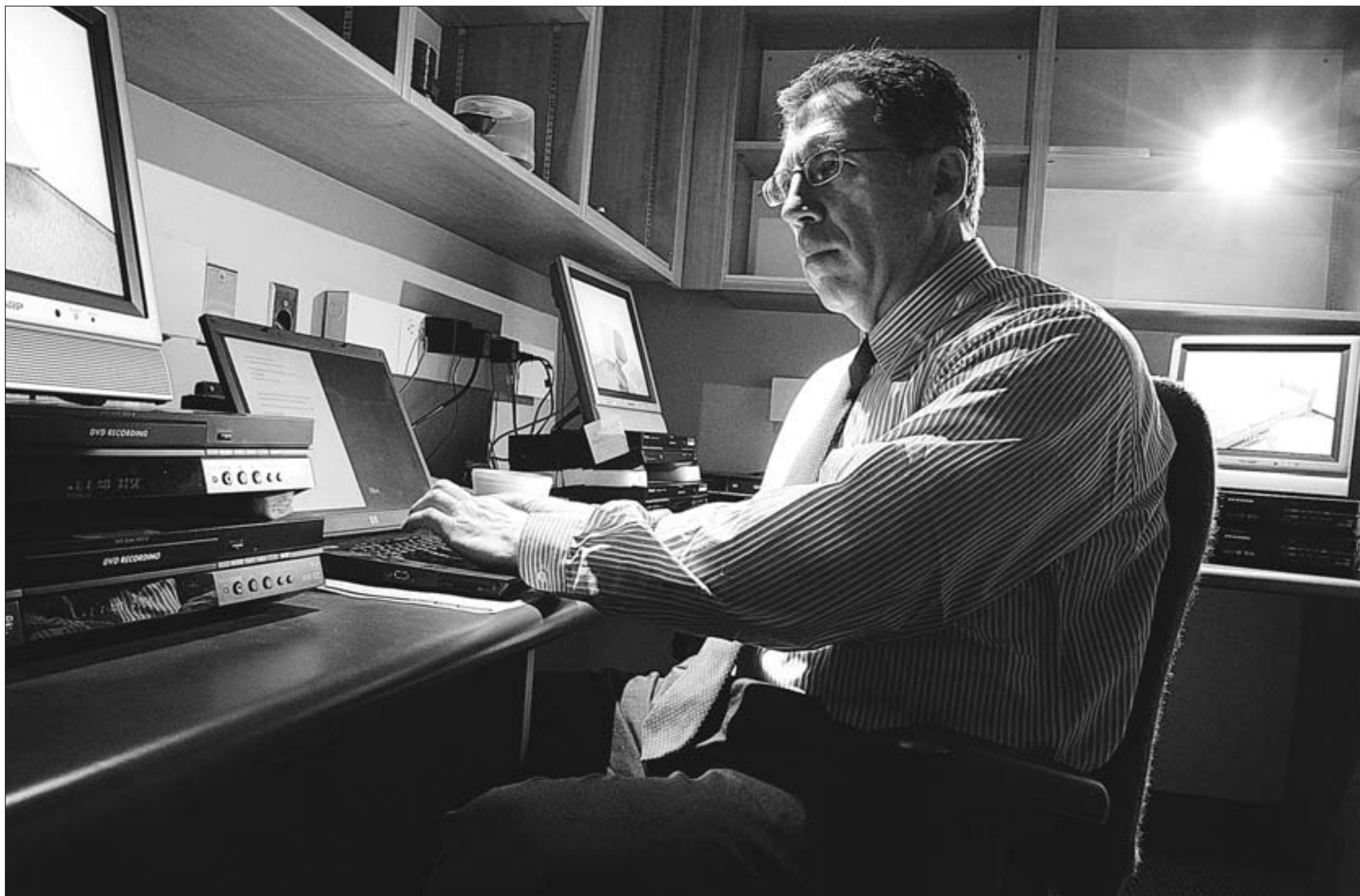


DANIELLE PIRRERA'S statement about what her husband said and did that day became a crucial narrative for the murder investigation in the early days. And, down the road, additional information she would offer shed light on perhaps another dark secret in Sam Pirrera's past.



As Peter Abi-Rashed interviewed Sam Pirrera, Detective Mark Petkoff monitored the exchange by video from another room. If Petkoff had an idea for a line of questioning, he would type it into his computer, and Abi-Rashed could read it on his own screen without interrupting the interrogation.

"Look, something pretty horrific happened in that house. You're upset, you're depressed. You're venting your frustrations, smashed up your own house, right? Used a baseball bat. Look at me, Sam. Do you agree with me, you're pretty upset, pretty pissed off?"

"Yeah."
"And why couldn't that carry over to you being pissed off at someone who is at your house?"

"I don't remember anyone else being at my house."
Detective Mark Petkoff continued to monitor on the video camera in the room across the hall, and type suggestions for Abi-Rashed to read on the teleprompter.

"You were on a bender, you're all by yourself, you went back to coke and crack, using them as a crutch. Is that right?" Abi-Rashed asked.

"Yeah."
"And you have someone who comes to help you, and what you were trying to do is lose yourself, Sam. Trying to separate yourself into two Sams, and freebasing was helping you do that. And no one wanted to help you. Sam, look at me. It wasn't you that did those things in your house, it was your loneliness that caused you to do this."

Abi-Rashed's voice, rising. "Sam! Look at me! Do you agree with me?"

"I don't believe I killed anybody, OK? So I don't know what you're talking about."

"Well, Sam, you know what the problem is? You can't stand someone leaving you. Do you agree with me?"

"Yeah?"

"Sam, talk to me. Why are we going around in circles here?"

"I told you I don't want to talk about it any more."

"I see. Do you have nightmares?"

"No."

"No nightmares, Sam? Look at me. You picked up someone, right? You're already hurting. Nobody there for support, nobody cares about Sam. You don't know what to do, you're freebasing, you try to kill that loneliness, that 'nobody cares' feeling. You get someone back to your house. Sam, look at me. You do some coke with her, you have a bit of fun, feeling better, but then it's time for her to leave, right? Sam? It's time for her to leave, right?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You're going to be lonely, once she leaves you're back to being lonely. And Sam doesn't like being lonely. Cause it hurts. So you stop her. And then you realize, 'Oh my God, what did I do?' And now you realize: 'I've got to cover up. Clean up. This didn't happen.' Right?"

■ ■ ■

Petkoff continued to watch, and chip in questions. Sam was definitely a player, he reflected. Knew what he was doing. Very evasive.

He thought Sam was a hard-looking man. Not very tall, but solid. And the stare, if there was such a thing as an evil stare, Sam had it.

Petkoff had worked Vice and Drugs. They say that when an addict has that drained facial expres-

sion, it shows they are on the "crack diet." Often look like a walking dead person. But Sam, for all his apparent crack abuse, didn't have that same look. Looked rough after being in lockup, but didn't look as bad as many of the addicts he had seen.

And, while Sam was uncomfortable with Abi-Rashed's questions at times, he didn't seem all that worried. Arrogant at times, a nonchalance to his answers. He was sticking to a real simple storyline.

Petkoff had an idea for turning up the volume a bit, get Sam closer to admitting that he had a woman in his house that week. Time to play the ex-wife card. He typed in a new question.

"Remember Beverly?" Abi-Rashed asked Sam. It was the name of his first wife.

"Beverly? What about her?"

"She wanted to leave, too."

"Yeah, she's gone. She's dancing."

"Dancing? Where did she go?"

"What do you mean? She was dancing in California, I guess. I don't know. What's Beverly got to do with this?"

"Well, you were happy with Beverly, right?"

"Yes."

"But she wasn't happy with the relationship, right?"

"I guess."

"And she wanted to leave?"

"Yeah."

"Didn't that hurt you?"

"Sure, a bit."

"And you can't bear that, you can't stand that a woman would leave you. Beverly left you, right? And now Danielle leaves you, you can't stand that, being alone. And now you have a girl in your place, she's making you feel a bit better, and what happens, Sam? She wants to leave."

"She left."

Boom. Finally: Sam Pirrera had admitted that a woman was in his house. Abi-Rashed pounced on it.

"She left?"

"I told you guys I don't want to talk about this any more."

"What do you mean she left, she left out the door?"

"She left out the door."

"Why couldn't you tell me that in the first place?"

"Which?"

"That she left out the door. You said she left. Where did she go?"

"Out on the street, I guess."

"Where did you pick her up?"

"Do you remember what I said about a half-hour ago? I don't want to say any more."

"OK. How did she end up at your house?"

"She didn't."

"You just said she left your house."

"You keep putting words in my mouth. Now I don't want to say no more, please."

"I'm not putting words in your mouth, Sam. The girl you had in your house, did she have red hair?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? But she left your house, though? What time did she leave your house?"

"Three in the morning, I think."

"How was she going to get back?"

"Cab."



"Did she call a cab from your place?"

"Yes."

"What was her first name?"

"I don't know. We didn't talk about names."

"What did you guys do?"

"Just blast."

"Blast? What's blast?"

"Coke."

"Where did you meet her?"

"Just walking down the Mountain, I guess."

"What? She's walking down the Mountain? Where down the Mountain? It's a big Mountain."

"By Upper Wellington, I guess. I asked if she needed a ride. I don't want to talk any more."

"So you're on Upper Wellington, you see this girl, you offer her a ride. Did you know her?"

"No. Never seen her before. I said, 'Do you want to party?' So we smoked some coke and that was it."

"Then she called a cab and left?"

"Yes."

"Did you see her get in the cab?"

"Yes."

"What kind?"

"Yellow."

"What time?"

"Three"

"I might be a little confused here, but what day was that now?"

"Could have been like Thursday, I don't keep track of all these days and times."

"OK Sam, this is pretty important. You are alone, for the past six weeks, feeling pretty shitty, no one coming around, no one cares. You are freebasing coke pretty good in that last week. Nobody cares about Sam. Finally you find someone who will talk to Sam, and party with Sam. Pick her up, a bit of basing, and then something goes wrong. Right, Sam?"

Sam said nothing.

"She wanted to leave, Sam."

"She left."

"She didn't leave, Sam."

Petkoff had an idea for turning up the volume a bit, get Sam closer to admitting that he had a woman in his house that week. Time to play the ex-wife card.

Tomorrow: Maggie

GRAVEONLINE: Cops talk about drugs, violence and death. Watch the interview at thespec.com