

A guy looking for a hand up, not a handout.

It is not unusual to get a call from someone who tells me that they've tried everyone or everything else and just can't get the necessary answers or help with their problem(s). They've heard I may be willing to listen to their story and offer some help - or at least share the story with a public who may or may not care.

I had another of those contacts several days ago.

While I'm pleased that word has spread that this local advocacy journal has been successful in bringing satisfactory resolutions to some matters, and flattered that more and more people think we have become the court of last resort for them, I am also disappointed and disgusted that those who are being paid to deal with these issues are not doing so.

The caller outlined a story I would normally pass on but there are times when the despair is obvious and I just know that the "authorities" are not likely to even try to solve the guy's problems. So I agreed to sit down with him - I prefer face-to-face meetings so I can try to size up the person who has contacted me - and we met on two separate occasions.

The subject of this story is not a native of Wyoming or a current resident of Cheyenne but has had experiences in a couple of the northern cities of this state that has left him frustrated, hurt and angry.

At this point, let me confess to not knowing much about mental health and its tangents. My research on the subject has been fairly limited and I don't have any real firsthand experience or knowledge on the subject. And as mental health issues relate to adults, I am even less familiar. I have spent dozens of hours researching Ritalin and other psychotropic drugs and their use on children - that subject I have knowledge and strong opinions about.

For a total of about four hours, I listened to a story of a man who had been labeled as a boy as "slow." He had been banished to special ed classes and held back a grade. Yet, he could throw out details, numbers and statistics to me with the best of them. He has had the energy and drive to bicycle across the country. He has hitchhiked across the country as well.

We spent some time on his experience, as a child, with Ritalin. For this story, I'll just say that one with direct knowledge of that drug helped to further confirm my stand on it. And it ain't a supportive one.

If adults think that kids won't remember the labeling now more common even than when this guy was a boy, they're wrong. He told me that when classmates called him "retard" he responded.

The initial subject we spoke about on his introductory telephone call and in person was a complaint he has filed against a counselor he had in a central Wyoming city. I explained to him that I seldom use names and specific locations so revenge could not be extracted on my pages. I have copies of his grievance and of a

document he provided which gives much of his personal history.

Admitting to being much in the dark when it comes to mental health causes, issues and solutions, his Complaint Report to the Mental Health Professions Licensing Board (and he's had no satisfaction of it as of today, November 24, 2006), relates a relationship that certainly sounds improper. A woman who was to be his counselor interjected her own personal life experiences to him - when he was visiting her to understand and improve his own mental health.

Perhaps that is normal treatment practice. In this holiday week, I simply ran out of time to confer with professionals to determine whether the conduct described in the complaint was appropriate. I would hope not.

While he was receiving counseling from her, she was, according to him, describing her lifestyle which included her "wild trips" to Sturgis, S.D. His complaint alleges that the female counselor provided him both her personal cell phone no. and her home telephone no. He alleges that she introduced him, her patient (or client, whichever you prefer), to her children and invited him to attend family functions.

When I asked this guy about his experience with workers in the mental health field, he said others besides this one shared personal life experiences with him and it was not uncommon that the "counselor" had serious issues of their own - with drugs (past, generally), relationship in their own lives, etc.

Should a patient (client) even know about any weaknesses, troubles, or failings in the lives of one who is supposed to be able to help them deal with their issues?

Are all of his complaint allegations true or provable? I do not know. The complaint was filed in August of 2005 and no resolution has come of it. He has been told things but I could not confirm them

so I will not relate that here.

I queried him repeatedly on what he was asking or expected of me. I think it would come down to two things.

First, he wanted his story told. His story about a counselor with the State who had complicated and confused his life when she was charged with improving and straightening it out. He did not indicate he was looking for a financial payout. He had done as she advised, "you can tell me everything," then she turned some of those confessions on him. She told him she had herself been abused as a child. He had shared a similar experience with her and never expected she would play it back to him in that way.

If his story calls attention to mistakes and abuses made by mental health counselors, the telling it will have been productive. These are persons in a position of trust and it seems critical that they have an arm's length relationship with those seeking and needing their counseling.

While he seems to be in need of counseling, he is leery now and reluctant to trust anyone. He's not crazy and he's not dumb. He is on disability and receives a monthly check. He values his independence and told me he would not seek or accept meals and lodging from places set up to provide them. He wants to work.

He has a pickup and a bicycle he carries in the back. He is proud to have ridden 100,000 miles on his bicycles.

The borrowed slogan that headlines this story describes this 44 year-old man. He isn't looking for anyone's charity. He is looking for work. A job that can lead to better things in his life. A job that he can handle. He has done things like landscaping and detailing. He'd like to have his own truck detailing shop. Self-sufficiency is his goal. He is drug and alcohol-free.

In this time of sharing and caring, if a reader can help, contact me at 637-2879.

Another "find" in the Republican Party Public Records Request?

As time permits, I will continue to wade through the public records provided to the Republican Party - of which they seem to have made a pile and ignored.

Sole source contracts are often an interesting subject. The Cheyenne Herald has been tipped before about abuse of sole source contract granting but has not pursued the subject.

A perfunctory glance at one of the records on "sole source contracts" of the Dave Freudenthal administration was rewarding. A business name from the past leaped off the page. Then, a review of the contract itself caused further concern.

Phil Shaffer was once president of Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power. Years after he lost that employment, he was retained by the City of Cheyenne to lead the hostile takeover of his former employer, Cheyenne Light. That effort, of course, failed. But he has one of those lucrative, and somewhat questionable sole source contracts with the State. Most contracts describe with specificity its purpose. Shaffer's contract says, basically, that he will provide consulting of an unspecified nature, for two days per month, at the rate of one thousand dollars per day. That's right, \$1,000.00 a day! Plus expenses!

"... advice and assistance in the areas of professional management and strategy." Shaffer (CSLLC) also is "reimbursed for travel and other service related expenses." Mileage, food, lodging, etc.

The original term of the contract was May 2, 2003 thru May 22, 2004 and it has been renewed three times since. Was this a legitimate contract or a sweetheart deal for an old friend? Repubs didn't ask.