

# Teacher, 35, has a child by a 13-year-old student

She loses baby, her family, and may go to prison

By ERIN VAN BRONKHORST  
Associated Press

BURIEN, Wash. — Mary Kay LeTourneau appreciated all her pupils at Shorewood Elementary School, but one second-grader was special. She bought him art supplies and introduced him to the piano. Over the years, the bond grew.

"There was a respect, an insight, a spirit, an understanding between us that grew over time," LeTourneau said recently.

By the time the boy was 13, teacher and student were having sex. In May, just before his 14th birthday, LeTourneau, 35, gave birth to his child.

Last week, she pleaded guilty to rape of a child. She could get up to seven years in prison.

Her husband, who helped blow the lid off the affair after finding letters from his wife to the boy, has filed for divorce and taken their four children to live with him in Alaska.

Her newborn daughter will be reared by the boy's mother.

"I think what I've done was horrible," she said, "and I wouldn't want anyone to think I believe it's acceptable. It's not."

Still, she said she has romantic feelings for the boy. And he has

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The unnamed boy who fathered a baby daughter with teacher Mary Kay LeTourneau

feelings for her. "I want people to stop seeing me as a victim," the boy, whose name has not been released, said. "My life is going to be fine. Mary didn't harm me in any way."

The boy's mother said she had questioned her son about the two spending so much time together.

"But he said there was nothing between them. So when I found out . . . I was hurt — hurt because of the trust that was broken," she said.

Around Puget Sound, people shake their heads and snicker. The gossip spurred Brian Acuff to send his story to a newspaper, telling of an affair with a teacher when he was 13. He said he believed she loved him. Only later did he measure the damage.

"I never developed the skills of

young romance, and my ability to relate to girls my age was completely destroyed," Acuff said.

Now that he is 28, his judgment is harsh: "Mary LeTourneau is a pedophile. She violated her duty as a teacher and adult. . . . She needs to be put in jail just as any man would be if he manipulated a young girl."

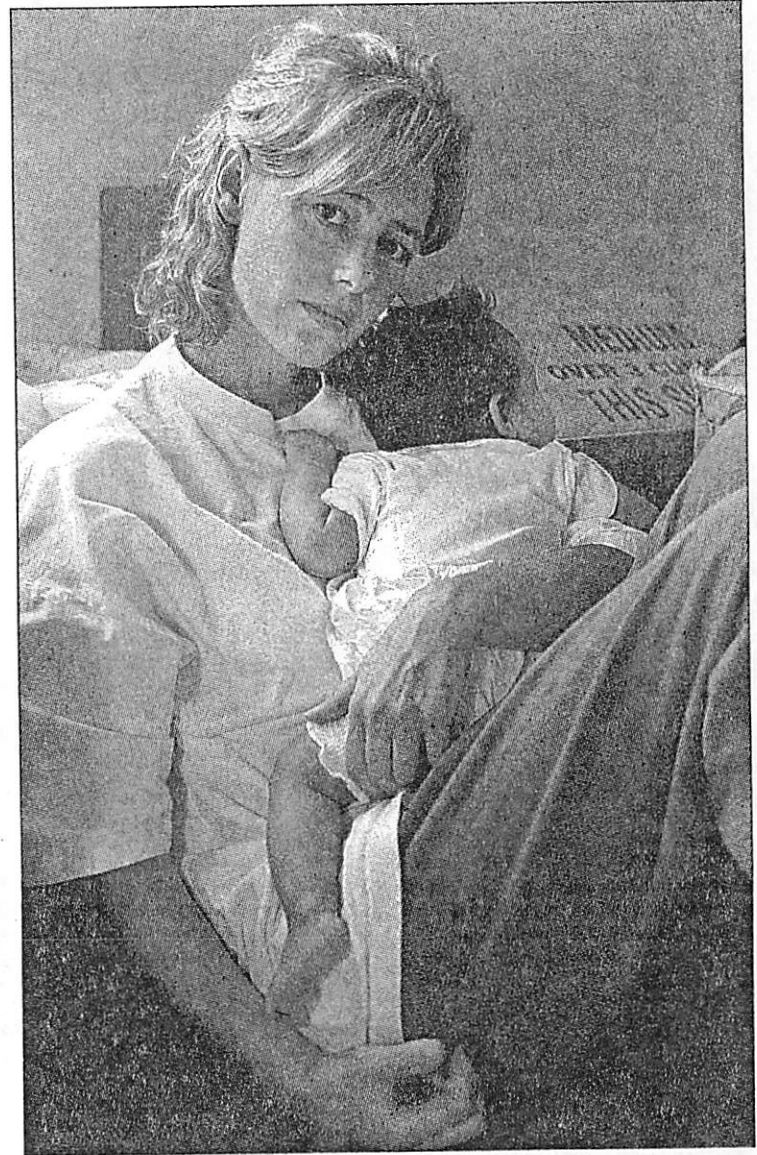
Sexual-abuse experts have no mercy. Florence Wolfe of Northwest Treatment Associates said women sex offenders often enter treatment convinced they had a love affair, and "it often takes them a long time to realize it was exploitation."

"When we hear it here — the proclamation of love — it is a rationalization," Wolfe said.

The case has brought up stories about LeTourneau's father, former Rep. John Schmitz of Orange County, Calif. Schmitz, a Republican, was considered so extreme he was asked to leave the right-wing John Birch Society.

He reared seven children in a strict Catholic home, pulling them out of school whenever there were signs of sex education, said David Gehrke, LeTourneau's lawyer. Schmitz's career ended in 1983 when it was learned he had a mistress and two illegitimate children. The affair began when he taught at Santa Ana College, where the woman was a student.

"It's a tragedy that this came out about me before his death," LeTourneau said. "He has cancer. He's expected to die in a couple of months. He had a right to die with dignity."



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Mary Kay LeTourneau, shown last month holding the baby daughter fathered by a former pupil, pleaded guilty to rape of a child last week and could get up to seven years in prison. The baby will live with the boy's mother.