

Chief Bob Fecht's Phony Master's Degree is Giving Black Eye to Cheyenne and Its Police Department

NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE USA ARE REPRINTING TRIBUNE-EAGLE'S LAME DEFENSE WHICH MAKES CHEYENNE'S POLICE CHIEF, MAYOR, AND HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR LOOK LIKE WITLESS RUBES

by
Jim Mathewson
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Two weeks ago, **THE CHEYENNE HERALD** revealed that **Police Chief Bob Fecht** had requested and received more than \$2500 from the City of Cheyenne as reimbursement for his so-called "Master's in Criminal Justice" degree from an unaccredited diploma mill in Mississippi.

Four days later, the **Wyoming Tribune-Eagle** ... always eager to come to **Mayor Jack Spiker's** defense when **THE HERALD** exposes problems or misdeeds at City Hall ... once again embarrassed itself with an error-filled frontpage story excusing the Mayor, the Police Chief, and anyone else associated with this sorry episode.

The WT-E's story written by Kelly Milner claimed that the City got its money's worth from the extensive "research" Chief Fecht was required to do in order to receive his mail-order diploma from Lacrosse University.

While the Tribune's story correctly pointed out that Lacrosse was and is the subject of numerous investigations into degree-selling businesses, it tried to create the false impression that Lacrosse's phony degrees are considered legit by some reputable accrediting agencies. That's simply not true.

Ms. Milner even reached so far as to mention that Lacrosse is a member of the local Better Business Bureau in Southern Mississippi, a laughable and irrelevant factoid which she borrowed from Lacrosse's website.

The Associated Press ??

Two days after our original story about Chief Fecht's bogus Master's Degree, Cheyenne's local television station (KGWN Channel 5) added a shortened

version of our story to its website. Instead of attributing it to **THE CHEYENNE HERALD**, however, it listed the source of the story as the "ASSOCIATED PRESS".

Contrary to what Channel 5's website implies, the Associated Press had nothing whatsoever to do with the original story about Chief Fecht's mail-order degree. Nor did AP or Channel 5 contact us for permission to misappropriate the story and claim it as their own.

Also interesting about Channel 5's website are the two advertising links which appeared directly below the five paragraphs about Chief Fecht. They're ads for websites promoting mail-order diplomas!!

Nationwide exposure and embarrassment

The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle is a member of Associated Press. As such, its original stories ... when it does write them ... are available to other newspapers around the USA which are AP members.

Apparently, a large number of AP member papers have found the story about our Police Chief's bogus Master's Degree interesting enough to share with their own readers. Every day, more and more papers from coast to coast are reprinting the WT-E's hapless defense of Chief Bob Fecht's mail-order matriculation.

The readers of those papers are also learning that Cheyenne has a Mayor and a Human Resource Director who don't seem to understand the difference between legitimate institutions of higher education and those sleazy operations like Lacrosse University which prey on people who are too lazy or deceitful to earn college credentials honestly.

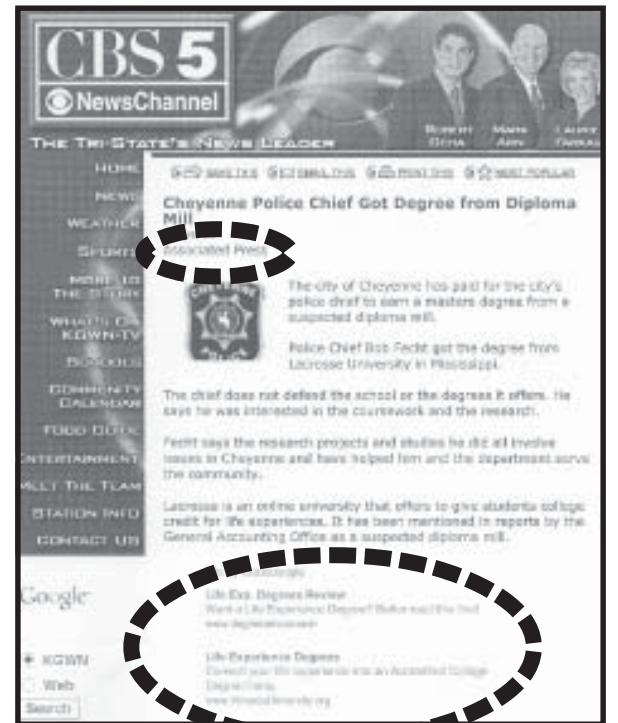
One has to wonder just how many mayors, police



MONDAY
April 18



FRIDAY
April 22



chiefs, human resource directors, and managing editors around the country are reading reprints of the WT-E's unfortunate defense of mail-order diplomas and asking themselves, "What kind of Mickey Mouse operations are they running in Cheyenne these days?"

Hi, I'm Bob Fecht

Sadly, the Tribune-Eagle story of April 22nd is also starting to appear on internet sites promoting mail-order diplomas like Chief Fecht's. Because of the false impression the WT-E tried to create to help Mayor Spiker and the Chief, its story is apparently finding utility as a convoluted endorsement of such bogus degrees.

What's next? Will Chief Fecht's image or voice start popping up on websites or commercials. Will we all be cringing when we read or hear something like this? ...

"Hi, I'm Bob Fecht, the Police Chief of Cheyenne, Wyoming. I purchased my Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from an unaccredited mail-order business. My Mayor was so impressed that he agreed to reimburse almost all of the fees using money in the City's bank account. Maybe your boss is as gullible as mine."

Commentary

I'm so lucky. I'm so thrilled. I'm so, so honored !!! Three weeks ago I sent an email requesting information from Lacrosse University ... the "school" where Police Chief Bob Fecht purchased his Master's Degree in Criminal Justice.

The packet finally arrived the other day and it was certainly worth the wait. It contained a letter confirming that I've been accepted into Lacrosse's graduate program. I've been assigned my own Student ID Number ... #91156, thank you very much ... and I've already received credit for about 10% of Lacrosse's Criminal Justice Master's.

My only regret is that I used email to request the information packet. I can only imagine how much farther along I'd be by now if I'd used the phone or sent a handwritten letter with a commemorative stamp on the envelope. Bummer.

After reading what Lacrosse sent, I suspect that in almost no time at all I'll qualify for a mid-level managerial job with the Cheyenne Police Department.

On second thought, maybe not.

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Yesterday (May 1st), the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle tried again to retrieve the Police Chief's chestnuts from the fire with an editorial which merely repeated many of the factual errors contained in the WT-E's original frontpage story about Bob Fecht's bogus mail-order Master's Degree.

The fact-challenged editorial writer's position is that Chief Fecht did nothing wrong and is entitled to the entire \$2500+ the City reimbursed to him for his Master's Degree from Lacrosse University. (The WT-E said \$2300, but we won't quibble. Anytime the daily gets within 10% of any actual dollar figure, it's cause for celebration, not derision.)

To the extent that Chief Fecht did nothing wrong in purchasing a bogus Master's Degree from an unaccredited business like Lacrosse, we are in total agreement with the uninformed editorial writer at the Tribune.

Where we part company with the daily is on the issue of reimbursement from the City of Cheyenne's public funds.

The WT-E says it's okay because the City's policy on Tuition Reimbursement didn't specify that the degree-granting school ... or more appropriately in this case, the degree-selling business ... had to be accredited by someone with honest-to-goodness credentials.

That argument in defense of the Chief goes up in smoke when you recall what **THE HERALD** pointed out in our original story about the bogus Master's Degree. The money to reimburse Chief Fecht for his \$2500+ of Lacrosse expenses came, not from the Tuition Reimbursement account, but from other accounts controlled by Rick Abernathy, the City's Human Resource Director.

The fact that the Purchase Orders signed by Rick Abernathy and the Lacrosse receipts submitted by Police Chief Fecht indicate TUITION REIMBURSEMENT as the purpose is in conflict with the reality that the money was not taken out of the account established for that type of legitimate reimbursement. Instead, it was taken out of the Human Resource Department's "Professional Services" and "Employee Development" accounts.

Such mis-coding of Purchase Orders is indicative that either the Human Resource Director or the Police Chief ... perhaps both ... knew that using City funds to reimburse the Chief for his unaccredited Lacrosse degree was wrong. Even a hokey Criminal Justice program like Lacrosse's must mention the concept of "Consciousness of Guilt" somewhere along the way.

If Cheyenne had a Mayor with a backbone ... unfortunately, it doesn't ... Chief Fecht would have heard something similar to this during the past two weeks:

"Bob, this doesn't pass the smell test. It's making us all look like a bunch of ninnies. Worse yet, it has the very real potential to hurt the Police Department's credibility among the citizens and with other law enforcement entities. We simply can't permit that to happen. You're welcome to keep your Lacrosse degree, but you must make arrangements with the Treasurer's office to get that \$2500 back into the City's bank account a little at a time or all at once. The choice is up to you, Chief."

Jim Mathewson