



## Slaughtergate

### A Different Kind of Murder (But Murder Nonetheless)

-- by Steven Long

The victim stood trapped in a steel box as the assailant stood above repeatedly stabbing her in the back. He was aiming to sever the spinal cord but continued to miss. Finally, on the 13th thrust of the stiletto like knife she dropped to her knees and lay on the concrete floor, her spine destroyed, but her mind very much alive. A chain was wrapped around her numb legs and she was hoisted head down as she saw a sharp knife come toward her and felt the slice into her carotid artery. Finally, mercifully, she lost consciousness as her four feet were chopped from her body.

This murder was unusual because it was documented by a news photographer from a Texas newspaper. You see, she and a reporter had penetrated the bloody halls of a slaughterhouse in Juarez, Mexico. The story by San Antonio Express News reporter Lisa Sandburg has stunned the nation, and perhaps will finally persuade Congress to move to pass an act that will finally end this horror. The story broke simultaneously also in the Houston Chronicle.

The Mexican abattoir, and another in Canada, has been busy since equine slaughter was finally outlawed by the legislatures of Texas and Illinois, and the laws banning the killing of horses for human consumption were upheld in two federal appellate courts.

America has never had a hunger for horse meat, yet it is considered a pricy delicacy in parts of Europe and Japan. Years ago, two foreign owned companies saw an opportunity and opened slaughterhouses in Fort Worth and Kaufman, Texas, and also in DeKalb, Illinois. For years,

despite protests from local residents, the killing of horses took place in these locations to the tune of 100,000 per year until the two Texas plants were shut down late last year, and the Illinois kill was closed a couple of months back.

And make no mistake about it; the method of killing a horse in America was no less painful, cruel, and clumsy than in the foreign slaughterhouses. It was just mechanized. The U.S. plants used what is called a captive bolt gun. With this device, a rod was discharged with the idea of hitting the head sufficient enough to stun the animal who was about to meet its maker and be transformed from a living beautiful creature to red meat displayed in a foreign butcher shop.

But the captive bolt missed its mark as often as not and the horses endured unspeakable suffering until they were finally subdued by a lucky strike. As in Mexico, horses were hoisted by one leg into the air, their throat slashed, and they were dismembered – as they bled to death.

The killing of horses for their meat is big business. The industry would have you believe that only old, broken, frail, and useless horses go to slaughter. That is the big lie. Fat, healthy, horses are bought at auctions across the land not because they are useless and old, but because they are healthy and filled with meat. Most often, their owners take them to the auction hoping that the horse they have loved for years will go to another adoring home to be used for wholesome recreation.

Recently I was sent a chilling photograph. It showed the carcasses of horses inside a kill plant hoisted in the process line. Below, their hooves had just been severed. In the foreground was a hoof with a horseshoe on it. That horse was never meant for slaughter. It had been cared for by a farrier in the past six weeks (the proscribed period for shoeing a horse). Its owner had paid the farrier at least \$80 to trim and shoe the animal. The horse clearly had gone to auction, its owner hoping it would be sold into a good life as a work horse at worst, or as a pleasure horse which was more likely.

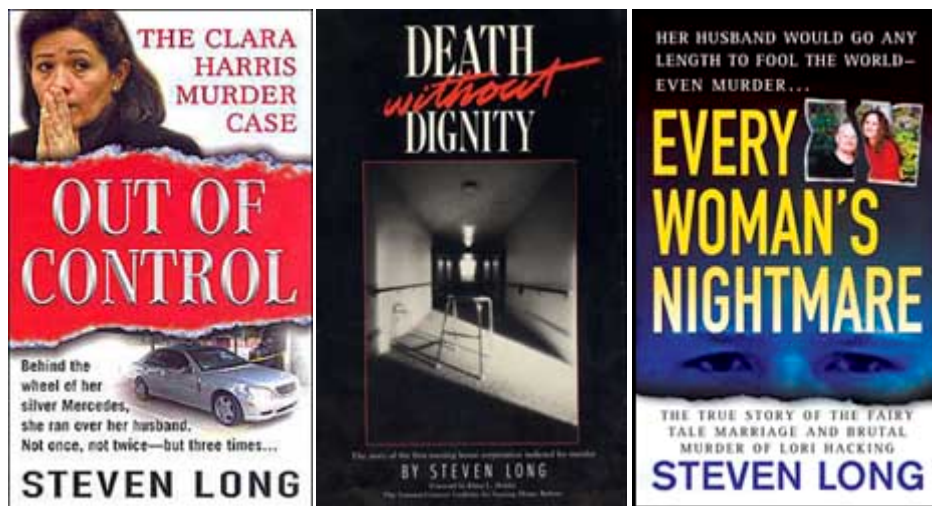
Instead, the highest bidder was the "killer buyer," a bottom feeder in the horse industry. From that point on, the horse knew nothing but misery. At auction's end, it was loaded on huge crowded trailer, taken to a feed lot likely hundreds of miles away, and then shipped on a cattle truck with ceilings built for low slung cattle. From there, the horse was again shipped hundreds of miles to the slaughter plant.

The cruelty which goes on 24/7 in this business is unspeakable.

Congress now has before it the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. It will not only outlaw slaughter from the federal level, it will also make illegal the transport of horses to slaughter, including transport to plants currently operating in Mexico and Canada.

Until that happens, horses will still be stabbed to death, be hoisted by their feet in the air, their throats slashed, and then be bled to death as their bodies are cut apart while still living. If this happened to humans it would make the horrors of Auschwitz look merciful.

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