

MEDIATE THIS!

THE EX, THE KIDS AND THE TRIP WITH THE GIRLFRIEND

Mom doesn't want children going on trip with dad's new love interest, and neither do they — what to do?

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

This week's column of expert tips on resolving everyday conflicts focuses on a dispute about a divorced dad's plans to vacation with his kids and his girlfriend.

Dear Mediator:

My ex-husband and I have joint custody of our young children. He began dating a co-worker before our divorce was final. I'm pretty sure their relationship started as an extramarital affair. I've kept that suspicion to myself, but I don't trust the woman to be around my children. My ex just announced he is planning a trip with the girlfriend and our kids. But the kids are refusing to go. Could mediation help, or should I petition to reopen the custody order?

Heartsick Mom in Poway

Dear Heartsick:

You deserve credit for taking the high road about your husband's romantic interest. Speculating to anyone about when and how it started won't change the outcome. By showing discretion, you have put your children's wel-

fare above your natural desire for settling a score. Your commendable instinct will serve you well as a compass in charting your path forward.

A judge probably won't modify your custody agreement just because your ex wants to travel with the children and his girlfriend. And you cannot block him from trying to forge a bond between your kids and this woman, especially as you have no evidence that she poses a risk to them.

But you and your former spouse can always agree to revisit the agreement on your own outside the court's purview, especially as circumstances change.

You both love your children. They need both of you to help them navigate post-divorce disruptions, including the sudden appearance of new significant others. Mediation can help you work together to achieve that.

When you meet with a mediator, you will each lay your concerns on the table. Resist the urge to demonize your ex and his girlfriend. Talk exclusively about your children's need for an orderly transition from their familiar Dad-and-Mom family unit to an



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Aikido is a formidable self-defense strategy because it empowers the defender without inflicting harm on the attacker. When a divorced parent remains centered and calm by responding thoughtfully instead of reacting furiously, she or he gains traction in ongoing custody proceedings.

Waging war on your children's father will never result in a clear victory. Establishing your authority as a responsible and caring parent will put you in a position of strength.

As mediators, we strive to help people free themselves from conflict so they can redirect their time and energy into more fulfilling pursuits. Your children's well-being is paramount. So is yours. All three of you are embarking on a new life together. And you have new personal horizons to explore. That should be your focus now.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as President of the San-Diego based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003.

Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Please share your story with The Mediator via email at MediateThis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting: www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

SAN DIEGO: DAVID GARRICK

Campaign focuses on illegal dumping

San Diego is expanding a campaign launched last year to remove trash and debris from places where illegal dumping is common, including downtown and the San Diego River.

Additional city workers and more crews from the Urban Corps of San Diego will respond to reports of trash and other debris in public areas, such as abandoned shopping carts, furniture left in alleys and tires along roadways.

The Police Department will also increase surveillance and enforcement in areas known for illegal dumping.

"Every neighborhood deserves clean street corners and sidewalks, and that's what this citywide cleanup effort is all about," Mayor Kevin Faulconer said this week at a news conference announcing the expansion. "We will clean up our neighborhoods and we will hold those who illegally dump their trash in our communities accountable."

The campaign, called "Clean SD," has removed more than 1,000 tons of trash from city neighborhoods since it was launched in May.

That includes 67 appliances, 430 tires, 750 shopping carts and 1,900 mattresses

and box springs.

The nine areas crews have focused on are in Ocean Beach, City Heights, San Ysidro, Logan Heights, Paradise Hills, Webster & Mount Hope, Mission Beach, Point Loma and Pacific Beach.

The highest priority is given to trash and debris that is hazardous, such as chemicals or paint, and trash that blocks the public right-of-way.

The city's "Get it Done" smartphone app, which allows people to report nuisances, has played a key role in the effort, city officials said.

The expansion includes three new two-person crews from the Urban Corps, which will increase the number of its volunteers involved in the effort from 16 to 22.

The Environmental Services Department is also in the process of hiring two more city crews, which will increase the number of workers assigned to the effort from 21 to 29.

The police surveillance will also add a new element.

david.garrick@suniontribune.com (619) 269-8906

ERNIE COWAN: OUTDOORS

Spotters help notify of weather dangers

Mark Twain my have said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it," but apparently before he met guys like Jim Campbell and Eric Hutchins.

Campbell, a Valley Center resident, is the San Diego County coordinator of an organization known as Skywarn, a volunteer army of trained weather spotters that assist the National Weather Service in times of severe weather.

Hutchins, a Vista resident, is the volunteer regional coordinator overseeing activities in the western half of Riverside and San Bernardino counties as well as Orange and San Diego.

Both men consider themselves "weather nuts," as do just about any of the more than 500 San Diego Skywarn Weather Spotters.

Skywarn, according to NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist Alex Tardy, is sponsored by the National Weather Service nationwide and enlists trained volunteers to provide "ground truth" to received weather data.

One might wonder why the NWS would need much help when you consider the sophisticated equipment, cameras and instruments it has available.

"Ground truth is the eyes on the ground verifying what radar is showing since it only shows 10,000 feet and up," Hutchings said.

Radar may show a huge thunderstorm building that could provide dangerous flash flooding, but only someone on the ground can say if rain is actually hitting the ground or evaporating.

Public Information Officer Tom Smerk said Skywarn began when HAM radio operators working through their national organization helped create a partnership with the weather service.

Today, HAM radio still plays a part as an important communication tool for weather spotters reporting either from home or from remote locations. Spotters also have online or telephone reporting resources available and a HAM license is not required to participate.

As major weather events approach, Tardy may decide to activate Skywarn by sending an email out to local spotters.

That usually starts with Campbell, who then begins to find net operators to monitor radios as reports are called in.

"That might include any kind of severe weather from heavy rain, strong winds, or most commonly, summer monsoon storms,"

Campbell said.

Many spotters have their own sophisticated weather stations and will call in such things as rainfall rates, power outages, downed trees or streets closed due to flooding.

"Any kind of severe weather is important, and often passed on to local authorities so action can be taken.

Some weather spotters prefer to be mobile, often equipped with storm radar apps that allow them to see storm cells. Equipped with HAM radios, they will follow storms, providing important ground truth information.

One such spotter a few summers ago was the first to report large boulders on Montezuma Grade and then severe flooding in Borrego Springs, cutting off many roads during a summer deluge.

One of the busiest years for Skywarn in San Diego was the summer of 2015 when spotters were activated 21 days in a row because of a series of mountain and desert thunderstorms.

Despite San Diego's heavy winter last year, Campbell said the year was only about average in activity because there were few summer storms.

Campbell said what attracts volunteers is their common interest in watching or chasing storms.

"It's not like the Midwest, but it can still be very exciting," he said.

His most memorable event was a warning of an approaching tornado in La Jolla several years ago.

"I was working in La Jolla and wondered if this was really real," Campbell said.

It was, so he warned his fellow employees to stay away from sea view windows until the danger passed.

Being a Skywarn volunteer is open to anyone. Star with a visit to swskywarn.org where you can sign up as a spotter.

Hutchins said there, volunteers can get online training, pass a basic exam and receive a Skywarn spotter number.

Additionally, HAM radio operators can listen to the weekly Skywarn net at 7 p.m. every Tuesday on the ECRA Repeater, 147.030.

It's your chance to do something about the weather.

Email ernie@packtrain.com or visit erniesoutdoors.blogspot.com.

COURTS: LYNDSAY WINKLEY

Traffic ticket? Make an appointment

Do you need to address a traffic citation? Soon, you'll need an appointment.

Starting Thursday, San Diego Superior Court houses in East, North and South County will require pre-scheduled appointments for courtroom appearances — including that first appearance date on a ticket.

Court officials hope the move will make the traffic court process more efficient.

"By having a date/time certain, people can take care of their court appearances more quickly and make the appearance around their schedules," Michael Roddy, executive officer of the San Diego Superior Court, said in a statement.

Plus, he said, the appointment system allows court staffers to pull and process files ahead of time, so cases are prepped and ready.

The new process is not entirely new; the system was put in place three years ago at the Kearny Mesa courthouse. And, Roddy

said, the appointment system has been successful.

It's also becoming more common. The new procedure is similar to policies in superior courts in Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Courtroom appearances on traffic ticket collection cases, which have been scheduled by court staff in the past, will continue with fewer exceptions.

People can make appointments through the court's website at www.sdcourt.ca.gov, by phone or by contacting a court employee in the business office.

"The online court appearance scheduler is continually updated and provides detailed information to the person who may be trying to decide if they actually need to spend the time in court," Roddy stated.

(619) 293-1546  
lyndsay.winkley@suniontribune.com  
Twitter: @LAWinkley

FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

COURT ACQUITS BABE RUTH

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

Friday, February 25, 1927

In 1927 the famed Yankees slugger was acquitted of violating state child labor laws during an autograph show in San Diego.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

COURT ACQUITS BABE RUTH

NEW CHARGE IS FILED AGAINST PLAYER

"If this constitutes a violation of the law -- if this is 'employment' of a minor child, then my 30 years of the study of law have been wasted, and I'd better begin all over again."

COMPLAINT DISMISSED

With this final sentence to his decision, Police Judge Claude L. Chambers today dismissed a complaint charging George Herman ("Babe") Ruth, idol of fandom, with violating the state labor law. Another charge has been filed.

The charge against Ruth grew out of the ball player's appearance at the Pantages theatre, in this city, early in January. He was charged specifically with permitting and employing one Baby Annette Lum, also known as Baby Annette de Kirby, to appear on the stage after 10 p.m., and of allowing her to appear on the stage without asking the permission of the state labor bureau.

The warrant for Ruth's arrest was issued after he left the city and was served in Long Beach, Ruth being obliged to put up \$500 bail.

The basis of the charge seems to be that Ruth, during his act, asked children to come up from the audience, the number being limited to five or six. Each child was given an autographed baseball and was asked if he or she could sing a song, or recite or dance. The Lum child, who forms "exhibit A" of the complaint, recited a poem, according to Stanley Gue, deputy state labor commissioner, who was one of the prosecution witnesses. Other witnesses called for the prosecution were stage employees and the girl's father — none of whom appeared to be



overly in sympathy with the prosecution. The girl's father testified that he took his family to the theatre that night, and that at the first show the little girl cried because she could not go up on the stage and get a baseball, so she was allowed to go up at the second performance. There was no previous arrangement of any kind, he declared.

NO DEFENSE TESTIMONY

No testimony was put on by the defense, which was conducted by Attorneys G. C. Thomas and Eugene Glenn, of the firm of

Wright & McKee. They stated that the prosecution had exhausted the available supply of witnesses, and that others they desired to call were prevented by road conditions from reaching the city.

In summarizing the case, Judge Chambers states, in part:

"When the exact meaning of the law has not been ruled on by a higher court, we must determine its meaning by its purpose. It is clear that the purpose of this law is to protect the health, morals and education of children, and to prevent them being kept up late continuously, or out of school. In a case like this, it would be absolutely impossible to get permits for the children to go up out of the audience and onto the stage. I fail to see how they could get together their five or six children out of the audience, and then run over to the bureau of labor statistics and get a permit for them to step up onto the stage and get a free baseball. It could not be done without pre-arrangement, or contract, and it would be physically impossible to enter into any contract with a child. I do not believe that the framers of this law ever had any condition such as this in mind, and I will go further and say that if it were the law to regulate this sort of thing, any court would declare it unconstitutional, as it would not be legal, it would not be sound, and it would not be just. If this case constitutes a violation of the law, then all my 30 years of the study of law have got away from me, the time has been wasted, and I'd better start another 30 years of study. The case will be dismissed."