

FROM THE DESK OF JILL JONES-SODERMAN - 2/14/16  
HAPPY VALENTINES DAY

A holiday that celebrates love and romance also shadows love loss/betrayal and revenge; such are my thoughts today when having to deal with, for the first time in my very long career, a very unpleasant and disappointing experience with a client of the Foundation for the Child Victims of the Family Courts. While the Foundation has had two upsetting experiences with individuals who were not clients, but known to us, they were not "one of us", they were not "chosen, selected, vetted, fully engaged", not one of US. The OTHERS who entered the orbit of "not clients, but known to us" were known because we attempted to assist but not engage.

One individual whom we assisted, but did not engage was known because of a consultation to the partner of that individual to whom the person was not married. The "not married" status can pose a particular legal status that poses a threat to a client in a custody evaluation because they lack marital privilege. It was our decision to view this person in this category and did not engage the client requesting consultation because of a conflict in this area. We met this individual in one brief contact. The other individual to whom we rendered assistance, but with whom we did not engage, we simply acted as an intermediary - between countries, to help the person to appear before an American Court. The appearance before the American court was because in order to engage his due process rights, with American Attorneys the individual, a British citizen was barred from the US by the US State Department. The Foundation took the position that the State Department was wrong. We prevailed in our ability to have this individual admitted to the US in order to represent his case, in his defense in Florida. The Foundation was correct in our position that the individual had a right to defend himself, (nothing more).

The charges presented against the person we assisted that barred him from the US were proven to be defamatory and false. The accusations that barred him from visitation and custody of a child were upheld. He was not, to the best of our knowledge, ever able to see that child. The accusations used against him were admitted to as false by his accuser.

Our experience assisting, but not engaging with these two individuals with whom we elected to not become clients of the Foundation have been and continue to be very disappointing. Both individuals seem to have decided that the Foundation must be a lucrative venture and attempted to take an equity advantage of us by trying to extort money directly with threats (written) if we did not pay! They both retaliated with false accusations when we did not pay.

We have never experienced an assault where the client had in fact been a retained client whom had experienced every possible benefit and support from the Foundation, from other clients of the foundation - (peers), from other organizations and support services, (colleagues) of the foundation whom offered support and services based on our agreement to provide collateral support to our colleagues clients. The client in question was enraged not because of the failure of the efforts of the Foundation, our staff, her peers, collateral services to which she was privileged to have access; we were in fact on the road to great success. Failure of goals set was because of the betrayal of those close to the client with whom she had a long history of contentious dealings, reunion followed by renewed conflict and separation. Further events beyond our control impacted extended family as well, impacted our client's life status and derailed our goals. Because of the history, legal work and attendant services included extended family, by contract and shared mutual agreement with the goal of resolving long standing conflict as well as our primary client's high conflict custody issue.

Our mutual goal of resolution of long standing legal and personal resolution, hopes for the client to be able to move forward not only failed, but the conflict has evolved to a level where the client has attempted to destroy the Foundation the clients we serve and the universe of potential clients. While we are extremely disappointed in the outcome of this case, the only such event ever experienced in the history of the Foundation and my own very long institutional and private practice. Our immediate perspective is to analyze, review, reflect on what we could have done, should have done, what we might not do in the future. An initial flurry of activity, discussion, consultation has moved to a reflective review to a simple perspective - away from the naive - "we work so hard, we attempt to avoid the prejudices, limitations of advocacy imposed by other organizations, we attempt to take into account the experiences of our clients that have derailed those clients ability to prevail in their cases", etc., etc., etc..

Just as we encourage our clients to live, learn, move on, we are taking our own advice, but not before we take certain steps to carve this event into our memories, our psyches, our now newly developed and developing skills which have now, again become activated in the area of renewed self awareness, holding ourselves to account for decisions made, safety precautions not made, the resolution to not become self doubting as to our own convictions, viewing ourselves as victims or feeling sorry for ourselves for more than five minutes, faith in our evaluation processes. In brief, our resolution is to secure and enrich our services from our new experience and wisdom, to change none of our practices of openness, willingness to take on challenges, even when those challenges seem unwise or unlikely to work out well. The adages that I quote myself, believe in, respect - "Past is Prologue", "That Which is not Resolved is Repeated" (etc.), I have thrown out in developing the Foundation as I do and will

continue to believe in the endless possibility of the human spirit and psyche to find a New Normal".