

**Forgive me, HERALD, for I have sinned**

The nightly TV news shows have been filling up lately with stories about public officials and their embarrassing falls from grace. Three U.S. Senators, for example, have each had their images plastered on the screen as they tried to explain away their indiscretions.

Senator David Vitter of Louisiana admitted (with his humiliated wife obediently standing next to him) that he had a connection to a call girl enterprise in Washington, DC.

Senator Larry Craig of Idaho admitted (with his humiliated wife obediently standing next to him) that he had entered a guilty plea to something which supposedly took place in a Minneapolis restroom.

Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska had some lackey from his office admit that the Senator was under investigation by the I.R.S. and other agencies for accepting gifts from companies which had benefitted from his legislative skills.

The fact that all three gentlemen got elected to America's most exclusive and powerful "club" as chest-thumping conservatives gives us at THE HERALD no particular pleasure ... okay, maybe just a little pleasure for one of us ... so we probably won't be devoting a lot of future space to such non-local scandals.

What prompted this reference to the three pompous fools was Senator Vitter's soulful explanation that he has now been forgiven for his sins by both his wife and his God. How sweet.

Taking a cue from the fun-loving Senator from the bayou, we at THE HERALD have decided to take a more forgiving approach to those about whom we write.

From this time forward, we'll no longer rake anyone over the coals IF they admit their indiscretions or thefts of public money and/or time BEFORE we write about them AND IF they make financial amends in a timely manner.

Thank you, Senator Vitter, for opening our eyes, our minds, and our hearts. We here at THE HERALD now forgive you too. Lead on.

*One Citizen's Opinion*

A faithful HERALD reader applauded us for last issue's story about the City of Cheyenne employee who's been making all those pre-dawn calls from inside City Hall to someone in Centennial, Wyoming.

Our thoughtful fan also forwarded some current or proposed text from Laramie County's personnel rules dealing with the use of County-owned cell phones and vehicles. Here's what it says about the phones:

**Cell phones issued to County employees to conduct business off-premises are considered listed property by Internal Revenue Code Rule 280 and must be used and reported according to the policies in order to not be treated as taxable income for the employee.**

**(a) No personal use of a County-issued cell phone is permitted;**

**(b) Each County employee to whom a cell phone has been issued by the County must sign a statement declaring that there has been no personal use of the cell phone and attach it to each monthly billing. The form is prescribed by the Finance Office;**

**(c) If a County employee uses a County-issued cell phone for personal use, all personal calls and a pro-rated share of the monthly billing must be included in the wages of the employee. County employees shall keep a record of all calls made indicating the date, time, and business purpose of the call and submit it to the Finance Office with the monthly billing.**

We also heard (several times) from the City employee who's been making all those calls to Centennial. In keeping with our new FORGIVE-ME-HERALD-FOR-I-HAVE-SINNED policy (as previewed in the column to the left), we will not be identifying the caller or the person on the other end of his calls UNLESS he fails to PROMPTLY and FULLY reimburse the citizens of Cheyenne for BOTH the cost of the calls AND the value of the time he spent making the calls.

He knows how much the City pays him each month. That amount divided by the number of hours he works per month will yield a per-hour compensation figure.

From there it's just a hop, skip, and a jump to establish a per-minute rate which can be easily multiplied by the number of minutes the phone company has tallied for his calls during the past 3 years. (We printed only 7 months worth of calls.)

If he can't do the math, we'll gladly do it for him. Fair warning, however. We reserve the right to append a "chiseler penalty" to our own calculation if he waits too long or wants to continue arguing about the appropriateness of using City-owned phones for extended personal long distance calls on almost a daily basis.

And argue he does, as you'll see if we decide to publish his several emails. Those emails suggest that he wants THE HERALD to cut him some slack for the following reasons:

- He has a personal cell phone but he wasn't using it or a City-issued cell phone to make all those calls to Centennial. He was using the phone which sits on his desk at City Hall;
- He's a good guy who does valuable work for the City;
- He knows lots of current and former members of the City Council who'll say nice things about him;
- He's a veteran and a non-smoker;
- The calls were "welfare calls" to an "elderly woman" who lives alone in the mountains; and
- Bob Bradshaw, the City's Director of Special Projects and keeper of the phone logs, told him that it was okay because calls to Centennial from City Hall are free. (Not true.)

The fact that Bob Bradshaw can't accurately decipher phone bills is symptomatic of much bigger financial problems at City Hall. Troubling too is his apparent belief that City employees making personal calls on City time is acceptable.

We at THE HERALD applaud the fact that the City employee who's been making all those calls to Centennial is a thoughtful, non-smoking veteran who just wanted to check to see if his elderly woman friend in the mountains had been attacked by a marauding bear or raccoon during the night.

We suggest, however, that from now on he should make those welfare calls from his own home phone or from his own personal cell phone BEFORE he comes into City Hall.

And oh yes ... he should take his personal checkbook to the Treasurer's office ASAP.

*Jim Mathewson*

*Jim Mathewson is just a poor dumb citizen of Cheyenne. His email address is jmat44691@yahoo.com*

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