

The Pueblo Chieftain

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Dateline NBC to air Pueblo 'hitman' case



Wayne Luizza



Pamela Dickens

Pueblo Police Sgt. Wayne Luizza scheduled to appear on show tonight.

By **PATRICK MALONE**
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

The undercover work of a Pueblo police sergeant will be spotlighted tonight on a national television news program.

Sgt. Wayne Luizza's efforts posing as a hitman resulted in the arrest and conviction of former Colorado prison guard Pamela Dickens, who was seeking to hire someone to kill her prison guard husband in order to collect insurance money so she and a prison inmate could start a life together.

The program, "Dateline NBC," airs at 8 p.m. local time on KOAA Channels 5 and 30. The Dickens investigation and three other crimes from around the nation that involved women hiring hitmen to kill their spouses will be featured.

Luizza was a detective with the Pueblo Police Department in December 2003, when he went undercover as a willing killer for hire to ensnare Mrs. Dickens in her attempts to "whack" her husband.

He recently was interviewed for two hours by NBC staff in Chicago.

During his 19 years with the Pueblo Police Department and nine years spent as a police officer in New Jersey, Luizza has had a colorful career. He'd gone undercover to buy drugs and explosives before posing as a hitman, and he solved numerous homicides during his tenure as a detective, before he was promoted to sergeant. Most notably, Luizza cracked the case of Herbie Hudson and Roy Mitchell. Mitchell's remains were unearthed from a makeshift grave on the city's western fringe 14 months after his disappearance. His longtime best friend, Hudson, was convicted of killing him over a dispute involving their illegal nitrous-oxide dealing enterprise.

"What I really liked doing was working homicides - dealing with the families to help them find closure," Luizza said. "The Dickens case was like going back to the old days. I got away from the desk and had a chance to make a difference.

"This case is significant, not because it's being featured on Dateline, but because it saved someone's life. If (Dickens) had hired someone other than me to do the job, her husband would have gotten killed."

Luizza initially was reluctant to take part in the TV show, but encouragement from his wife and from Colorado Department of Corrections Investigator Alex Wold, who spearheaded the investigation, convinced him it would be worthwhile.

Dickens, now 51, pleaded guilty to solicitation of first-degree murder and was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

Luizza rendezvoused with her at a Denny's restaurant in Pueblo, where she asked Luizza to kill her husband. Dickens promised Luizza cash for the job and pledged to give him start-up money for a legitimate business. She planned to pay him from the proceeds of a \$250,000 insurance policy she had taken out on her husband.

The case previously had been featured on Dateline NBC, and is frequently rerun on the MSNBC network.