

# Mary Kay Letourneau

**Mary Katherine Schmitz** (formerly **Letourneau**; January 30, 1962) is an American former schoolteacher who pleaded guilty in 1997 to two counts of felony second-degree rape of a child, **Vili Fualaau**, who was 12 or 13 at the time and had been her sixth-grade student. While awaiting sentencing, she gave birth to Fualaau's child. With the state seeking a six-and-a-half year prison sentence, she reached a plea agreement calling for six months in jail, with three months suspended, and no contact with Fualaau for life among other terms. The case received national attention.

Shortly after spending three months in jail, the police caught Letourneau in a car with Fualaau. A judge revoked her plea agreement and re-instated the prison sentence for the maximum allowed by law of seven-and-a-half years.<sup>[1]</sup> Eight months after returning to prison, she gave birth to Fualaau's second child, another daughter.<sup>[2]</sup> She was imprisoned from 1998 to 2004. Letourneau and Fualaau began a 14-year marriage in May 2005.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup>

Mary Kay Letourneau	
<b>Born</b>	<div>Mary Katherine Schmitz</div> January 30, 1962 <div>Tustin, California, U.S.</div>
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	<div>Steve Letourneau</div> <div>(<span>m.</span><span> </span>1984<span>;</span><span> </span><span>div.</span><span> </span>1999)</div> <div>Vili Fualaau</div> <div>(<span>m.</span><span> </span>2005<span>;</span><span> </span><span>div.</span><span> </span>2019)</div>
<b>Children</b>	6
<b>Parent(s)</b>	John G. Schmitz (father)
<b>Relatives</b>	Joseph E. Schmitz (brother)

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## Early life and education

Mary Katherine Schmitz was born in 1962 in Tustin, California, the daughter of Mary E. (*née* Suehr), a former chemist, and John G. Schmitz (1930–2001), a community college instructor.<sup>[6][7]</sup> She was known as Mary Kay to her family and called "Cake" by her father.<sup>[8]</sup> She was the fourth of seven children, raised in a "strict Catholic household."<sup>[8][9]</sup> When Mary Kay was two years old, her father began his political career and successfully ran as a Republican for a seat in the state legislature.<sup>[9]</sup> He held positions as a California state senator and U.S. Congressman, winning a special election for an unexpired term in 1970 and the general election later that year. After a primary defeat in 1972, he changed parties and ran for president as an American Independent Party candidate in the 1972 U.S. presidential election.<sup>[10][11]</sup> In 1973, Mary Kay's three-year-old brother drowned in the family pool at their home in the Spyglass Hill section of Corona del Mar, California while she played with another brother in the shallow end.<sup>[10]</sup>

Mary Kay attended Cornelia Connelly High School, an all-girls' Catholic school in Anaheim, California, where she was a member of the cheerleading squad for Servite High School. She was also a student at Arizona State University.<sup>[12]</sup>

In 1978, her father was re-elected as a Republican to the California State Senate. He intended to run for the U.S. Senate in 1982, but his political career was permanently damaged that year when it was revealed that he had fathered two children out of wedlock during an affair with a mistress, a former student at Santa Ana College, where he had taught political science.<sup>[13]</sup> Her father's affair caused her parents to separate, but they later reconciled.<sup>[7][14]</sup>

Her brother John Schmitz was the deputy counsel to President George H. W. Bush.<sup>[11]</sup> Her other brother, Joseph E. Schmitz, was Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Defense under George W. Bush,<sup>[15]</sup> was a senior executive with Academi, and is a foreign policy adviser to President Donald Trump.<sup>[16]</sup>

## First marriage

When Schmitz was attending Arizona State University, she met and married fellow student Steve Letourneau, and she conceived the first of her four children with Letourneau.<sup>[17]</sup> She said that she was not in love with Letourneau and married him after being urged to do so by her parents. The couple moved to Anchorage, Alaska,<sup>[18]</sup> where Letourneau found work as a baggage handler for Alaska Airlines.<sup>[18]</sup> After a year in Alaska, he was transferred to Seattle, Washington, and she gave birth to their second child. She graduated from Seattle University in 1989 with a teaching degree.<sup>[19]</sup> She began teaching second grade at Shorewood Elementary School in the Seattle suburb of Burien.

The Letourneaus' marriage reportedly suffered; they had financial problems and both parties engaged in extramarital affairs.<sup>[18]</sup> Her attorney, former neighbor, and friend David Gehrke said that she was "emotionally and physically abused by her husband" during their marriage, and twice "went to the hospital for treatment, and police were called," although no charges were ever filed.<sup>[20]</sup> While imprisoned for child rape in May 1999, she divorced her husband, and he gained custody of their four children.<sup>[21]</sup> In 2010, the Letourneaus became grandparents when their oldest son had a daughter.<sup>[22][23][24]</sup>

## Crime and sentencing

Born June 26, 1983<sup>[25]</sup>, Vili Fualaau, a Samoan-American,<sup>[26]</sup> was Letourneau's student in both his second-grade and sixth-grade classes at Shorewood Elementary School in Burien, Washington.<sup>[27]</sup> When she was 34 in the summer of 1996, her relationship with the 12 or 13-year-old Fualaau turned from platonic to sexual.<sup>[28]</sup> On June 18, 1996, police came upon Letourneau in a car with Fualaau in a marina parking lot. She was seen jumping into the front seat while Fualaau pretended to sleep in the back. She and Fualaau provided false names when asked for identification and Letourneau lied about his age, saying that he was 18.<sup>[29]</sup> Fualaau said that no touching had taken place. Letourneau said she and her husband had gotten into an argument, and that Fualaau, who she said was a family friend who had been staying with them that night, witnessed the argument and ran away upset. She said she left to find him.<sup>[29]</sup> The police took Letourneau and Fualaau to the police station, where Fualaau's mother was called. The mother was asked what should be done, and said to return Fualaau to Letourneau. She later said that if the police had alerted her to the fact that Letourneau had lied about Fualaau's age and what had occurred in the car, she would not have allowed her son to go back to Letourneau.<sup>[29]</sup> Letourneau was arrested in March 1997 after a relative of her husband contacted the police.<sup>[30][31]</sup> Her first child with Fualaau, a daughter, was born in May 1997 while she was awaiting sentencing.<sup>[32]</sup>

With more than 100 journalists observing,<sup>[33]</sup> Letourneau pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree child rape. The state sought to sentence her to six-and-a-half years in prison.<sup>[34]</sup> Through a plea agreement, her sentence was reduced to six months (three of which were suspended) in the county jail and three years of sex offender treatment.<sup>[35]</sup> She was not required to register as a sex offender.<sup>[35]</sup> As part of her plea agreement, Letourneau could not contact Fualaau or her five children, or have contact with any other minors.<sup>[1][35][36]</sup> She became the subject of an international tabloid scandal,<sup>[37]</sup> was targeted by delusional strangers,<sup>[38]</sup> and experienced symptoms of degraded mental health.<sup>[39]</sup>

On February 3, 1998,<sup>[40]</sup> two weeks after completing her jail sentence, Letourneau was found by police in a car with Fualaau near her home. Letourneau initially said she was alone in the car. She and Fualaau provided false names when asked for identification.<sup>[41]</sup> Although it was reported that sexual intercourse had occurred in the car,<sup>[42][43]</sup> Fualaau told a detective that he and Letourneau had kissed frequently and that he had touched Letourneau on the thigh, but that no sexual intercourse had occurred.<sup>[41]</sup> There was evidence the two had met several times since Letourneau's release from jail on January 2.<sup>[41]</sup> When she was arrested, police found \$6,200 in cash, baby clothes, and her passport inside the car.<sup>[44]</sup> Receipts for \$850 in purchases made since January 20 for men's and young men's clothing and infant wear were found.<sup>[41]</sup> Letourneau said that the money was for dermatology treatments and for her divorce lawyer, and that some of the men's clothing were gifts for relatives and for herself since she enjoyed wearing oversized men's clothing.<sup>[41]</sup> With more than 125 journalists observing,<sup>[33]</sup> the judge revoked Letourneau's prior plea agreement and re-instated the original prison sentence for the maximum penalty allowed by law, seven and a half years, for violating the agreement.<sup>[1][45][44]</sup> In interviews and in a book on her involvement with Fualaau, Letourneau said she had sex with Fualaau in January.<sup>[2]</sup> This aligned with testimony from police, who said they had seen no evidence that sex had occurred in the car in February.<sup>[46]</sup>

In October 1998, while serving her second stint in jail, Letourneau gave birth to her second daughter by Fualaau.<sup>[30]</sup> That year, Letourneau and Fualaau co-authored a book, which was published in France, called *Only One Crime, Love* (French: *Un seul crime, l'amour*).<sup>[30]</sup> In 1999 a second book appeared, this one published in the United States, but written with only minimal cooperation from her, and none from Fualaau.<sup>[47]</sup> *If Loving You Is Wrong*.<sup>[48]</sup> During her imprisonment, Letourneau was allowed visits from her children but was denied permission to attend her father's funeral.<sup>[49]</sup> While in prison Letourneau tutored fellow inmates, created audio books for blind readers, participated in the prison choir and "rarely missed Mass."<sup>[30]</sup> Because of her notoriety, Letourneau was unpopular with other inmates, "sassed guards and balked at work" and, reportedly as punishment for this, spent "18 of her first 24 months" in solitary confinement.<sup>[30]</sup> In one instance, Letourneau endured six months in solitary when letters she tried to send to Fualaau were intercepted.<sup>[50]</sup>

In 2002, Fualaau's family sued the Highline School District and the city of Des Moines, Washington, for emotional suffering, lost wages, and the costs of rearing his two children, claiming the school and the Des Moines Police Department had failed to protect him from Letourneau.<sup>[51]</sup> Following a ten-week trial, no damages were awarded. Attorney Anne Bremner represented the Des Moines Police Department. Lawyer Michael Patterson represented the Highline School District.<sup>[52]</sup>

Letourneau was released to a community placement program on August 4, 2004, and registered the following day with the King County Sheriff's Office as a Level 2 sex offender.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Release from prison and marriage to Fualaau

After Letourneau's release from prison in 2004, Fualaau, then age 21, persuaded the court to reverse the no-contact order against Letourneau.<sup>[28][53]</sup> Letourneau and Fualaau married on May 20, 2005, in the city of Woodinville, Washington, in a ceremony at the Columbia Winery.<sup>[4]</sup> Exclusive access to the wedding was given to the television show *Entertainment Tonight*,<sup>[4]</sup> and photographs were released through other media outlets. Letourneau said she planned to have another child and return to the teaching profession and indicated that by law she was permitted to teach at private schools and community colleges.<sup>[54]</sup>

Attorney Anne Bremner, who met Letourneau in 2002 during Fualaau's civil suit, said that Letourneau considered her relationship with Fualaau to be "eternal and endless". According to Bremner, "Nothing could have kept the two of them apart."<sup>[28]</sup> During an *Inside Edition* interview, Fualaau said, "I'm not a victim. I'm not ashamed of being a father. I'm not ashamed of being in love with Mary Kay."<sup>[55]</sup> The television series *Barbara Walters Presents American Scandals* covered the case in December 2015. Walters interviewed the couple about their relationship and their two daughters.<sup>[56][57]</sup>

On May 9, 2017, after almost 12 years of marriage, Fualaau filed for separation from Letourneau<sup>[58]</sup> but later withdrew the filing.<sup>[59]</sup>

As of April 2018, Fualaau was working at a home improvement store and as a professional DJ and Letourneau was working as a legal assistant. An article in *People* magazine quoted an insider source who said, "They know what everyone thinks about their relationship [...] And they don't care. They really never have. The wrong stuff that happened was so long ago. They are two grown adults who are living their lives now."<sup>[60]</sup>

The couple divorced in August 2019.<sup>[61][62][63][64]</sup>

## In popular culture

- On March 30th, 1998, Mary appeared holding her child on the cover of *People* magazine.<sup>[65]</sup>
- In 2001, the Court TV (now *TruTV*) television series *Mugshots* released an episode about Letourneau's case titled "Mary K. Letourneau and Vili Fualaau".<sup>[66]</sup>
- On October 2, 2010, Paul Brittain and Abby Elliott portrayed Vili Fualaau and Mary Kay Letourneau in a "What Up with That?" sketch on *Saturday Night Live*.<sup>[67]</sup>

## See also

- Debra Lafave*
- List of teachers who married their students*
- Pamela Rogers Turner*

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## External links

- [Mary Kay Letourneau](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1380717/) (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1380717/>) on [IMDb](#)
- "Mary Kay Letourneau: All American Girl" ([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0232062/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_5](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0232062/?ref_=fn_al_tt_5)) at the [Internet Movie Database](#)
- *Double Standard: The Bias Against Male Victims of Sexual Abuse* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060810180454/http://www.reason.com/cy/cy060402.shtml>)
- [Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature](http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/misconductreview/index.html) (<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/misconductreview/index.html>)
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