

Molester...

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a twisted married man, thirty years older than they, who preferred molesting boys to being faithful to his marriage vows.

Listening to the proceedings, I thought that if they had hoodwinked the judge in a back room deal, surely he would back out and save his name from being a part of this chicanery. The State Attorney's Victim's Advocate leaned over and said to me, "Judge Skinner isn't buying this; he sees right through it."

Though they had 15 months to prepare, closing arguments by the State were inept. It appeared to be a mock hearing. Ms. Senterfitt didn't request any of the additional probation stipulations that she had promised. Sheppard stood up and said, "Your honor, why do we do the things we do? We don't know." He spoke as if his client had forgotten to return an overdue library book. He didn't argue as

though his client was at risk for serious prison time or that he had stalked and lured children into a premeditated trap and maliciously assaulted them, committing disgusting acts for years that would scar them for life.

As my father left the hearing that day, he asked Ms. Senterfitt if Edmonds was going to prison. She grimaced and said, "The judge is going to give him *some* time."

On Monday, June 30, Judge Skinner said he had reached a decision, "a split sentence that will not please anyone." He was wrong - Edmonds was pleased. Shuffling into the courtroom in shackles, the molester winked and smiled at his wife who smiled back at him. Unbelievably, Judge Skinner announced that Edmonds would get a year in the county jail with time served.

How could he so subvert the intentions of the state sentencing guidelines? What value had he placed on our children? Edmonds was to be incarcerated at the prison farm for eight months to plant crops as

DID YOU KNOW

- The U.S. Department of Justice reported four million child molesters reside in this country.
- Almost half of all sex offenders are under 18.
- Ten years ago we had twenty-two rehabilitation programs for juvenile sex offenders - we now have 755.
- New York rape arrests of thirteen year old males increased 200% between 1986 and 1988.
- 57% of child molesters were molested themselves as children.
- A typical molester will abuse between 30 to 60 children before they are arrested - as many as 380 during their lifetime.
- 29% of all rapes occurred when the victim was less than eleven years old, another 32% occurred between the ages of 11 and 17.

Source: www.angelfire.com/ga3/protectourkidz/statisti.htm

punishment for desecrating the childhood and innocence of three boys.

To qualify this travesty of justice, Judge Skinner stated, "I see cases of a much more serious nature cross my desk daily." That remark was as "shocking and damning" as Judge McCaulie had earlier described the evidence to be. It sent a message to the children that what had happened to them was meaningless. Judge Skinner told the media he thought the sentence "was appropriate."

The Jacksonville community was outraged. Several hundred comments were logged onto the *Florida Times-Union* message board, vehemently denouncing the sentence, many saying it "reeked of politics" and blamed Harry Shorstein and Judge

Skinner for the outcome.

As Judge Skinner sentenced Edmonds to psychosexual counseling, he said, "I don't think these acts are isolated." The judge had already read evidence of five boys being molested. The state sentencing guidelines that at the top could have given him 45 years and at the bottom 18 years were grossly ignored. Even in a plea agreement the sentencing range and verdict were shamefully low for three children.

Other mothers have told us that Edmonds solicited sex from

their sons also. If you have been a victim, please call the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office at 630-0500.

Either the criminal justice system is broken or Steve Edmonds beat it, perhaps with the assistance of those within the system. Many prosecutors and judges are desensitized to despicable crimes committed against children, signaled by the State Attorney that this [sentence] is about the going rate.

Voters must shut down this "catch and release program." The safety of our children depends on it. **Sex crimes against children must no longer be tolerated.**

This story is written by the mother of a molested child in this case; her name is withheld to protect the victim's identity.

LETTER to the Editor

Family seeks answers in son's death

Shawn Handy was reported missing early Christmas morning after leaving a grill near Tinseltown. He was with friends and had walked out of the establishment once and appeared (in surveillance videos) to be looking for someone, returned right away, then left the grill alone. No one saw him after that. He had left his car keys, cell phone and credit card at the bar. Family, friends, Find Org., and police looked for him but never found him.

A week and four days later a man walking on Southside Blvd. looked down into a retention pond at the CNB Bank and saw a body. Sadly, the body was later identified as Shawn. His empty billfold was on his person, even though he reportedly left his friend's apartment with thousands of dollars. Because there were no marks on his body, his death was ruled accidental drowning.


Shawn would never have gone into that pond on his own. It would be very difficult for anyone to just fall into that pond, because the brush around the edge is two to three feet deep. We believe Shawn was murdered and want a thorough investigation into his death. He was only 41 years old and had a successful business he had worked to build.

His loss is so painful it feels as if someone has taken a knife and cut out our insides, and to lose him in such a tragic way is even worse. The feelings of hopelessness and helplessness intensify our family's grief.

If anyone had contact with Shawn on Christmas Eve in the Baymeadows or Tinseltown area, please contact the JSO at 630-0500. We are praying that someone will come forth and tell us what happened to Shawn.

- Family of Shawn Handy

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