



funding for advocacy. There simply wasn't any help available in my area, and I was on my own."

Shirley's way of dealing with the emotional turmoil was to bury it and try to move on with her life. She returned to college in Moorhead, Minnesota. Not wanting to be viewed as different by her peers, she didn't talk much about the incident.

"After the assault is over and the danger passed," says Shirley, "one of the hardest things to do is to talk about it. It's so overwhelming. I am not sure you can put into words what happened or how you feel."

Back at college, Shirley began missing classes and was eventually placed on probation. Her personal relationships faltered. She avoided dark places and feared being isolated.

Rodriguez's assault on her life would continue for years to come.

*(Above) Shirley spends much of her leisure time trail riding with friends Tresa Cordell and Lise Wenker along the Columbia River.*

*The Iversons breed Paint Horses and grow hay on their farm outside St. Helens, Oregon.*

### Stepping into the light

It wasn't until Shirley reached her early 30s that she realized she had been walking in a shroud of darkness.

"I was wandering without any direction or purpose for 12 years," she says. "I finally decided to do something with my life. I wanted to make a difference."

Propelled by her newfound purpose, Shirley began vigorously working to improve rights for victims of sexual assault. On the local, state and national level, she has provided an important voice and leadership in the

