

**KELSEY
SHELTON
SMITH-BRIGGS
2002-2005**



**FACE
OF
CHILD
ABUSE**

The tragedy of child abuse – and the actions of people who are supposed to protect children – became front-page news with the death of two-year-old Kelsey Briggs in 2005. Married in July 2000, parents Lance Briggs and Raye Dawn Smith had a violent two-year marriage with Lance arrested multiple times for abuse. By the time they divorced in July 2002, Smith was pregnant.

Kelsey Shelton Smith was born in December 2002. Lance's mother Kathie insisted on a paternity although he really didn't care. When his paternity was confirmed, Kathie had the court add Briggs to Kelsey's last name. Kelsey shuttled between battling parents while Kathie stalked Smith to assist in a custody battle.

Lance remarried in June 2003 and Smith married Michael Porter in January 2005. On January 17th, Kelsey was taken to an emergency room with a broken collarbone and multiple bruises. On January 24th, Judge Craig Key sent Kelsey home with Kathie, with Smith granted visitation. Smith fully cooperated with DHS, completing every course and evaluation to regain custody of Kelsey.

After breaking her legs at Kathie's house on April 27th, Kelsey was put in emergency protective custody with Smith's mother Gayla. During Kathie's supervised visits, Kelsey was combative but laughed and played games during Smith's visitations. Judge Key couldn't determine who abused Kelsey so he placed her with Gayla on June 15th – against DHS' recommendation.

Between June and October, repeated DHS visits showed no signs of abuse apparent to the caseworker. The last visit was mere hours before the tragic events on October 11th. Smith left Kelsey with Porter while she went to pick up his daughter from school. Kelsey was sleeping, dressed only in a T-shirt because they were "running out of Pull-Ups".

When Smith returned home, Kelsey was being loaded into an ambulance, wearing a Pull-Up. Porter was afraid of "what people would think" about him. Kelsey died on the way to the hospital. Her death was ruled a homicide from blunt force trauma from a kick to the stomach. It was later determined that she had also been sexually assaulted.

Porter's daughter told her school guidance counselor that Porter told her not to talk about what she saw. She told investigators that Porter would abuse Kelsey until she threw up and he would be nice to Kelsey when other people were around. After Kelsey's death, investigators found child pornography on his computer. Porter was charged with sexual assault and first-degree murder.

District Attorney Richard Smothermon wanted to convict Smith to help his campaign for Attorney General. Even though he knew Porter murdered Kelsey, he allowed Porter to plead guilty to enabling child abuse and was sentenced to thirty years. At Smith's trial, he allowed Porter to lie under oath, claiming Smith murdered Kelsey. Kathie perjured herself as well in Smith's trial. In July 2007, Raye Dawn Smith was also convicted of enabling child abuse and sentenced to 27 years in prison. Kathie also tried to put Gayla in prison for neglecting Kelsey.

In March 2006, the Oklahoma Legislature passed the Kelsey Smith-Briggs Child Protection Reform Act to change the ways courts and DHS handle cases related to child abuse and neglect. A vindictive grandmother and physically-violent father had DHS and the courts so chasing their tails that a killer slipped under the radar.