

April Wilkens Bio

On April 25th, 1970, April Fitchue was born in Kellyville, Oklahoma. She attended school in Kellyville, with a small stint at Monte Casino in Tulsa. April received her Bachelor of Science at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma where she studied dietetics. Then April completed the accelerated graduate Prosthetics program at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1990, she met and married Eric Wilkens, son of Roy Wilkens who was the CEO of WilTel Communications (later Williams Company). They had a son, Hunter. April was busy doing her studies in Chicago while Eric completed his undergraduate degree in Stillwater. The long distance nature of their relationship began to wear on them. April and Eric divorced amicably in 1993 and she had custody of Hunter during the weeks and every other weekend. She was a prosthetist at Snyder Orthotics. There was a brief period when she went to work as the Director of Prosthetics at Sabolich Orthotics in Florida so that she could learn the new prosthetics technologies.

Ultimately she came back to manage her family's clinic. In 1994, she took over ownership of the clinic which had been in operation since the 1930s. She was designing and manufacturing prosthetics for clients with a wide range of needs. Under April's leadership, services were expanded to include myoelectric arms, immediate postoperative rigid dressings and prostheses, and the addition of a second satellite center, located north of Harrison, Arkansas.

In 1995, April met Terry Carlton at Don Carlton Acura of Tulsa while shopping for a car. The two became engaged within three months. Terry would go on to take April on several lavish trips abroad and the two were set to marry in April 1996. After the engagement, things seemed to change with Terry. April broke off the engagement. During the years of 1996-1998, Terry perpetrated brutal and horrific abuse, stalking, and sexual assault on April. The abuse led April to self-medicate with drugs. She was committed to Parkside hospital in March and April of 1998 by the Tulsa Police Department.

On April 28th, 1998 April fatally shot Terry in self defense after a harrowing night of abuse and sexual assault. Terry had told April several times he was going to kill her. She was able to hide the gun in a back pocket of her vest so that Terry would not use it on her. When he turned to lunge at her she fired. "There was no choice," she testified.

District attorney Tim Harris tried April's case before a jury in April of 1999. His co-counsel was Rebecca Nightengale, a current district court judge in Tulsa County. After a two week trial, April was sentenced to LIFE for premeditated malice aforethought murder.

April was transferred to Mable Bassett Correctional center where she has been ever since. She has completed a number of programs including dog training. Most recently she used her nutrition background to design a nutritional and exercise bootcamp for the women in prison. In her first cohort, the women lost over a hundred pounds combined. The warden and other Oklahoma Department of Corrections employees have asked April to recreate her program at other facilities.

April continues to remain hopeful that justice will be served. She believes that the true story that comes from this tragedy is other women coming together to lift each other up.