

Ex-wife says Jim Oswald is dangerous, sane

He was ready
to kill others,
she claims

By Kay Murphy Nolan

Freeman Staff

SAN DIEGO — Susan Oswald says her ex-husband, James Oswald, "is not crazy, even though he's probably going to use that as his defense."

In a phone interview from her home in California, Oswald said neither media stories nor testimony at the trial of her son, Ted, fully described the dangerous mind of James Oswald.

James and Ted were arrested April 28, 1994 after a crime spree that left Waukesha police Capt. James Lutz dead and other officers wounded. Ted was found guilty last week of all 19 counts, including taking a town of Pewaukee woman, Judy Opat, hostage.

"Judy Opat saw 10 minutes of what I had 15 years of," Susan Oswald said.

She said James used both eloquence and deadly threats.

"He's a world-class debater, and he can tell good lies," she said.

James also threatened to kill Susan's sister, friends, a psychologist, and the aunt on whose town of Emmet property James and Ted lived.

"... That's what the jury didn't understand. If Teddy hadn't gone along with his father, there would have been a much larger trail of blood."

Oswald said she believed their daughter, Hattie, was



Oswald

likely the "third man" that James planned to recruit, and said she had to "steal" Hattie away from James and Ted, making a heart-wrenching

decision to rescue one child and leave the other with James.

Oswald met James in California, as she was bicycling along the beach. She was 19; he was 29 and just finishing his CPA internship.

"It's so embarrassing to admit now, but at the time, he was very good-looking," she said.

The couple married in 1974, and James worked as an internal auditor for a large company. Susan became a graphic artist.

As their marriage deteriorated, Susan said her husband often handed her a loaded gun and told her to commit suicide.

"The day I decided to leave, Teddy walked in and saw Jim holding me down, choking me. He made Teddy spit on me and chant, 'Any other man would have killed her for that.' My crime was wanting to take my children to a beach party."

Oswald said she has written a book about her ordeal. She said she recently lost her job and had no health insurance when her daughter, Jenny, 15, suffered a perforated appendix last September.

"I'm looking at bankruptcy," she said. "The hospital bills were over \$30,000."

She said her daughters are struggling to return to a normal life.