

Jessica Ballard Venable

I usually don't use names in stories in the Cheyenne Herald. Partially because the stories stand on their own merits - names aren't necessary to make them interesting or informative.

When I've written about this particular woman before, I didn't use her name. But, I consider this story too important to be told without her name. I believe she was so poorly represented, and her defense attorney knew he represented her poorly, that I don't want anonymity to stand in the way of the allegations I will continue to make in this case until Jessica Ballard is home again - with her children where she belongs.

I won't use the name "Venable" in the story because I believe the day she met the man she would be goaded into stabbing was the first day to the end of her life.

The guy she is in prison for killing had a long history of domestic abuse. He should not have been on the streets to terrorize Jessica on the day she finally took the protective action she had to - and should have - to protect herself and her three children.

For this district attorney to prosecute Jessica Ballard when he refused to similarly prosecute a guy who repeatedly struck his brother with an axle shaft with a gear on it, intending to harm his brother, is disgraceful. If Wyoming had standards of conduct and a test of prosecutorial integrity, this prosecutor would be removed.

He knows it. He didn't have his heart in prosecuting Jessica Ballard. Yet, he did it. In the axle swinger's case, his predecessor in the DA's office said that he would not approve a "probation only" sentence for this violent crime - which was originally charged as second degree murder. Yet, after the ensuing election, the new DA went against the position of his predecessor and approved a probation only sentence for the deliberate attack.

Jessica Ballard did not spend the night drinking or doing drugs with her husband. She was handed the knife she used to stab him when he would not break off the pursuit and torment of her. She did not go to a kitchen drawer or knife stand and retrieve it. In the axle swinger's case, he not only sought the murder weapon, he swung it "at least six times" according to his own attorney as sentencing.

The terrorists at Guantanamo had a better

and more competent defense than that mounted for Jessica Ballard. Like those in Cuba, she had no defense. An assigned attorney, but no defense.

Her husband had a history, a criminal history, of abuse of women. No matter how many times the prosecution dismisses or reduces charges against violent men like him, the files still record his misbehavior. In the two month period before Jessica took the necessary action to protect herself and her family, including a new baby, she twice sought a protective order. What happened? She did not appear at yet another hearing required to enforce the protection (not that the women are adequately protected anyway) and her husband was given a free pass to continue the abuse - both physical and emotional. Against her and her children.

Even an attorney who graduated in the bottom ten percent of his law class should have been able to mount a self-defense case here. He even said he could have. But he didn't. And then he had the guts to seek reimbursement for time and fees as though he had provided her an adequate defense. I wouldn't allow him to defend me for spitting on the sidewalk

Who cares about one woman? Who cares about a single case among the many that are mishandled by the DA's office and public defenders? By the time an appeal could work its way to and through the Supreme Court, she may be out of prison. With a felony conviction on her record and likely 3-4 years away from her children. People will forever look at her as a convicted criminal - for she is. Few will know the details - they'll just point a finger at her back and tell the one with them, "she killed her husband."

But, in my opinion, she committed no criminal act. She protected herself and he died. His death is also on the heads of the DA's office. Had they dealt with him properly, he would not have been there that day. She did not *murder* her husband. Certainly nothing like the axle swinger killed his brother. He walked out of the courtroom - guilty but free.

She was put in a van to Lusk. Innocent but incarcerated. And, who gives a damn? The prosecutor has another notch on his belt. The PD's office is used to losing cases. They sometimes do better than in this case, but they lose most. It is an uneven fight. The State has huge resources - the defense has pennies. Next case.

Channel 5's Anders Nelson

If you think the new kid on Channel 5 is doing okay, you should know he has a pretty good media blood line. His father is Denver KMGH7 Chief Meteorologist Mike Nelson. Mike has been on the air down there since 1991, first with KUSA-TV (1991-2004) and since with KMGH7 (2005-present). Prior to moving to Denver, Mike was Chief Meteorologist at KMOV-TV in St. Louis (1985-1991). Anders' father has more Weather Anchor Emmy's than one shelf will hold - 12 and counting.

A couple months back, this writer was listening to an Oldies AM station out of Denver (Cruisin' Oldies 950) one day and Mike Nelson does the weather cut-ins for the station. While talking with the on-air DJ, Mike mentioned his kid had landed a job on television in Cheyenne. When asked what his son would do, Mike said he was hired to do news, weather and sports. After losing other on-air talent, Channel 5 needs to find some new blood to make the broadcasts more interesting. If Anders is anything like his old man, he can do it. Welcome to town, young man. Do your Dad proud.

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Carey Avenue

What is going on with the simple one block long extension of Carey Avenue, between 15th St. and 16th St. (Lincolnway)?

Except for the short stretch of roadway known as Deming Blvd on the southside, there has not been construction this slow since . . . well, I can't remember when.

If this same outfit built the Chunnel, 31.4 miles of underwater tunnel connecting the UK and France, they'd still be carrying water in ice cream pails to lower the Strait of Dover.

If this same outfit built the Pacific Railroad from Council Bluffs, Iowa to Sacramento, California, a distance of 1,777 miles of track, they'd be at Omaha on the east end and Reno on the west after 140 years. Connected? Are you kidding?

If this same outfit built the replacement bridge over the Mississippi River near downtown Minneapolis after the collapse of the I-35 bridge on August 1, 2007, they'd still be trying to figure out how to build a bridge over water. Instead of going from design to completion in 13 1/2 months, our local outfit would have signs up that the bridge might be completed in 13 1/2 years, not 13 1/2 months.

How long ago was it that City Fathers were certain that Carey Avenue had to be abandoned so a pedestrian mall with small offices and a center "gazebo" could attract millions of visitors to the downtown?

What caused a new group of City Fathers to decide an extension of Carey toward the railroad tracks was desirable? Was it the abandonment of the Tivoli Building? The desertion of Frontier Printing?

There's no credible explanation for extending that street. There is nowhere to go to the south. Or come from. Does the Wyoming Business Council want to get to the Cheyenne Country Club a couple minutes faster? Double on the rocks, pls.

Perhaps they think that if they make Carey Avenue - for one block - the most attractive street in Cheyenne, it will also become the most inviting. It won't.

And, while the Gunslingers were given a very nice area to conduct their entertainment, passing trains will pose a problem quite regularly as they try to explain things to the gathered crowd. It's too bad that whoever encroached on the very "necessary" (albeit unused) 15th St. surface parking lot to take land for the Gunslingers didn't think to reconfigure the east

end of the remainder of the lot. But, they can't think of everything, can they? Or anything.

The striped parking spaces that remain head vehicles up a one-way path that requires them to back up for a dozen spaces or so when they're ready to leave - if other vehicles have also parked to the east end of the parking lot.

"Planning" isn't one of the City's strengths.

Speaking of parking, how do they get away with violating every requirement that would have been placed on a private lot? After being open for months, the Volk Parking Lot landscaping is still not started, the handicapped parking spaces do not have the proper symbol to designate them as handicapped (if everyone knows that blue on the ground means "handicap parking," they're okay - but, wait, what happens when the area is covered with snow?), there is inadequate ingress and egress, etc. I've been told that the matter of parking is what kept Buffalo Wild Wings from taking the former C.B. Potts restaurant on Dell Range.

As we've come to learn, rules apply to others, not the City of Cheyenne.

Carey Avenue will not lack for landscaping. It will have more landscaping per foot than any other street the city is responsible for. Whether they'll keep them alive or not is another question. Take a drive north on Converse (between Dell Range and Storey Boulevard) and notice the dead, dying and toppled trees along Converse. Rules require the planting of trees and/or shrubs - they don't require the maintenance of them. Without a drip line for regular irrigation, trees just won't make it in Cheyenne.

Maybe Carey is being constructed with stimulus funds but, like the auto dealers found out, being promised money is quite different than getting money. At the pace Carey Extension is being completed, it could run into the next presidency before we can drive a vehicle on that street.

If they need some brick pavers to complete the job, I can tell them where to find them. And, it's not very far from where countless workers are leaning on shovel handles along the Carey route.

What, pray tell, will be gained by having Carey extended one block toward (or from) the railroad tracks? Has anyone made a prediction about "economic development" the area will experience with another couple hundred feet of street?



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