice which was pretty bad as well. WHY weren't these mistakes spotted ?

I had to admire Colene's sheer tenacity in managing to survive the horrendous attack on her. She totally saved her own life. I know I'd have probably been happier to curl up right where I was attacked. She was amazing. It upset me how her life turned out and the crappy breaks she had in life after such a promising start and of course the perpetrator was living it large in prison. It's so horribly unjust. I was shocked he was given permission to leave the courtroom at certain junctures because hearing his confessions upset him.....amazing. I did feel for him with the rotten life he had with his delightful mother Linda though that in no way gave him leeway to commit the atrocities he did.

I was never quite certain whether Julie had been raped as it didn't seem to be confirmed by what we were told. I'll need to Google Michael to see what happened to him as we weren't really told this, either.

I hope both James and Colene are doing OK now.....both their lives were irrevocably affected through no fault of their own which is terribly sad.

Bettye McKee says**A terrible, tragic story**

Two University of New Mexico students, Julie Jackson and Colene Bush were kidnapped off the street, forced at knifepoint into a car, and driven to a secluded place where they were stabbed.

This is a story of crime and death but also one of courage and survival. The sheer determination to live exhibited by one of the victims was nothing short of awe-inspiring.

If I had proofread this book, I would have made 58 corrections.
