

That radio station

In the last Cheyenne Herald, there was a brief story about a radio station that purports to be "local" and plays a version of a popular country song that was watered down to eliminate the phrase, "toes in the water, ass in the sand."

I personally thought it was a pretty silly exercise and removed that radio station from my preset buttons.

The only things I rely on country music stations to bring me is music, occasional news and some weather. I don't want them taking political stands because they seldom have a clue about what they're told their position is - or should be.

When the ultraconservative Clear Channel-owned stations blacklisted The Dixie Chicks because of something Natalie Maines, the Chicks' lead singer, said about being ashamed the president was from Texas, I just found other stations that did play their songs and switched.

The bonehead station ownership and obedient jockeys had no idea how much good the Dixie Chicks had done for worthy causes - they just thought a boycott of the Chicks' music was "righteous."

After the story about the station's treatment of the song "Toes" appeared here, I received e-mails detailing other shortcomings of that sissy station. Still a Clear Channel-owned station, the prudes broadcast from a studio in Loveland, Colorado, I was told. Next to a Hooter's. I don't have a problem with the Hooter's chain, even though I have never eaten in one. But for a pious Clear Channel radio station to have Hooter's as a neighbor is a hoot in itself. There is a hit song now being played on that station, sung by Toby Keith, the faux conservative who waged a war of words with the Dixie Chicks even though he later admitted that he had never supported the war in Iraq himself, that has a much more off-color line than the "Toes" word that was censored.

Jessica Venable

When I visited with Jessica at the Lusk Women's Center on October 14, 2009, I found her to be dealing with the injustice perpetrated upon her better than I could. She was pleased to hear that there are people in Cheyenne who support her and believe she had committed no crime. She did not know that there were witnesses trying to come forward for her and who wanted to appear at her sentencing to show their support. She was not told that by her public defender.

Shortly before the incident in which her husband took his own life by charging her from behind, he had beaten her in the presence of his friend. He told her that he was going to break her wrist and proceeded to try. His friend watched. His friend did not intercede to help Jessica. That guy was not called as a witness in her behalf.

Her husband was arrested and she next saw him in Judge Campbell's courtroom. She commented to me how the Court must not understand how traumatic it is for a woman to be standing next to a guy who had beaten her, and in Jessica's case, tried to break her wrist. She said, "he is standing there, glaring at me, trying to intimidate me, trying to threaten me into changing my story." She told me, "I felt like I was still defending myself."

I thought she meant because her attacker had an attorney by his side and she was alone. But what she meant was that she felt like the judge believed her husband - believed him when he said "nothing happened," even though Jessica was standing there with marks on her face, on her neck and injuries to her wrist that he had tried to break. She felt like what had happened was being doubted by the judge.

It sounded much like a rape victim being attacked all over again in the courtroom by an attorney who puts the victim on trial, not the defendant.

She heard Judge Campbell sentence this serial abuser to 180 days in jail, 4-6 years in prison. Although feeling violated again by the system, she left the courtroom believing that she could finally escape - that she could do what prosecutors expect domestic abuse victims to do - flee their abuser. She had made application to Interfaith Hospitality Network and she expected to be accepted. Within days.

Finally, after this interminable period of beatings and abuse, she would be safe. She was relieved that he would finally be held in custody long enough for her to flee to safety. That is what she heard in the courtroom that day.

She went home. She went back to the house that she loved but would have to abandon because of this man who had weaseled his way into her life and made it a living hell. But at least she'd be safe while she found a more permanent place to live. At least he'd be out of her life. At least he'd finally be punished for the terror and torment he had inflicted on her.

As she sat in her living room talking on the phone to a girlfriend, he appeared at the door. Drunk and belligerent. He had proven to her once again that he could beat the system. That she could not get away from him. That he owned her and she was his to do with as he wanted. That the system wasn't going to protect her or punish him. It wasn't long after that night that he was abusing her still another time and an unintentional act took his life.

The system never protected her. But, in the end, it did punish her. Not him. Her.

The special visit required so that I could meet with Jessica Venable was approved quickly and with great professionalism. The warden and associate warden were cooperative with my request. The head of security at Lusk was prompt and helpful even though he was busy with transferring to the new men's prison in Torrington and he was also cooperative when I had to reschedule because of bad roads. At my visit, the officers I met were friendly and the official who oversaw the visit and conversation did not interrupt and was inconspicuous in his presence. I understood and accepted why they might want to have someone present.

I will now make application, with Jessica's acceptance, to become an "approved visitor." That would allow me to visit her in Lusk and also allow me to make deposits into her account at the prison so she has adequate cash to purchase things like stamps, paper, personal items, etc., that she may want or need. I already have readers who would like to help and they can do that by becoming an approved visitor or by directing money to Jessica through me. Only family members and approved visitors can do that.

Letters can be written her without becoming an approved visitor and I can provide her mailing address upon request here at the Cheyenne Herald. Call or e-mail.

With Jessica's acceptance, of course.



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