

Margaret Mary Ray loved her children and said she had tried, in her way, to be good to them. These were among the final words she wrote in a suicide note before taking her own life. During her lifetime, Ms. Ray had spent a total of 34 months in jail and psychiatric hospitals.

Margaret was the second of four children born to George and Loretta Ray. She was a popular honor student in high school and after graduating in 1970, briefly enrolled in a nursing program. She dropped out during her sophomore year to marry and eventually had four children. As her mental health began to decline, her marriage ended in divorce and her ex-husband was awarded custody of their four children.

Margaret had been dealt a tough hand: Her father was treated for both schizophrenia and alcoholism and M was the third child of the Rays to develop schizophrenia. She also would become the third to commit suicide. One brother drove a car into a tree. Another lay down in a garage filling with carbon monoxide. At age 46, M killed herself by kneeling in front of an oncoming coal train.

You likely have heard of Margaret, but may not know it. In the early 1990's Ms. Ray drew national attention for behavior so bold and so bizarre it was often portrayed as comical. Grippled by the delusion she was romantically involved with David Letterman, she repeatedly broke into his home, camped out on his tennis court and once stole his Porsche. Her story was a tabloid staple. Even Mr. Letterman turned it into a punchline, often kidding about her on his late night show.

An examination of her obituary is equally telling: her obituary stressed only her illness. In sharp contrast to the one directly below hers, there was no mention of her jobs, where she lived or relatives left behind to mourn her passing. Instead, Margaret's obituary detailed her multiple hospitalizations and ended with the DL punchline to his Top Ten List of Things to do before he left NBC: "Send change of address forms to that woman who breaks into my house."