

AGATA FILIPSKA VELLOTTI

IN MEMORIUM

Agata Filipaska Vellotti was shot and killed in Raleigh, North Carolina on the morning of August 30, 2012 just five minutes after dropping her son off at school. Her husband, Mario Vellotti has been charged with first degree homicide, but this is not merely a story about the horror of domestic violence. It is the story of a loving mom who literally sacrificed her life for her child, Francesco.

Agata was born 43 years ago in a small village near Krakow. Her family was one of modest means. She was trained to be an artist, but worked in a variety of jobs as a young adult.

Agata met her husband in Krakow. They were married in 2005. Their son Francesco was born in Krakow 2006. The family moved from Krakow to Raleigh in 2007.

Agata was virtually invisible for most of the time she lived in Raleigh; her existence here went largely unnoticed. She had no church; no friends; no driver's license; not even a key to her home. Her world was Francesco—her crafts; her bedroom—her small neighborhood—her walks to the CVS store and back.

During a trip to Poland in 2010, Agata's family noticed that there were serious issues in Agata's marriage even though Agata would not complain, the father said she was always concerned about others and did not want to worry them with her problems.

Neighbors describe Francesco as a frightened, withdrawn child until his return from the trip to Poland in 2010. During that trip he was surrounded by Agata's family; his grandparents, an uncle and aunt; and cousins and friends. The neighbors say that the trip transformed Francesco into the gregarious, funny, outspoken and curious boy he is now.

On June 20, 2012, Agata summoned the courage to take Francesco and leave the home that had become a prison for them, she gave us only small glimpses of the terror she felt within that home. She did return briefly to the home for several days, but left permanently on July 5, 2012, armed with an order granting her custody of Francesco and an order that should have protected her from more domestic violence.

After staying with new friends for a couple of weeks and with the financial and physical help from the Polish-American community, Agata was able to obtain an apartment for her and Francesco. Agata began her new life with Francesco full of hope and promise for a better and brighter future for her boy and herself. Francesco spent two glorious weeks at the Kerr YMCA summer camp where he learned to swim. Agata enrolled him in school within walking distance of their apartment. She worked constantly on producing her handmade jewelry and clothing while Francesco was at camp and during the short time that he was in school last week. She dreamed about earning enough money from her work to support Francesco. She had consigned several beautifully handcrafted items of clothing to the Womenscraft shop in Chapel Hill and she was planning to participate in a craft show in Raleigh on September 15th and many other shows in the future.

We only knew Agata for a few, short weeks this summer. The Agata who had been so hidden from us for five years was humble; painfully shy; her eyes sparkled as her gaze rarely left Francesco; she was protective even of the husband who made her so fearful; her smile held no ill will toward anyone; no sarcasm; no cynicism; not a bad word. She could soothe an anxious and crying Francesco with soft words and a held hand or a kiss on his nose. It was obvious to everyone that that boy was everything to her. In the last weeks of her life, she was almost joyful, perhaps for the first time in years. She was optimistic and full of hope. She was emerging from the darkness which had marked her last five years.

Now, with his mother gone and his father likely to spend the rest of his life in prison, Francesco is in protective custody. Soon, however, he will be free to go home to Poland with his dziadek and babcia, Marian and Helena Filipski.

The Filipskis are still a family with modest means. Francesco will have material needs, for school, for Polish tutoring, perhaps for counseling, for college and even for transportation from here to his new home. We are setting up a fund for Francesco—simply called Francesco's Fund---to help him. If you would like to contribute, please send your check to Francesco's Fund c/o Wake Family Law Group 4350 Lassiter at North Hills Avenue Raleigh, NC 27609. We will see to it that all monies collected go to the Filipski family for the care of Francesco. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know.

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