

"I didn't do it. I'd like a pardon."

How many innocent people have been convicted of a crime they did not commit? No one could even fathom an accurate guess. It seems like every week, we now see on television another wrongly convicted prisoner leave confinement.

And every week, a prosecutor defends his conviction, no matter the preponderance of evidence that pointed toward innocence. He will not admit error.

We have seen grave injustice as near as Fort Collins. Devious detectives became judges while an innocent sat in a prison cell.

The first contact I had with the guy whose wrecked Corvette (on which, by the way, he never collected a penny of insurance money), was after what appeared to have been someone finally coming forward and taking responsibility for the incident that October 1988 night.

As a result of our first conversation in 2006, the wrongly convicted met with a respected attorney to discuss an approach for a pardon. Disappointingly, that advice was that because an election was coming up in November, it would not be a good time to apply for a pardon - that the Governor was not likely to grant a pardon if the justification had anything to do with poor work on the part of law enforcement.

Quite a reflection on the Governor. In this case, the guy wasn't looking for commutation of a sentence so he could get released from prison. He'd never been imprisoned, just wrongly convicted. But it was the opinion of one who should know that the governor would not grant a pardon if it might cost him a single vote from those in law enforcement.

The other advice he was given at the time was to drop the claim of innocence. This guy had no criminal history before that night and hasn't had so much as a traffic citation since. Once again, the advice was that Wyoming's governor would not grant a pardon if it reflected poorly on law enforcement. Whether accurate or not did not matter. He would protect his standing

with law enforcement rather than grant a deserved pardon. The clearest path to a pardon seemed to be to focus on a law-abiding life not on innocence of the crime the guy had been convicted of.

My understanding in late-2006 was that the guy would wait until after the election and then apply for a pardon based on an exemplary life after the conviction.

I was wrong but did not know that until a couple weeks ago.

He could not bring himself to admit to having committed a crime he had not committed and made his pardon application based on being wrongfully convicted.

I was surprised. No, I was shocked.

In a November 14, 2006 e-mail to me (which I kept because I thought this matter would resurface), he indicated he would make the application based on his having been "a good boy" and the governor wouldn't have to admit "anything in the state's legal process went wrong." Then, he wrote, "bottom line, although I will more than likely get my rights restored, in the eyes of many I will still be considered a criminal."

In closing, he wrote: "So, I feel I basically have to conform to the guidelines set before me if I want to be granted a pardon. Though I have extreme heart burn about how I was told to word my pardon, I don't feel I have any other choice other than to conform to their format, or just not apply for one at all."

He went on, "I have chosen to apply for a pardon, get my pardon, then express my innocence in other ways if opportunity presents itself in the future."

But he could not bring himself to do it that way. He could not bring himself to utter or write the words, "I am guilty as charged." So his pardon application was based on his contention of innocence. It was, predictably, denied.

The governor has an attorney on staff,

who goes by the unlikely name of "Kip."

January 29, 2008, Kip wrote a six-page letter of denial to the pardon applicant.

His officious posturing is very familiar to the likes of Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld of Project Innocence. They've probably read hundreds of similar mis-sives - each relating how law enforcement and juries are infallible and how in their personal experience, they've never seen such great legal work on both sides and that the convicted would have been convicted a thousand times out of a thousand.

Then, the DNA comes in. Oops.

Where are these blowhards then? Why aren't they hoisted on their own importance. Headnodding is not a virtue.

Kip wrote: "I think I can tell the difference between a good case -- a good trial, and a bad one."

Pray tell, then, o' pompous one, name a bad case and a bad trial. I'll wait by the e-mail. Name one. "Had I been on the jury, I would have voted to convict him without hesitation," he added.

Just as the jury did to Tim Masters in Fort Collins, as the appeals court and Colorado Supreme Court did. As did all the juries, appeal courts and supreme courts in all the wrongful convictions overturned by Project Innocence and others.

This public offender's arrogance about a conviction he knows little about but will defend to his last breath provides a strong basis for not allowing pinheads like him to serve on juries. He is a believing that one who is accused is guilty or he would not be accused.

He stated in his letter that independent engineers hired by the insurance company would not "slant their testimony or they quickly lose credibility, and thus their livelihood."

Is medicinal marijuana legal in our governor's office? Expert witnesses testify for or against a side depending on whom is paying their expert witness fee. Does this moron not know if an expert witness does not agree with a hypothesis, he does not get the gig? They are hired guns, you dope, not independent.

In late 2004, almost exactly 16 years after the incident, there was much in the news about a potentially hazardous material having been sent to the governor's office, Channel 5 and the daily newspaper. The WT-E printed a "manifesto" allegedly written by the perpetrator of the mailings. Profanity laced, the writer warned of all kinds of mayhem if his demands were not met. It seemed that his accusations were directed at the same company that owned the equipment at the construction site back in 1988. He "took credit" for much other damage he had done with or to heavy equipment over the intervening years.

He wrote the following: "If you check your records you will know I am capable of *#^@*% up lots of stuff with heavy equipment. Ask (local company) what I did with their equipment back in August 1989. *#^@*% And all you powerless *#^@*% could do was to put out a \$1,000 reward in the trader paper. How pathetic is that. If (local company) paid their employees a fair wage for the work we performed we wouldn't be so pissed off."

Then, "I nailed that *#^@*% in a black or dark blue Corvette out on Missile Drive by the back base gate with a water truck back in October 1988 to get your attention. After 5 or 6 letters to state employment about unfair wages I was going to drive that truck into the Herschler Building to make a point but the *#^@*% in the Corvette got in the way instead so I hit him instead. That one was so *#^@*% funny to watch all the *#^@*% pigs running around with their heads cut off looking for me. One cop started to come up to the out house I was hiding in and I stepped out just before he got there. *#^@*% must have been blind. He looked right at me and didn't say a word to me. Stupid *#^@*%. Could have had me there. Pretty easy to do when the keys are already there and you just drive away."

The letter writer named several incidents of destruction. Did law enforcement check out any of them to verify his veracity? The guy with the D-9 in Granby, Colorado was his role model. He planned to do with heavy equipment what that guy had done. With no logical explanation as to why someone had chosen to drive a truck broadside into a Corvette that night, might this explanation be the one? Who cared? They had their man. Right or wrong, they had their man.

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