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# Universal City couple recount daughter's passions

BY JEFF B. FLINN  
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Kristine Luken, whose parents are Universal City residents, was killed Dec. 18 in a brutal attack in Israel, where she was hiking with a colleague. Photo courtesy of Lary Luken

Kristine Luken had "the happy gene" in the Luken family, never at a loss for words — or laughs — when growing up alongside her twin sister, Kathleen.

"When young, they were always laughing and giggling," stepmother Meg Luken said on Christmas Eve, from the Universal City home she shares with her husband Larry Luken, father of the twins and their older brother, Dean. "They had each other, they always talked; Kristine always had her sister to talk to."

The two played soccer together, attended George Mason University together, traveled to Italy and Greece together.

Kristine loved the outdoors, as scenes of hiking and camping, riding horses and walking beaches,

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dominate the dozens of digital photos Mr. Luken has stored in his computer. About the only indoor scenes capture Kristine in a stunning bridesmaid's outfit, when she joyfully served as maid of honor for Kathleen's Jan. 16, 2010 wedding.

"She loved the outdoors," Mrs. Luken said. "Kristine loved to ride, and she probably walked three to four miles a day, at least 2½ miles through the English countryside in snow, mud and muck. But that didn't stop her."

This weekend, however, Larry, Meg, Kathleen, Dean and other family members and friends will gather for a memorial service in Virginia to say their final goodbyes to Kristine, 44, who died Dec. 18 — stabbed to death while hiking in the woods outside Jerusalem in Israel. A private burial is planned in a small town in West Virginia.

Kristine and friend [Kaye Susan Wilson](#), 46, a naturalized Israeli citizen from England, were hiking in the Mata Forest about 12 miles southwest of Jerusalem when they were approached by two Hebrew-speaking men, who asked them for water. The two women tried to walk away but were suddenly and viciously attacked by the men, who bound them and stabbed them repeatedly.

Wilson — who told authorities one man removed her Star of David before stabbing her directly where it touched her skin — said she "played dead" long enough to survive the assault. She was admitted to an Israeli hospital, where officials said she was to remain for several days, recuperating from her wounds.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities announced Dec. 22 the arrest of two Arab men for the attacks and Kristine's murder and have since kept a media blackout on further news of the event.

The arrests come as little relief for the Lukens, who are trying to make the best of a traumatic situation that occurred at such an inopportune time, at the Christmas holiday.

Mr. Luken said Wilson had just finished a study tour and had the day off, and Kristine took advantage of a 3-or-4-day Christmas holiday to be with Wilson and hike in the Israeli wilderness.

"We knew she wanted to get back there," Mr. Luken said. "This trip had nothing to do with anything, except friendship, hiking and recreation, and another chance to be in a country she had come to love."

The world seemed Kristine's backyard, as her father's military duties required him to travel, which became a foundation for her life. The Lukens recounted hiking trips in the mountains of Taiwan during previous military duty that the girls immensely enjoyed.

Mr. Luken retired from the [Defense Intelligence Agency](#) in 1982 while living in Virginia. The twins later graduated from high school in Virginia and enrolled at George Mason University, about the time Larry and Meg decided to move to Universal City.

The Lukens are a bit of world travelers themselves, having traveled to China, Mongolia, Cambodia, New Zealand, Mrs. Luken's native Australia, Central Asia, even Antarctica. As with Kristine, the Lukens pursue and enjoy the humanistic side of life: "We prefer to make a light footprint in the world," Mrs. Luken added.

Kristine worked for the [Department of Education](#) in Virginia for 15 years. A deeply religious woman, she embarked on a 2007 study tour in Israel that appealed to the deeper aspects of her religious conviction, Mr. Luken said.

"She wanted to work internationally, and it ended up bringing the travel and the religious aspects together," he said. "There's a lot of history in that area; she could practically walk the Bible."

Mrs. Luken said Kristine "liked the lifestyles, the simplicity; it all appealed to her."

At one point, Kristine wanted to take a 10-day trip to Israel, and had asked the Department of Education for a leave, in order to accommodate the trip. "When they didn't grant it, she quit her job there," Mr. Luken said, adding that she was a GS-13 at the time.

Kristine later went to work at Patrick Henry College in January 2009 as assistant director for the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Initiatives](#).

"She kept trying to figure out how to get back (to Israel)," Mr. Luken said.

While taking a six-week intensive Hebrew class, Kristine met some people from the United

Kingdom who were involved with an evangelical [Christian organization](#), CMJ, or Church's Ministry among Jewish people.

"She kept working the process, and they finally offered her a job," Mr. Luken said. "It took her almost a year to get into England. But she was determined, very determined."

So, in September 2009 she left [Patrick Henry College for Britain](#).

"She sold everything," Mrs. Luken said. "She had many antiques, she had nice 'stuff,' but she gave it all up" and sold all of her belongings to follow her dream of working for CMJ.

"The U.K. was literally a steppingstone for her," Mr. Luken said. "She had been on several trips while she was there. On one tour, to Poland, she had met Kaye (Wilson)," who was with Kristine when they were attacked.

Wilson was a senior tour guide with Shoresh Study Tours of Israel, which offers study tours of the Holy Land and parts of Europe. CMJ guides "are committed Christians who will explore with you the Jewish roots of the Christian faith," according to the CMJ website.

"Kaye was kind of Kristine's mentor, showing her the ropes," Mr. Luken said. "They had another trip planned in April, and (Kristine) was going to be in charge of the tours."

A press release on the CMJ website says Kristine "had just taken on responsibility for Shoresh Tours, a CMJ company that organizes tours to Israel. Kaye Wilson, who is the senior tour guide for Shoresh, was a close personal friend of Kristine's as well as a colleague and her visit to Israel was for both."

CMJ plans a Jan. 12 memorial service for Kristine at Holy Trinity Church in Southwell, Nottinghamshire.

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