

# The dastardly orchestrated theft of incarcerated Jessica Venable's baby

By chance, I discovered earlier today (Friday, August 6, 2010) that there was a hearing in Judge Peter Arnold's courtroom that would involve the custody of Jessica Venable's child or children. At 1:30.

A quick review: Jessica Venable is a Cheyenne mother of three who was the repeated victim of battering by a guy who should have been charged and convicted of felony domestic abuse long before the fateful day in which he lost his life. Jessica, poorly represented by a public defender, pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter and is serving a sentence of 6-12 years. She was first incarcerated in the local jail in June of 2008. Judge Arnold reduced her sentence by two years a couple months back and Jessica will soon be released to a halfway house on her way to freedom. Her three children, including an 18 month-old baby girl, were placed under guardianship of an older couple Jessica referred to as her "parents." They are not biological family - they had once acted as (likely paid) foster parents to Jessica and her sister.

Shortly after Jessica arrived in Lusk to serve her sentence, things started to go awry in terms of care and custody of her children. Instead of being supportive and caring "grandparents" to the children, the "parents" began to realize that raising children is much different than visiting them when they are under the care of a loving and doting mother and they could go home. So they started making plans to reduce or eliminate their responsibility, without Jessica's knowledge or approval.

Visits from her children (to Lusk) were coveted by Jessica. But, they became infrequent / stopped as the "guardians" had plans for the children that they knew Jessica would not sign onto nor agree with. First, they brought the biological father of the oldest boy into the child's life. He had never, according to Jessica, spent any time with the boy until learning of Jessica's imprisonment. The boy is very close and protective of Jessica and wants to remain in her life. But he was no longer being taken to Lusk to visit his mother.

*It should be pointed out here that the one constant I heard from neighbors of Jessica's when I began to look into her story was what a great mother she was. How she walked the younger boy to Freedom Elementary and went to get him (on foot) regardless of weather conditions. I have never heard one negative thing about her parenting or devotion to her children. The theft of her baby has nothing to do with her being an unfit mother. There are ulterior motives involved.*

Jessica Venable has written me and, on occasion, has called me, from Lusk. A blood relative who has filed a motion for guardianship of the baby has also called me a few times. When Jessica found out about the plan to take away her baby, she was devastated. It was bad enough that her children were no longer being brought to visit her, the people she had trusted to care for and nurture her children during

her unjust confinement had betrayed her at least as badly as the system had. There was no one she could trust. And, I believe, in her mind, that included me. She had nowhere to turn. Then, Judge Arnold reduced her sentence by twice the length she had requested. At last, she had reason to be hopeful. She had hope.

But, the "parents" had their plans. They had obviously promised Jessica's baby to a neighbor couple / friends of theirs and the fact that Jessica would not serve anywhere close to six years mattered little to them. They had decided that Jessica's adorable baby would be better off with their friends who could give her more things - provide nicer clothes, more toys, her own bedroom, all the things that, in their minds, represent love and affection - and Jessica would not be able to match those offerings when she got out of prison.

In the hearing today, it came out into the open that the "guardians" - the "parents" Jessica counted on to keep her three children together while she was away serving a sentence that should never have been imposed for an action that was not a crime - had actually given away her baby to the friends they also want to be able to adopt the little one before Jessica gets home. Their lawyer described it as these people having "guardianship" but their friends having "custody." Say what?

My wife and I were guardians of a young blood relative of mine several years ago. I was not given the right to farm the nine year-old boy out to others. I had full and total responsibility for his care and well-being. The Court and documents made our responsibilities clear to us. These guardians knew likewise. But, in January of this year, these "parents" gave away Jessica's baby. Gave her away. They should be charged and tried for trafficking. And the friends who accepted the baby should be charged and tried as accomplices. This baby is not a piano, is not a bicycle. No one having legal guardianship of a minor can hand that child over to another who may not be an acceptable guardian.

The attorney for the baby's guardians / custodians was allowed to make statement to this judge that should have been stricken and the attorney scolded. Several times he questioned the motivation of the blood relatives who have also filed a motion for guardianship of the little girl. He said they didn't put in their pro se documents that their interest was for the benefit of the child - as though their actions did not make that clear. From their telephone hook-up near Riverton, the woman told the Court they were "family" and that should count for something. And it is supposed to. Courts are supposed to place children with biological family if they are available, fit and willing. The relatives of Jessica and the baby don't have to satisfy a high paid attorney about their motivation. It certainly isn't financial as is his.

And if their reasons include providing a safe environment for the little girl only until her mother is free, good for them.

For this attorney to impugn their "motives" when his clients gave away the baby, without authority or consent of the mother, is disgusting. Someone should ask him what his motivation is in representing adults who would pass along someone else's child(ren) when they were charged with providing care for them.

And, collectively, they want this Court to rule that Jessica Venable is an unfit mother and terminate Jessica's parental rights? There are people here who, by their actions, have proven themselves unfit, and it is not Jessica Venable.

There are four separate matters before Laramie County District Courts - one before Judge Arnold and three before Judge Campbell. The guardianship of the betrayers who handed over Jessica's baby girl to friends (and her pre-teen son to an absent biological father) want their guardianship extended beyond October when it will expire. The blood relatives who want to provide care for the little girl have also sought guardianship. The despicable also seek to terminate Jessica Venable's parental rights. Presumably only for the little girl. The middle son has special needs and is not so much in demand as the darling little girl. Who wouldn't want to be able to take a child of someone else's who has proven to be adorable, intelligent, loving and, they think, available? That childbirth thing can be rough. These people could adopt an unwanted baby. One from an orphanage in South Korea, Russia, South America or the Bronx. But they've seen this little girl since birth and now they want her for their own. She is no risk. The fourth legal matter is adoption of the little girl if Jessica's parental rights are terminated.

It would be criminal to terminate Jessica's parental rights. It is unwarranted. That is not an action taken against all parents who are serving prison sentences. And this parent should not be serving a prison sentence and everyone knows it. The "parents" didn't step in and protect Jessica and the children when Jessica was being repeatedly abused. Beaten. They bear some of the responsibility for what eventually happened. Their hands are not clean. Now they want her child. Her baby. Not for themselves, that was too much work. For their friends. How sickening.

Arnold ruled to consolidate the four cases, then said that he had sentenced Jessica Venable and had reduced her sentence so he probably should not be the judge to hear these cases. He should absolutely hear and rule on these cases. He has a familiarity with a victim who deserves fairness, so he has an additional duty. The "parents" and the couple who want a child the easy way - no conception and no labor involved - are lawyered up. Jessica is on a telephone from the Women's Center in Lusk. Not present in the courtroom while strangers decide what happens to the baby she gave birth to and loved unconditionally until the day the system stole her freedom. Now they want to steal her baby. How nauseating.

## CFD Night Shows

So soon old. So late smart.

That can sometimes describe me as well as it does others.

I'm not sure how often I've promised myself "never again" after leaving a CFD Night Show. It's not once. Nor twice.

I've never raised the advertising rates in the Cheyenne Herald but CFD has more than quadrupled the prices for a Night Show in the past 20 years. And, no, Clay Walker is not worth more now than Garth Brooks was then. It must be nice.

Anyway, my wife and I went to two, count 'em, TWO! night shows this year. We saw Dierks Bentley with Miranda Lambert and Sugarland with Danny Gokey on consecutive nights.

I may have mentioned it here before but I think I'd rather be waterboarded than to enter Frontier Park during Frontier Days. It has been many years since I thought drunks were interesting or amusing. And just circling the carnival midway to kill time can be creepy. The poor exhibitors under the stands must lose 30-40 pounds in ten days. There is not a breath of fresh air and the temperature must top 90 degrees. Just looking around under there at a bit of a trot takes far too long.

Have you ever heard any attendee of a CFD Night Show later say, "that sound volume was just about right - maybe a little low." In 24 years of going to the Night Shows, I have heard nothing but complaints. If it were after a LaToya Jackson show, you might think she needed to muffle her voice because it's so bad. But, Miranda Lambert, Dierks Bentley and Jennifer Nettles can sing. They can carry a tune. I always thought it was the sound board operators. But, after leaving the Sugarland concert before it ended and walking back to our car several blocks away, I hit on the problem. The speakers are far too large and powerful for the venue. By the time we reached our car about ten blocks from the concert, Jennifer's voice was crystal clear and all her words were finally understandable.

So. I think concert prices are a bit steep. I think parking in the lot is unnecessary and too expensive. I don't think drunks are funny. I think the carnival midway is like a dark alley in South Bronx. And I think the Night Show performers' words are indecipherable. I think products for sale on the grounds are unwanted. I think the Park's food and drink are unaffordable. And I think the neighborhood sidewalks used to get back to the car in pitch darkness after the Night Shows are dangerous from disrepair.

Why with all the negatives did I go to another Night Show after saying I'd never go again? Two words, readers. Two words.

I'm married.