

Editorials AUGUST 12, 2015

Widow has every right to object to killer's request

HIGHLIGHTS



The News Tribune

Larry Shandola may be in prison serving a sentence for first-degree murder, but that hasn't kept him from thinking outside the box.

He figured out a way to continue tormenting the widow of the man he killed – by suing her for victimizing *him*! Now that's chutzpah.

A little recap is needed.

In 2001, Shandola was convicted in the 1995 shotgun murder of Tacoma businessman Robert Henry and sentenced to almost 32 years in prison. Henry had sued Shandola for punching him at a party and won a judgment just nine days before the murder. The shotgun that killed Henry was traced to Shandola.

In 2011, he renewed an earlier application to the state Department of Corrections to serve out the remainder of his sentence in his native Canada.

Henry's widow, Paula Henry, objected to the transfer in a letter in which she referred to Shandola as a "sociopath." Shandola filed \$100,000 lawsuits against her and three others who also objected to the transfer.

Shandola apparently was much aggrieved by being called a sociopath, arguing that Henry is no psychiatric expert and claiming that her letter "constitutes invasion of privacy by placing plaintiff in a false light."

Sorry, but there are even choicer words the grieving widow could have used, and no jury in the world would fault her for it. One only has to listen to family members' speaking at sentencing hearings to realize that what Henry wrote is actually mild in comparison.

A Pierce County Superior Court judge threw out Shandola's lawsuit in 2013 based on a state law against frivolous lawsuits meant to quash free speech. However, the Washington Supreme Court unanimously declared that law unconstitutional in May in an unrelated case.

So now Shandola wants to reinstate his original lawsuit against Henry in hopes of getting her and the others he's suing to drop their objections to his transfer to Canada – oh, and it would be nice if they could throw in some money to cover the expenses he's incurred filing the lawsuit. A hearing on his request has yet to be scheduled.

Henry says she has spent thousands of dollars fighting the lawsuit, and attorney John Ladenburg – the former Pierce County executive – said he's donated about \$10,000 in legal work to helping her. It's outrageous that the lawsuit has reached

this point. Henry has every right under the First Amendment to voice her opinion about her husband's killer, and she shouldn't have to defend herself in court against him.

Besides, the best defense in this kind of case is the truth. A judge should make short work of Shandola's request.



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