

Jessica Ballard Venable

As further proof that some attorneys will do anything for a buck, I recently heard from Jessica Venable that the biological father of one of her sons has found a bottom-feeding lawyer here in Cheyenne that is pursuing action to take that boy from the familiar home he has with a couple Jessica calls her parents.

They are not her biological mother and father but they have been there for her and her children when people like this boy's father was nowhere to be found. Jessica has told me that the guy did not play a meaningful role in the young boy's life but now that he smells a way to avoid paying child support, he will pursue it.

There is no depth to which some who have passed the Bar will not sink. Some will say that everyone is entitled to legal representation but no private attorney was there to fulfill that commitment for Jessica Venable when she was improperly charged - initially with first degree murder, then manslaughter. She had no choice but to settle for a public defender who, basically, sold her out for disposition of her case. Try walking into an attorney's office and telling them you need an attorney to defend you on a felony

of which you are innocent but that you have no money to pay them. You'll find out that attorneys do not HAVE to take you as a client. That the principle of everyone being entitled to legal representation ends when there is an inability to pay for that representation.

The guy probably only wants to be able to slough off his required child support. The couple where Jessica's two sons and young daughter have lived since her incarceration in June of 2008 have offered to retain custody for Jessica's three children without outside financial considerations. When his bluff is called, the father (that is so hard to write - he's not a father, he was nothing more than a sperm donor) will probably run like a scalded hound. For him and a willing attorney to impose this additional stress on Jessica Venable leading into her first Christmas in prison is beneath contempt.

I know the identification of the local law firm and I will steer every potential client I can away from them. In the future, if anyone asks me for input about their selection of that law firm, I will tell them, "stay away from those guys, they're pond scum." That's just my opinion, of course.

They could be lower than that.

Two days ago, I received a call from a woman who praised my concern for Jessica Venable and said she had served time at the Laramie County Detention Center with Jessica. She told me some of the examples of Jessica's kindness to others and how she talked incessantly about her children.

The caller, who did not deny she had belonged in jail herself, said that Jessica was the one example of a person who should not be in jail. Not only because she hadn't committed a crime to be charged with but because she was gentle, naive, innocent and decent - a person who would never intentionally hurt anyone and would give whatever she had to someone who had nothing or less.

It has been very frustrating to try to work within the system so my wife and I can visit Jessica in Lusk. Provided forms for application to become approved visitors, they were completed and sent to Lusk in late October. We did not hear anything from the prison. Then Jessica wrote me that we had to resubmit after the first December. No problem. They have their

rules and maybe one of them is that an inmate cannot have non-family visits until they're there for six months. I can only guess because the prison did not feel they had to inform me of anything. The forms were resubmitted December 3 and we await further word.

I called the prison's "Visiting Officer" to ask what had happened to our application and was told that Jessica would get the approval and she would inform us. What if she had no stamps, for God's sake? Does the State not have 44¢?

Beyond being unable to schedule a trip to Lusk to visit her and discuss her case further, we need to be on the approved visitor list to send her money. Anyone can send her notes, cards and letters (with no gifts or money) but only an approved visitor can send funds for her "bank." I have money on hand to forward her. (And thanks to those who have donated to the Jessica Venable Compassion Fund.) Once approved as a visitor, I'll let readers know again how to participate. Once approved, I will forward adequate money to her account so she can buy what she needs. Like stamps. And we will keep that going into the future.

Another mercenary leaves UW men's basketball program

When the Brylcream Boy and complicit UW AD Tom Burman decided the best way to "resurrect" what had been a winning men's basketball program, they concluded the quickest way to do that would be by offering valuable scholarships to foreign-born and prep school mercenaries and put together a home-only pre-conference patsy schedule.

The fallacy to that plan is that these players come to UW with one interest. That is to play basketball. Most have been at other schools for a few years after their so-called high school years. If they do not get court time and do not build a resume they hope will get them to professional basketball somewhere, anywhere, they are likely to move on.

Thomas Manzano is a good example of what's wrong with recruiting prep school players. These guys are not high school graduates. The usually are a few years out of high school and attend a prep school to hone their basketball skills. A prep school is a private, for-profit business. Becoming a basketball factory makes it easier for the "school" to sell tuition.

The players are often, if not usually, on "scholarship" at the preps so they don't pay to be schooled in basketball. Much of their school year is spent on the road - away from the prep school at which they do not attend classes.

The UW men's basketball brain trust has decided this is the way to go. Piling up wins with mercenary players and against tomato can opponents, they hope, will get them an NCAA tournament invite. It won't. The selection committee does look at quality of opponents, not just wins.

UW has recruited seven prep school mercenaries since Schroyer became head coach. He does not recruit high school seniors. The future is bleak. Two of the seven prep school alums have already dropped out of UW. Thomas Manzano is the latest but not the last.

Manzano played basketball in high school, in an AAU program, at Genesis One Prep School, at Notre Dame Prep School, at Western Iowa U., at Garden City Junior College and UW. Manzano spent two years at the JC, one as a "red-

shirt." He was a sophomore at UW according to the UW roster. He was at least four years out of high school and 22 years old. Highly touted, he just does not seek an education. He wants to play basketball. Like Mahmoud Diakite before him, he did not get enough court time so he chose to leave school. Or, it could have been because grades came out for the fall semester and he would be ineligible.

Contrast the nomads recruited by Brylcream Boy, with tacit approval from an unproven AD, to the student/athletes recruited by Joe Legerski for his successful women's basketball program. He has but one transfer on his team. He recruits high school and Australian players. As reported here previously, all of his American high school recruits were honor students. You can win with character and quality. The UW men's program doesn't believe that and will fail in the long run. And embarrass the State in addition.

Briefs ...

Snow plowing downtown streets has been wholly inadequate. Opening a furrow down the middle of the busiest streets does not cut it. Plowing snow toward the curb and blocking the parking spaces is not helpful. Budget problems or not, the mayor has to find a way to clear downtown streets. We don't expect neighborhood streets to be plowed but downtown has to be kept open for visitors and customers.

Juvenile Detention Center. Why is the County talking about building a new center when it wasn't very many years ago Frontier Correctional built such a facility? If current ownership out there can't get the job done and the State, County and City won't house juveniles at that detention center, buy the place. They can't hold onto it without juveniles housed there and the County wants their own facility. The answer is simple. And the solution would be immediate, not long term. Unless someone wants a monument in their memory, buy *that* place.

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