

Howard Lawrence
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June 21, 2016

Ms. Alice Gruenberg
Retired Principal, Prairie Elementary School
173 Cape Pointe Circle
Jupiter, FL 33477-9640

Dear Ms. Gruenberg:

I hope this letter finds you in good health and enjoying retirement!

I recognize that due to your professional accomplishments, most of your correspondence is filled with happiness and fond memories. This is not one of those letters.

As you were likely the one professional person closest to the affair between Dewey Menter and Joanne Lawrence, I chose to share this story with you. As a parent to two children in Prairie School, you were an important resource to help me work through a difficult and horrific experience in my life and in the lives of my children.

As you know, my children are Amanda and Ryan Lawrence. The marriage of Dewey and Joanne left deep scars in their long-term emotional growth. They have been subjected to fabricated and deliberate emotional abuse. I understand that children can be hurt, but I do not understand deliberate abuse. I had my relationship with the children and that was fine. Dewey and Joanne did not like my relationship and they spent their marital energy TEARING my relationships with the children apart. And they succeeded.

TO PARAPHRASE

In the foyer of our house, Joanne said she wanted a divorce. I said, "Why" and she replied "Just because". This was repeated one other time and I convinced her to go to a psychologist with me. Joanne said nothing during the session; the psychologist abruptly threw us out of his office because he could not establish respect and respect is the foundation of friendship. It would have been a perfect opportunity to talk about her "affair and our children, the Elephants in the room".

At the house the children were *hysterical*. I had loving bonds with the children and Joanne spent her time telling the children she was getting a divorce because I was very mentally ill. I was treated a couple of times for bi-polar (medical term for corporate stress) but working full time for over \$100,000 when she was dating Dewey and requested the divorce.

I requested custody everyday that school was closed and this was great for Dewey as he had three children. Joanne gave me that custody arrangement. **Would *any* mother give up custody every day school is closed if the father of the children is “mentally ill”?**

I caused a great deal of conflict for Dewey in the District and he was moved from Prairie to the middle school. The conflict turned into a deep HATRED for me. In addition, when I found out Joanne was carrying on an affair, I made the completion of the divorce decree difficult and Joanne had a strong dislike for me. Dewey and Joanne had me as a common enemy.

- Shortly after their marriage, I drove to Barrington to pick the kids up for McDonald’s and deliberately parked on the opposite side of the street not to create conflict. Dewey called the police and I had to appear in court.

They did not want me in their life and Joanne was not going to have a plutonic relationship with me for the benefit of the children. No conversations about school, no get-togethers on birthdays, etc. In thirty years since the divorce she never called regarding the children.

The children were devastated when they were taken from the marital home to live with Dewey, a man they never met. Out of fear the children would spend time in one bedroom. Joanne and Dewey would eat dinner separately and the children would have to wait to be served after they were finished. There was no effort to blend the children into the new marriage.

Their marital “cult” was to unwind the bonds that I had to the children and fill them with negative energy and anger toward me. Amanda has not communicated in ten years and Ryan has not contacted me in five years. Positive energy could have been used to easily heal any conflict during this time between parent and child. The parents do not have to like or socialize with each other; however, the parents should respect each other and be civil because they had the children together, they share the same DNA. Dewey and Joanne have deliberately ignored my existence in all aspects regarding the children.

As result of not having any contact with me and the children, some of the following occurred:

- When I was in the hospital being treated for MS, they made no effort to find the phone number for the children to call me from college.
- When Amanda kept \$20,000 from my parent’s estate that was intended for my disability trust, they encouraged her to keep the money and Amanda never called me to discuss the issue. The estate attorney told me to let her keep the money and I did. Amanda never called to discuss this matter as recommended by the attorney.
- Ryan was in a rollover SUV accident and Joanne never called. She took Dewey as the surrogate father.

- The divorce and the crude manner of severing the relationships with the children caused Amanda to have much difficulty in finding a long-term meaningful relationship. Two marriages and third that is a live-in.
- Amanda now has two children and she has made it known that she will not allow me to meet my grandchildren. Joanne and Dewey live twenty miles from Amanda and it would in Joanne's interest to use the grandchildren as a reason for Amanda to reconcile with me; instead they feed the anger and give Amanda reasons not to reconcile.
- Ryan was going back to Iraq for his third tour and I knew he was mentally tired. I wrote a letter to Joanne asking her to meet me at Ft. Hood and we could use that time to spend with Ryan. I mailed a copy of the letter to Ryan. Joanne called Ryan and said I would not open a letter from your father. I threw it over to Dewey and he said, "You are not going to Ft. Hood".
- After many sessions with a psychologist, it was explained that Ryan received a vasectomy at age 31 due to the turmoil he experienced in the divorce. My psychologist said it was unrelated to experiences in Iraq.
- Ryan asked his mother if he should join the Army Reserves and she said, "Do what you think is best". Joanne did not say discuss the matter with your father. So, Ryan signed and did three tours of Iraq.
- I do not know where Ryan lives.
- In 2010, I had triple bypass surgery while Ryan was in Iraq. Ryan returned for his R&R two months later at Ft. Hood and was dating a woman, twenty-five years old. In addition, he also had a wife in Pompano, Florida. The girlfriend would not let him visit me in Florida at the hospital because she was insecure about Ryan going to visit his wife.
- When I asked Ryan to let Amanda know about my surgery, she said "Oh, everyone in our family has heart problems". Amanda never called to ask about my recovery from open heart surgery. Exactly what Joanne and Dewey wanted her to do.
- When Amanda made it known that she had two children and would not introduce them to me, it became necessary to leave Amanda out of my Will.

All of these problems because Joanne would not be a parent in divorce and because Dewey was not a stepparent who knew his boundaries. He was the enemy and could not keep his mouth closed by not getting involved in the issues between two children and their DNA parents.

I am seeking relationships with my children looking for adults to encourage those feelings to renew.

Joanne and Dewey live in Carson, WA and if possible, their phone number is 509-427-0093 or 8116.

Thank you for your help.

Cordially,