

Do not praise predators

Family and friends tried to influence the sentence of an admitted serial child molester - downward!

The message in this story is that, when asked to provide a reference letter for a person accused of the dastardly crime of repeatedly sexually assaulting a teenage girl in his care, be damned careful. No matter what you might have believed or been told, find out the whole story before sending a letter that will end up in the case file and make you look like a fool.

It is the policy of the Cheyenne Herald to withhold individual's names from most stories and that will be maintained here. But it is hard not to let the public know just who said inappropriate and unfortunate things about this reprobate.

This story, briefly: A foster father repeatedly sexually assaulted a young girl he was to provide care and nurturing. The case file discloses that he physically assaulted the girl for either a year and a half (by his admission) to five years (her accusation according to the Assistant District Attorney). He admitted to his despicable conduct "12-15 times" over the course of 18 months and also admitted to "3-4" instances in less than a week just before the girl reported him.

Three felony charges of "2nd Degree Sexual Assault - Position of Authority" were filed against the predator. Each carried a potential sentence of up to 20 years and up to a \$10,000 fine. A plea agreement was reached and he was recently sentenced to 7-14 years on each count, to be served consecutively. That means, of course, one after another.

Deals and sentencing in other local cases written about on these pages in the past couple years have often been lenient to the convicted. In this case, ADA Antoinette Healy did an excellent job. Unlike many of those who wrote glowingly about the admitted offender, she did not shirk her responsibility to the victim.

As so often happens in these plea agreements, the allocution leaves much to be desired. One standing in front of the judge to be sentenced is supposed to tell the Court what happened - truthfully and with specificity. Usually, they diminish their transgression(s) and the judge allows it.

In this case, the adult responsible for the care of this 15 year-old girl told the judge: "I was approached by the victim, to, basically, make a deal to - so she could drive our vehicle. She wanted to trade this stuff to me. I accepted and (he described one of the acts for which he pled guilty)."

The ADA disagreed with his characterization and pointed out there was much more to his criminal contact with the child.

About the only positive thing to be said for this guy is that his guilty plea spared the young girl and her two younger sibling (and the guy's wife) the ordeal of a trial. That would be more trauma for her.

After his plea but before sentencing, 14 letters in support of the guilty foster parent were sent to Laramie County District Court Judge Ed Grant. To his credit, he gave them no consideration.

The letters were personal in nature and often identified the youngsters by name who had been in foster care of this family for ten years. Excerpts follow:

"Both ---- and --- (the adults) have character. They are good, trustworthy people."

"If a man can take three children in his home unconditionally and instill moral values, integrity and pride, that is a very honorable man. We need more people in this world like Mr. -----."

We need more people like a serial child molester in this world? No we don't.

"These children probably would not be where they are without the opportunities ---- provided for them." "... vacations that provided positive lifetime experiences for the foster children in their care."

The criminal has "... strong faith and good character," wrote a supporter.

"---- treated his three foster kids with respect. He was a terrific father to these three sibling. We feel that ---- helped enlighten the lives of these children."

"He is a person of great family values."

A letter on government letterhead: "... he is one of the most intelligent, honest, ambitious and trustworthy individuals I have ever had the pleasure to work with." On official stationery paid for by taxpayers!

One friend blamed the victim: "Disciplining children can often be misconstrued as 'abuse' ..." "Children often resent being told what to do and if it brings the desired results, they will try or say whatever is necessary to avoid being obedient." Ask the guy now in Rawlins if the child lied about what happened. She didn't.

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Recycling

While the City talks a good game about recycling, they don't play one very well.

They chirp away about recycling - how important it is and even how they are exploring the possibility of single stream recycling with curbside pick-up but at the same time, the only blue bin collection points are in the northern third of the city.

I can personally attest to how popular the recycling effort on the southside had been. There were occasions when the bins for newspapers and magazines were completely full.

But now those blue bins are gone.

They had been placed next to the former

Capitol City Super Foods but they've been removed.

The 8,000 residents of South Cheyenne and those in Ward One south of the UP tracks have to travel all the way out to Pershing Blvd. or further north, to participate in recycling efforts.

That's hard to do. Or at least it's inconvenient to do.

It just doesn't seem that it should be that difficult to find a replacement site for the blue bins - they don't take up much room - but the City doesn't seem to be able to accomplish that. Can you imagine them actually handling single stream recycling of plastics, paper, glass and more?

Gas prices

As a product of one of the best public school systems in the country, I should be able to figure this out. But I'm having some difficulty.

How can gas sold in the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota be as low as \$2.82⁹ on June 12th when it was \$3.09⁹ or higher in Cheyenne on the same date? It is dropping slowly here but that differential is hard to explain.

Minnesota's state gas tax is 20¢ a gallon, while Wyoming's is 14¢ a gallon.

So, with gas tax 6¢ higher in Minnesota,

the pump price is from 25¢ to 35¢ a gallon lower?

It isn't like they're using a 25% ethanol blend or have refineries on every corner - that just isn't the case.

For some unfathomable reason - and don't lay it on Frontier Refinery being down for a brief time for improvements - Cheyenne residents are paying pricing that are out-of-line with other places.

Colorado's gas tax is 22¢ a gallon and Nebraska is 28¢ a gallon. Still, their prices are comparable to ours. Why?

Back to Black

For the time being, print issues of the Cheyenne Herald will be in black ink only. Pages offered on the Cheyenne website will continue to be presented in full color.

Production and composition problems have prompted this decision. There will be periodic issues in full colors but, primarily, issues will be in black and white.

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