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"Maura Murray Family, Friends Say State Police Lied"

Gary E. Lindsley

Family and friends of a missing 22-year-old University of Massachusetts at Amherst nursing student say New Hampshire State Police are misinforming the public.

"You don't try to provide spin unless you are trying to cover something up," said Sharon Rausch, mother of Maura Murray's boyfriend, Billy Rausch of Fort Sill, Okla.

Murray has not been seen since she was involved in a minor one-car accident Feb. 9 on dark, and curvy Route 112 in Haverhill, N.H. "They are a bunch of liars," Rausch said. "I am at the point the only people I am worried about offending are Billy and Fred."

Fred is Fred Murray, Maura's father. Murray and Rausch are upset about comments made this week by New Hampshire State Police Troop F commander Lt. John Scarinza. Scarinza pointed to a book by Nicholas Howe, "Not Without Peril," as a possible source of why Maura disappeared. The book was among items found in her car.

In the book, there are stories about tragedies and rescues in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, areas in which Maura and her father had hiked. Scarinza has said Murray told police his daughter was suicidal.

However, the first mention of Maura being suicidal was in a press release issued by Haverhill Police Chief Jeff Williams two days after Maura's car accident and disappearance.

Murray says he never told police his daughter was suicidal.

"I want to set the record straight," he said. "Scarinza is using (Howe's book) to reinforce his suicide theory. It's nothing like that.

"Maura liked the book," he said. "She was making her way through it. The reason she liked the book was because she likes several different areas in the White Mountains. There are all kinds of landmarks. That's all it was."

Although he is upset about Scarinza's comments, Murray isn't surprised.

"If he goes with the suicide theory, that means nothing happened on his turf and during his watch," Murray said. "However, when you have a bad guy (involved), it's in (Scarinza's) back yard and he can't solve it."

"He's pushing it hard," he continued. "He's to the point he's making things up."

Rausch, equally upset with Scarinza's comments, says, "It's pretty pathetic that 41/2 months later, the state police want to secure the evidence."

She says it's comparable to the state police not searching for Maura until 36 hours after she disappeared. "They never did a forensics study," Rausch said. "And Lt. Scarinza is providing a lot of misinformation to the public - including that she ran away to a new life; she froze to death; she committed suicide."

"When I lay awake at night," she continued, "I wonder how well Lt. Scarinza is sleeping." And Rausch is adamant when she says she never told Scarinza about "Not Without Peril." "That angers me because this is just another thing that is a lie," she said.

"Why didn't he ask me what that meant?"

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Rausch was referring to Maura saying the book was her favorite.

"She told me (the White Mountains are) a favorite place she likes to go," she said, adding Maura told her, "And most of all it's my favorite place on earth." Scarinza could not be reached for comment Friday afternoon."