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Paul LaRosa and his Lace Curtain

By Richard Leader

Self-avowed antifeminists are losers even in the eyes of other men. They are seen as desperate souls, unable to maintain the control over their own lives—and families—that other males seem to manage without resorting to sappy group-therapy sessions and pseudo-politicking, all under the guise of men's or father's rights. Patriarchy is a union shop by birth; sending away for a membership card is just tacky. These men are unable to comprehend why their whining is so often excluded from the mainstream media. They see a vast radical feminist conspiracy of editors and publishers arrayed against them, utterly unwilling to promote a male point-of-view. In their myopia they miss the obvious fact that men as a class benefit far more from the elevation of that particular viewpoint into "objectivity" itself, the addition of "male" in that case would only serve as a liability—to all but a select few losers, anyway, men obsessed with cloning feminist philosophy into their own doppelganger-movement. This conspiracy was even given a name: the Lace Curtain. A funhouse mirror interpretation of the Glass Ceiling, the designation was popularized by antifeminist notables such as Warren Farrell, a man who once wrote on the benefits of incest for *Penthouse* magazine.

The media abhors markedly antifeminist material not for its content but for its pathetic display of vulnerability: for all of its bluster there remains a musky scent of fear and anxiety. Thus it is men who are ignorant of their misogyny, secure enough in their privileged positions of "nice guys," who are able to perpetrate some of the most virulent coups when it comes to spreading patriarchal propaganda. One such man is Paul LaRosa. A 16 year veteran of the *New York Daily News*, he moved on in 1990 to CBS News, working as a producer for the show *48 Hours*. It was through his position there that LaRosa was able to insinuate himself into the life and death of Crystal Judson, a woman fatally wounded by her husband, David Brame, before he turned the gun on himself.

David Brame was the police chief of Tacoma, Washington. A local celebrity, he received national attention during the hunt for the Beltway Sniper, John Mohammed, who once resided near Tacoma before his campaign of terror on the East Coast. Brame will now be forever known for his own violent actions in a strip mall parking lot on April 26, 2003. Though the ways in which he had long abused his wife were not altogether dissimilar to those employed by other men who demand absolute dominion over their partners, his position of power over *other men* required an intense spotlight in the aftermath of his crime.

Some of these findings were predictable—Brame was a ruthless man in the midst of a messy divorce—while others were startling: his police administration resembled a mob-style dictatorship of backroom deals, where friends were promoted and enemies of his own creation were drummed into early retirement. He used his hand-picked subordinates as leverage against his wife during their divorce proceedings. Not only were several of his assistant chiefs guilty of intimidating Judson, one perhaps helping him attempt to frame her as the abusive partner, a police chaplain even dismissed her complaints during a therapy session that Brame had been trying to force her into a sexual threesome with an equally unwilling female officer.

48 Hours Mystery, according to their website, covered the case on June 9th of 2003, months after local news had time to digest the story into more manageable chunks: the CBS footage focused primarily on a third-party, John Hathaway, a Tacoma bowling lane attendant and rabble-rouser who operates an online journal. He received a copy of Brame and Judson's divorce papers from an anonymous source and published accounts of the abuse allegations on his website; this was perhaps the spark that ignited the tragic sequence of events. Paul LaRosa became fascinated with the hard-boiled detective image that his CBS had helped Hathaway cultivate (the aired segment included a patently ridiculous film-noir clip of him smoking as he typed, trench coat and fedora included) and their careers melded into an oddly symbiotic relationship, albeit one manufactured for LaRosa's ultimate advantage. He would later appropriate Hathaway's "Tacoma Confidential" moniker for a book of the same name.

Tacoma Confidential is Paul LaRosa's dramatization of the Brame case. An average example of the "true crime" genre, it often reads like near-plagiarized newspaper articles drawn into narrative form. While all the fac-

tual heavy lifting had been done for LaRosa, given the impressive and politically savvy reporting that had already been done by *The News Tribune* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*—treating the events with a rare intelligence—LaRosa somehow found it necessary to manufacture his own take on the story. While most of the book is cobbled together from the research of other writers, he did arrive at a few unique components.

Beyond the aforementioned attempt to demonstrate the critical—if momentary—importance of his new associate, John Hathaway, as that would bolster his future utility as an exploitable resource, LaRosa also heavily interviewed the Brame family in order to sell his own version as the most "balanced" and objective take on the subject. Crystal Judson's family was not approached in the same way: LaRosa saw her side as being adequately covered, albeit impersonally, by the press. Thus, like any typical men's rights advocate, he viewed the mainstream media's position as catering to the woman's point of view and saw it as a personal challenge to go out and broadcast the "other" side of the story.

The end result of that effort is that the fictionalized David Brame of *Tacoma Confidential* is used as a mouthpiece for rude and unsympathetic invective that, if accurate and not completely fabricated by LaRosa, could only have been drawn from Judson's in-laws. While the Brame family is likely unhappy with how their angry words were used to color David, being that most of them hold to this day that Judson was the abusive partner and are not shy about expressing that notion (Eugene Brame, David's father, once reminded an audience at a domestic violence symposium that men too can be abused), one has to wonder what the social value is of a book discussing unknowable things about the dead, using them as pawns to trade insults among the living. Does the reading public need to know which Judson family member David Brame saw as "overweight" and "pathetic" or who he nicknamed "the barnacle?" This is the only addition the \$7.99 narrative has over the freely-accessible accounts of journalists.

The true crime genre is a glutted market filled with fantasy novels masquerading as real happenings. They compete against so-called "instant" books that are put together within a matter of weeks, or even days, to capitalize on the latest celebrity scandal before interest wanes. Paul LaRosa, while competent, is hardly a Truman Capote or even a John Berendt (*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*). He lacked a vehicle for inserting himself into the plot, a convention that many in the industry

abhor despite its ability to move merchandise, and he published far too late to meet the instant-criterion—although he did set himself up as a fixture in Tacoma giving endless interviews and signings in order to make the most out of local appeal.

Thus it was necessary for him to go another route in an attempt to make *Tacoma Confidential* stand out on store shelves crowded with similar material: a controversy was needed and LaRosa worked to create one the best that he could, alleging that Crystal Judson was the one responsible for the gun going off, killing both herself and her husband. This theory can be hard to tease out within the pages of *Tacoma Confidential* itself (although the habitually rabid treatment afforded to Crystal Judson throughout the text paves the way for it, often treating her like a self-absorbed cartoon character) as the narrative structure implodes for the actual shooting. As Paul LaRosa admits that the knowledge of what happened in that car died with its occupants, he breaks from using the voices of the couple to a chorus of bystanders; at that point one might as well put the book down and pull out the newspaper account.

He is only a bit more forthright in an extended epilogue. The chapter is titled “Questions and Fallout,” hinting that there just might be a scandal that he alone can expose, and LaRosa states that one of the principal eyewitnesses, Rod Baker, believes Judson to be responsible for the gun going off, perhaps in an attempt to stop Brame from taking his own life. Further, evidence that Glock pistols are prone to misfiring at “inopportune times” is presented as both authoritative and germane to the scenario. Yet this section is disclaimed heavily: LaRosa refuses to take ownership of his hypothesis, using Rod Baker as a puppet in the same way as he did Judson, Brame, and the entire cast of *Tacoma Confidential*. He writes that the “police don’t put much stock in Baker’s theory,” working to distance himself from it in every way possible, at one point arguing that he “thought Baker’s theory was far-fetched” before launching full speed into lingering doubts he himself now has about the official report.

Despite the milquetoast apologetics, LaRosa goes on to say “But what if everything we think we know about this now infamous shooting is slightly askew? Here the word ‘slightly’ carries enormous consequences.” What he believes those consequences to be is never supplied in the text. Instead, LaRosa saved such musings for radio interviews and television appearances where he would give a conspiratorial wink, doing whatever he could to broach the subject of the controversy of his own creation. At

times, Crystal Judson was a hero, trying to save her devastated husband from committing suicide. On other occasions she was a villain, a woman vengefully stalking David Brame, a man who just wanted to spend a quiet morning alone with his children. Either scenario suits LaRosa just fine: it seems evident that he could care less what actually happened as long as his own personality is inseparable from the events themselves. One might call it retroactive-gonzo.

It is apparent that Paul LaRosa believes himself up against the Lace Curtain, even if he is unaware of the esoteric antifeminist term, preferring to see himself as a hero bravely standing up to the more standard notion of “political correctness.” That the world so eagerly puts blame on the back of the man involved, odious as he admits David Brame was in many respects, is something that he sees as a personal affront. It absolutely galls LaRosa that a more “balanced” interpretation of the events is neglected, that people are unwilling to accept the off chance that this “David Brame Case,” the one he has staked his writing career on, might have been an accidental-shooting in which the female partner was complicit.

For him, it is not about the truth, which he acknowledges is unknowable in its final details, but about public opinion and some sort of bias against men when it comes to domestic violence, even if he was too cowardly to point it out in his *Tacoma Confidential*. While he often defends his accidental-shooting conjecture as “speculation,” and has explicated at length to his detractors that his “true crime” story is nonetheless fiction (“I wrote the story as I saw it, filtered through my brain and judgement”), his Herculean struggle against the forces of Political Correctness falls apart when one considers that he was too craven to write the “accident” into the narrative itself and, until very recently, set Rod Baker up to take the fall were the theory to backfire. He was either not sufficiently serious about his position to actually include it in his own book or he did not, perhaps out of fear, write the story “as he saw it.” LaRosa is simultaneously positioning himself as a victor over the nonexistent Lace Curtain and as a victim of it, depending upon whichever role is more expedient at a given moment.

One of Paul LaRosa’s detractors is the moderator of a discussion group hosted by Yahoo: going by the online screen-name of “Cloud Writer,” she is dedicated to harvesting information on police officers who abuse their intimate partners. Prior to publication, LaRosa used the group to mine information on Brame for his book. Although the case is only one of scores, if not hundreds, covered by the group, Cloud Writer herself lives

in the Tacoma area and took special interest in it, at one point being retained by lawyers serving the Judson family for the knowledge she had accumulated on the case. After *Tacoma Confidential* was released she found herself dumbfounded by the ways in which LaRosa had twisted the official story whenever it was convenient to his own gender politics; particularly his “theory” on the shooting. On January 4, 2005, an online post by a third-party recommending the book appeared on message boards operated by Court TV; Cloud Writer swiftly intervened with her own response to the book and LaRosa followed suit, hoping to defend himself.

The debate between Cloud Writer and Paul LaRosa on the Court TV forum persisted nearly four months. While LaRosa was initially optimistic about his chances, it quickly became apparent that he was in over his head: at first he acted as if she were hysterical (“be calm, cloud....deep breaths”) hoping to discredit her as some sort of fringe lunatic. Before long, he would move on to ignoring her in order to address potential buyers directly, increasing his font size exponentially, perhaps hoping that his repeated messages of “READ THE BOOK....DECIDE FOR YOURSELF!” and long form press releases about signings would—through sheer volume—drown out Cloud Writer’s pointed questions. Finally, he found himself responding to her once again, if only to sustain the conceit that he is the more balanced and objective party: to work towards that, he began mentioning her by name incessantly, attaching “bought and paid” as an epithet to every instance, referring to her past association with the Judson’s attorneys.

For her part, Cloud Writer pointed out that as Paul LaRosa was incapable of getting even the most basic of facts right (the first page of *Tacoma Confidential* states that Tacoma is north of Gig Harbor, where the shooting occurred, when it is actually to the southeast), it seemed unlikely that he could be trusted with a theory that contradicted what all the convened experts had to say on the matter. While arguing against his initial points, before he moved into his more puerile antics, she also supplied context for his motives and that of his primary resources. Jane Brazell, David Brame’s sister, the same that LaRosa used to prove that Brame was not predisposed towards violence on the day of the shooting (“It was just about as normal as it could be. He was sad but he wasn’t angry, just kind of down”) had forwarded her own accusatory history of Crystal Judson’s relationship with her brother to a variety of antifeminist websites. Among them were John Hay’s Sleazereport.com and DVmen.org, a men’s rights website that

hilariously accuses “many radical feminists” of hijacking their email address to send virus-riddled spam messages in order to tarnish the site’s good reputation.

When LaRosa asked in the epilogue of *Tacoma Confidential*, “But what if everything we think we know about this now infamous shooting is slightly askew? Here the word ‘slightly’ carries enormous consequences,” it seems safe to assume that the enormous consequences are a judgment against a world ready to indict the male partner for domestic violence—if the official report could be proven only “slightly askew” it would be vindication for a gender that he believes is seen as guilty until proven innocent. Antifeminist groups prefer to see violence as a “dance” that occurs between codependents who each give as well as they get; thus they typically presume near equal numbers of victims and perpetrators across gender lines. This is the exact same sort of balance that Paul LaRosa strives for in his book.

Cloud Writer also pointed out evidence that Paul LaRosa is highly sympathetic to men’s rights fantasies of persecution, looking to reviews of other authors he had published on Amazon.com. (Incidentally, the first Amazon review listed for *Tacoma Confidential* is a glossy, sycophantic rave by John Hathaway, who is eager to sustain their public relationship, unbalanced as it is.) In a review of *While I Was Gone* by Sue Miller, LaRosa takes unusual pleasure in the discomfort of the mother figure, writing “For once, the family does not get along totally. Her daughters argue with Jo, consider her too old for words and generally treat her like dirt. Called me perverse but that I loved.” For Lisa Zeidner’s *Layover*, he demands, “Could a man have gotten away with this type of book???”

What bothered me about this book is that it is TOTALLY a woman’s book and seemingly perfectly acceptable to women readers. As I read through the story of a woman coming to grips with the death of her child and the one-time lapse into adultery of her husband (truly, it was a single event in the book), I began to question the entire premise of the book. I began to wonder if the book could have been written (or succeeded) had the main character been a man coming to terms with his child’s death and his wife’s single lapse into adultery. Would readers, especially female readers, have accepted a male character who decides, after these life changing events, to leave his wife and go off on a sleazy adventure

where he sleeps with a mother and daughter? It's laughable. The reviewers would have killed this book had the writer and main character been a man. Why then do we accept it because it's written and told from a female perspective? I don't. I wonder if anyone else had this reaction.

Despite his gender angst, Paul LaRosa seems to have little trouble wearing drag to promote *Tacoma Confidential*: Cloud Writer caught him in several online venues writing under a feminine identity, yet still using his standard email address, trying to drum up interest in the book. Laura C. or Laura Cone, his alter ego, posted messages at the newsgroup alt.true-crime (via Google) and at an EZboard.com forum devoted to "true crime/murder." Both accounts were similar, presenting as a female friend of the author, and yet in both instances LaRosa was too spineless to even include his precious theory about the accidental-shooting. In the first he refers to the case as a "horrific murder-suicide" and in the latter he only manages a noncommittal stance on Brame, "who had a breakdown and many secrets that ended in disaster."

If, as LaRosa insisted many times on the Court TV website, he was writing what he truly believed had happened on that day and not out of financial opportunism, it seems peculiar that he would neglect the cornerstone of his own polemic during his stealth-marketing fiasco. Instead, I would again argue that his own position is mercurial and lacks any real conviction: his capitulation to the standard notion of the shooting acknowledges that the true crime genre is dominated by female readers—as all genres of literature are today, women being the literate gender, something that might explain why a man who brags of several Emmy awards can be reduced to an adolescent thug with a big font size when faced with informed opposition.

One could also argue that he assumed the presence of a Lace Curtain—perhaps believing the bulk of his audience would be uninterested in a book where the female partner played a part in the violence—and that he surrendered to his imagination of it willingly, hoping to sell his book. That would likely be overstating it, however: an even more cynical reading of LaRosa's behavior might conclude that his theory, right or wrong, is utterly irrelevant to that segment of the market, allowing him to freely omit it. Instead, his pet hypothesis is designed to separate him from the multitudes of female *authors* in the true crime genre and place him, as

a male, with its masculine figureheads.

By "cracking" the case, particularly the meager—yet macho—aspects he offered on the technical workings of Glock pistols and in the making of his own personality inseparable from the narrative in some way, he found a way to elevate himself above those competing women and assume, or at least imagine, a place at the table with the Truman Capotes of the genre. Thus going on at length about what *really* happened, what might be "slightly askew," is something that is only necessary when dealing with his peers, critics and other writers; potential readers, as subordinates, are not worth the trouble and the standard "horrific murder-suicide" description works as well as any other.

Men who cite the Lace Curtain or the even more banal specter of Political Correctness, as LaRosa does, do so to conceal both their own power and that of their male peers. In the case of LaRosa, his invocation of it expresses fear of a world where women's voices count more than his own (as he feels some sort of kinship with David Brame who was convicted by both the police and the media for a crime which left no surviving witnesses) despite the reality of the opposite holding true. But moreover, it also serves to disguise his disdain for female authors, less balanced than himself, who can "get away with" making men into villains. His conception of their inferiority is sublimated into his every complaint about Political Correctness and is the force behind every reminder to others of his own dedication to fairness.

The final twist of the debate at Court TV came with the public release of police statements made by Rod Baker, the man paraded in *Tacoma Confidential* as the originator of the accidental-shooting theory. His initial statement on April 26, 2003 was brief and indicated that he did not see the shooting but was under the "impression" that the successive firings of the gun were too rapid for it to be a deliberate murder and suicide. The rationalization behind his interpretation, how he "felt," was later revealed in a follow-up interview, on April 15, 2004, where he ended the discussion by informing the detectives of Paul LaRosa's growing interest in his testimony. Strangely, Baker arrives at a single possibility for what might have happened based on both prurient and humane fantasies.

First, as Crystal Judson was only shot once ("I've never shot anyone, and I don't want to, but if you're going to shoot someone and want to kill them wouldn't you shoot them twice?") and did not die immediately, he believes that her death was not the desired outcome. Conversely, he feels

a deep need to redeem “Mr. Brame” (Baker always refers to him as such, Crystal existing as mere “Crystal”) for the benefit of the couple’s children—a need so strong that he mused in the interview that God Himself must have placed him there as a witness that day in order that the kids might be spared the shame of believing their father to be an “animal.” Allowing them that dignity, in his estimation, is more important than the law or even the truth. He first met the children while attending Judson’s funeral, his wife a worker at the church, though he would later share his belief about the accidental nature of the shooting with the Brame side of the family who were eager to hear more and arranged a meeting with him. Rod Baker’s irritation grew as he discovered that the Judson’s were not accepting holiday cards the Brame’s sent to their grandchildren.

Given Paul LaRosa’s willingness to discount Cloud Writer because of her biases (being a survivor of domestic violence and a past associate of the Judson family), it is fairly ironic that his own star witness has certainly gravitated towards one side in his quest to heal all wounds. Worse, it seems that LaRosa’s theory is not based on an eyewitness account but on an assumption made by a witness with his own agenda: in effect, the only “evidence” for LaRosa’s theory is another theory. Cloud Writer called him out on this at Court TV, giving him a near ultimatum to finally stand on his own two feet and state what he thought had happened the day of the shooting, in his own words, and not those of Rod Baker. This he did. However, he did not do it there at Court TV, at his home at CBS, in a book published by Signet, nor even in an article for a newspaper or magazine that would be appropriate for a professional of his standing: instead, he turned once again to John Hathaway.

The April 17, 2003 issue of *The New Takhoman* consisted of a 1,600 word essay by Paul LaRosa on how the “official” Brame story might be wrong. It was the bravest he had been yet in outlining his position, but even then his daring had limits—Hathaway’s website is unglamorously hosted by Geocities.com and has no real archive, every day its contents are replaced in their entirety, usually never to be seen again. There are two extant copies of “a few observations by Paul LaRosa on WHAT IF? The Strange Case of David and Crystal Brame.” (The very name of dead woman has become a political struggle between males vying for her ownership and the choice in LaRosa’s title is no exception.) The first copy available is a reposting of it Cloud Writer made at Court TV, while the second was put up by LaRosa himself at an infrequently trafficked promotional blog (or

“plog”) for *Tacoma Confidential* hosted by Amazon.com.

Though the “WHAT IF” manifesto was clearly designed to silence local detractors, the parochial publishing of it—Hathaway evidently still content with being the junior partner in a patriarchal tag team—ensured that only the “biased” would ever find their way to the information: mainstream critics and media representatives could still pick and choose whether or not the “theory” was relevant to their coverage of the book. (Most reviews chose to ignore it.) LaRosa coming clean in this manner did not force their hand one way or another. *Tacoma Confidential* is still a text controlled by editors and lawyers and its own façade of Political Correctness is intact.

In “WHAT IF,” he writes, “for nearly three years, David Brame has been portrayed as an absolute monster for doing something that is, by any measure, unspeakable. But what if he did no such thing? What if the whole thing was a crazy accident? And how and why did so many public officials sign off on it?” Only the shooting was not the only monstrous or unspeakable act that David Brame had ever been accused of: Paul LaRosa might concede that Brame was likely a “sexually repressed rapist and misogynist,” not to mention a “total son-of-a-bitch” (not the best choice of words considering *Tacoma Confidential*’s willingness to exploit bad blood between the surviving family members), but he does not seem to really believe that Crystal Judson was a victim of domestic violence. He might recount the time that David held a gun to her head at home and said “accidents happen”—perhaps something LaRosa interprets literally as ironic foreshadowing—because it makes for a good story, as it was in the newspaper he likely lifted it from, not because he actually believed it happened. In “WHAT IF,” he surmises:

“There are those who worked closely with David who insist that he was intimidated by her. It’s politically incorrect to say that, of course. After all, he was an armed cop and he was the chief but still... he had photos showing his bruises and scratches that he said came at the hands of Crystal. She had nothing like that and in fact had only called police once in nearly 12 years of marriage and that was to complain that he had left the house after an argument. No one has ever alleged that they saw any physical marks on her that came from David despite allegations that he choked her on four separate occasions. It may be true that Crystal did not call

police because she feared reprisals from David but wouldn't she then make doubly sure those bruises from choking were documented with photographs taken by family members?"

One could pick apart LaRosa's historical revisionism (after all, those who worked "closely" with David were all hired by and owed their status to him; they are hardly objective character witnesses), or his deliberate ignorance of the grim realities faced by domestic violence victims cut off from help, but all of that can be laid bare by the simple acknowledgment that LaRosa himself profited by selling stories of Crystal Judson's suffering and that suffering itself was marketed as entertainment. The tale of the gun and "accidents happen" was an example of that suffering at its most abhorrent—and, to many, its most entertaining. Yet after including that moment in his *Tacoma Confidential*, after profiting from his decision to take advantage of that moment, and after swearing up and down in the forums at Court TV that he filled his book only with what he absolutely believed, he has the nerve to say that it was Judson who intimidated and abused her husband.

The suffering that had translated into so many real dollars for him was, in his own mind, a fiction: so much for "true crime" as a genre. Brame might be a "sexually repressed rapist" (what that repression consisted of one can only wonder; perhaps LaRosa thinks him entitled in some way to that threesome he infamously desired), but evidently that alone is not a crime worthy of serious censure according to LaRosa's world view, where only the murder was "unspeakable." David Brame's death works to his advantage, there: being that he cannot "answer for" his lesser crimes, he must ultimately be redeemed as not a monster (LaRosa), nor an animal (Rod Baker), if he escapes responsibility for the shooting itself. It is this redemption plan that undergirds all of the suppositions contained within "WHAT IF."

Paul LaRosa, for all of his self-contradictory stances, declares himself some sort of rational skeptic standing up to Political Correctness, human nature (people want to have someone to blame, something his accidental-shooting scenario potentially robs them of), and even the local government of Tacoma, Washington—incredulously asking why it was that so many public officials signed off on the official conclusions rendered by the police investigation. While there was certainly some measure of opportunism in the wake of a an administrative shakeup that cost many of

Brame's associates and accomplices their jobs, men momentarily taking up the rallying cry against domestic violence because it was the current hot button issue in the region, it seems more than a bit farcical to wonder why it was that officials did not feel free to ignore the police findings and go off in search of their own conclusions. Indeed, if one were to assume some sort of heinous motive behind their acceptance of the Brame case as a murder-suicide and not an accidental-shooting, it might be that they were simply trying to protect themselves: in life, even at his worst, David Brame received career help from all sides. Building a firewall around a few "worst offenders" was prudent for those who believed themselves to be complicit in lesser capacities.

While LaRosa certainly discussed aspects of that in *Tacoma Confidential*, because scandal makes for good sales, the point of what makes it scandalous seems to elude him. The very subtitle of the book reads, emphasis original, "a **true story of murder, suicide, and a police chief's secret life.**" Glossing over the fact that LaRosa's all-important theory did not even make the cover of his book, referring to a murder and suicide, he has a need to view Brame's actions as the result of a singular character flaw and not the consequences of a patriarchal world of entitlement that made his crimes possible. When promoting *Tacoma Confidential* under the name Laura Cone, he wrote, "[Brame] had a breakdown and many secrets that ended in disaster." In his Amazon.com blog he responded to a reader complimenting *Tacoma Confidential* by saying "I was always struck by the question of how someone as seemingly unstable as David Brame could rise to the level of Police Chief. Shows that a lot of us have more than one side."

There seems to be little disagreement about David Brame's capacity for charm, but it was not charm that helped him overcome a failed psychological exam as a recruit. It was not charm that first stymied a rape accusation and later buried it under thick layers of bureaucracy as if it had never existed. Nor was it charm that ignored Crystal Judson's complaints during "therapy" or silenced the female officer he wanted to bring into their bedroom. It was all people who did that—almost all of them men. Brame did not live a secret life: his vices were hidden in plain sight, overlooked and excused by those who should have known better, people who would do anything to protect him, no matter what it might have cost Judson in the end. Paul LaRosa wants this protection-racket to continue for David Brame even in the afterlife.

LaRosa might believe that he is a lone soldier up against the forces of Political Correctness but instead he is just one of the more fortunate sons of immense army, a man who need not recognize that his own actions and beliefs mesh so easily with that of his more dissolute compatriots. Among antifeminists his own position is privileged as he has managed to avoid—as of yet—that label, allowing him to retain mainstream credibility that more fearful and desperate men lack. LaRosa, however, is proof that the so-called Lace Curtain is a fiction. The world is hungry for misogyny, even the feminine reading public, it just requires a certain amount of sophistication, patience, and compromise that fewer men than ever are able to harness in sufficient amounts.

Tacoma Confidential, if nothing else, is a work of astounding compromise. It is a book that does not live up to the author's desires. It is never explicit in what it seeks to accomplish, the "theory" itself exiled from both its pages and its cover. Even as it parrots, for the most part, the conventional history of Crystal Judson's abuse that LaRosa has shown himself not to truly believe, it does whatever is possible to smear her through the use of petty adjectives and pejorative verbs: a picture is painted of a Judson that has her "stomping" around, "gobbling" everything in sight, the kind of spoiled creature that even the most privileged of white men feel safe despising.

LaRosa's *48 Hours* uses stories of such women being raped and murdered as its bread and butter; this sexed-up coverage of misogynist violence garners even more hatred for the demographic on the chopping block, loathed for being too pretty, too popular, or too white, facts again pointed out by the most privileged of white men. (They take the most umbrage to what they have coined as "The Missing White Women Syndrome.") In a March, 2006 media panel convened in Tacoma, "Hysteria by Design? Good news, bad news and the 'chicken little' syndrome," LaRosa even fielded a question asked by an audience member on why the "Brame shootings" did not garner the same amount of attention as Lacey Peterson or Natalee Holloway. He replied, between accusing the media of a liberal bias and of using kid gloves when reporting on Islam, that it was simply because Brame was dead and there was not a trial to cover.

Nevertheless, the case did attract his interest: in his own words, it was story of obsession, love, lust, and secret lives. And he is right if you divorce all of those words from their accustomed meanings. Instead, the

obsession is LaRosa's own, his quest to rehabilitate Brame in order to strike a coup for men everywhere, ever assailed by false accusations by beguiling women. Love is the ideal of brotherhood that blinded John Hathaway to the fact that he was being used at every juncture in their partnership. Lust is LaRosa's desire to be an author and not just a journalist tucked away behind the scenes, *Tacoma Confidential* existing as a vanity project where he delved into real people's wounds to satisfy a need of his own ego—though never straying far from the safety of his television network roots, attaching himself to a story also covered under their banner. And if his own status as an antifeminist men's rights champion was ever in doubt, that secret, too, is out.

Paul LaRosa's *Tacoma Confidential* promotes a profoundly masculine point of view. In the words of Cloud Writer at Court TV, "As far as your proof of objectivity by piping in that you made David look bad too—no, David made David look bad, you only had to work on smearing everything extending out from Crystal. You needed balance, and the price was truth." By turning a blind eye to context, ignoring the fact of patriarchy, his need to validate a vision of shared complicity in domestic violence overwhelmed all other considerations. Even so, by smugly playing the part of the nice guy, presuming to protect the innocents—the couple's children—repeatedly mentioning how he did not want to drag them into the debate, he attempted to turn one man's evil into a family-tragedy where all were equal victims, including David Brame. For presenting this maudlin fairytale that presumed to serve all parties equally, LaRosa fancies himself the peacemaker and the victor in his interactions at the Court TV forum.

In his narcissism, he wrote, "So far, this board has received nearly 5,000 hits so you've done your part admirably," continuing later with, "keep it up Cloud, because I am one of those people who truly believe all publicity is good publicity [sic]. Thanks." Paul LaRosa can have his publicity. This is a public notice to his own family, his children, his future grandchildren and their descendents about how their great-grandfather once raped a woman, a dead woman; that he rooted around inside her for fame and spare change, nevertheless finding both in short supply. This is so they might someday think of him and wonder just what—exactly—was it that made it worth becoming a corpse fucker?