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Wife supports husband who shackled child

By Laura Elder

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SANTA FE, Texas - The wife of the Santa Fe man who shackled his 12-year old daughter with chains said she's standing by her husband, she loves him and wants him to come home.

The daughter, 12-year-old Heaven Robbins, said her father was justified in using the homemade restraints.

"I deserved it," Heaven said.

Ronnie Eugene Robbins has said he shackled Heaven's ankles to keep her in school and from sneaking away from home.

Speaking for the first time to U.S. media, Paula Robbins, 33, said she and her husband aren't monsters, and their separation, imposed last month by Children's Protective Services, is causing a hardship on her family.

"I love my husband, and we stand by him," said Paula Robbins. "I just want people to know we are still a family unit and we want to be together. We're normal parents trying to do everything we can with our daughter."

With her husband out of the home, Paula Robbins said she's unable to sleep at night, forced to constantly check in on her daughter, making sure she hasn't sneaked out of their Santa Fe home.

Day-to-day life is hard, she said. Machinery and appliances around the home need repairs, and she's alone to face the uncomfortable media spotlight and reaction of the community.

People stare at her when she goes to the store, but she doesn't know if it's because of

sympathy or contempt, She said.

"There's no one to turn to at night and say 'It's going to be OK baby,'" she said.

She said her husband is the disciplinarian in the family, and now she's left alone to make sure her daughter stays in school. But it was Ronnie Robbins' disciplinary method~ that landed the family in trouble.

On Oct. 31, Ronnie Robbins was arrested at a gas station for shackling his 12-year-old daughter with chains to keep her from skipping school.

Robbins was arrested after a woman called police to report seeing a girl whose ankles were chained together at a gas station in the 15700 block of state Highway 6. The girl was Heaven, and the story caused an international stir and public debate about how far a parent should go to discipline a child.

Ronnie Robbins said he chose to restrain Heaven under intense supervision, a disciplinary measure that he said he believed necessary to safeguard and promote her welfare.

Robbins said that on the day he was arrested, he was attempting to keep Heaven from running away.

After being released on bond, Ronnie Robbins has been staying in his mother-in-Law's backyard in Santa Fe. He's sleeping in a two-man tent, courtesy of a German news crew, one of many media organizations seeking the Robbins' story.

Some parents tell Paula their story, she said.

"So many other parents are in the same situation," she said. "They feel for me."

Ronnie and Paula Robbins' story is all the more unusual because they say they were taking the advice of a local judge.