Young Trespassers Were Playing With Fire

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: There is an 8-foot privacy fence all around my backyard, except for a small path that goes from the corner of the driveway around the side of the house. You can't see the path or the backyard from the street.

The other evening, I was grilling dinner when a pair of young women walked right up inside the fence. One of them introduced herself as a college student from Europe. At first, I thought they were hurt or something and needed help, but then they said they were selling magazines.

I asked them to back off my property and told them that strangers needed to use the front door to people's houses. I wanted to add that, at least where I live, it can be dangerous to trespass, and they were lucky my dog was inside.

It seems obvious to me that backyards, especially fenced ones, are private, and they should have known better. Then I got to wondering if that is true everywhere. Are there places where letting yourself into a stranger's fenced yard would be OK? (As an aside, I know they were probably not college students or legitimately selling magazines — that's an old one.) — PRIVATE PROPERTY

DEAR PRIVATE PROPERTY: You are correct on every level. What these young women did was foolish, rude, illegal and potentially dangerous. In Europe, just as in the U.S., a backyard is sacrosanct, and strangers should never enter without an invitation. These "students" were playing dumb because they got caught, and every part of their story is pure malarkey.

** ** **

DEAR ABBY: Fifty-two years ago, while in high school, I met a young lady. We hung out then and for two years after graduation. We did everything together, and at the time it seemed she was my soulmate. Then I dumped her with no explanation except that I had met someone else. I married that someone else within a year.

Twenty years went by, and during that time I reached out to the first lady a few times to wish her happy birthday and say that I hope all is well. After a few attempts at this, I received a certified letter saying I was to have no contact with her; otherwise, attorneys would become involved. It has now been 30 years of silence between us.

For more than half a century, I never thought about needing to apologize for leading that woman on when she was expecting our relationship to lead to marriage. In your opinion, would it be right to send her a letter to apologize for all the years of never saying I'm sorry, I was insensitive, and I was an idiot? — ANOTHER DUMB MALE

DEAR MALE: What part of "no contact" don't you understand? This woman wants nothing to do with you, and rightly so. You broke her heart. No matter how profusely and sincerely you apologize, she is not going to forgive you. The letter you want to send would be for your benefit, not hers. Stop being selfish, and let her leave that emotional trauma in the distant past.

** ** **

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren. For nearly four decades, Jeanne Phillips penned this column, which was founded in 1956 by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 270135, Kansas City, MO 64127.

Former Murray detective faces additional felony charges

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. (KT) – A former Murray Police Department detective sergeant faces additional felony charges involving the possession and distribution of child sexual abuse material, Attorney General Russell Coleman announced Wednesday.

Justin Swope, 44, was arraigned in Calloway Circuit Court on two counts each of distributing and possessing matter portraying a sexual performance by a minor under 18. A judge set his bond at $250,000.

The distribution charges are Class C felonies, each punishable by five to 10 years in prison upon conviction. The possession charges are Class D felonies, each carrying a potential sentence of one to five years.

According to the indictment, Swope possessed videos depicting an unidentified adult man engaging in sexual activity with a girl between 12 and 14 years old.

Earlier this year, a Calloway County grand jury indicted Swope on 28 felony counts related to the alleged sexual abuse of a minor. Those charges included two counts of first-degree unlawful transaction with a minor, 10 counts of promoting a sexual performance by a minor, four counts of third-degree sodomy, 10 counts of third-degree rape and two counts of first-degree sexual abuse.

One unlawful transaction charge involves a child under 16 and is a Class B felony, punishable by 10 to 20 years in prison upon conviction. The other involves a minor under 18 and is a Class C felony, as are the charges of promoting a sexual performance by a minor. The remaining charges are Class D felonies.

The original indictment alleges the abuse began in 2018, when the victim was 15, and continued through 2021. Swope worked for the Murray Police Department during that period.

Kentucky State Police investigated the latest case. Assistant Attorney General Richie Kemp presented it on behalf of the commonwealth.

Missing Lawrence County 6-year-old found safe

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

LOUISA, Ky. (KT) – The Kentucky State Police (KSP) announced on Tuesday, that Roman Heilman, a six-year-old boy from Lawrence County who was reported missing on Nov. 1, has been found safe.

The KSP had issued an IAN Alert for the youngster, who had last been seen on Tadpole Road in Louisa, Ky., around 4:00 p.m. (ET) on Sunday.

While they did not release the circumstances or location of his discovery, the KSP said they were extending their sincere thanks to all local, state and federal partners, along with the hundreds of volunteers who assisted in the search for Roman.

The KSP notes that IAN Alerts are used when children under the age of 18 with autism or mental illness go missing and may be in danger. The alert empowers the Kentucky State Police to instantly broadcast information to the public using the same technical framework as the Amber Alert system.

IAN Alerts became part of Kentucky state law due to legislation passed by the 2024 General Assembly.

The alert is named after Ian Sousis, a nine-year-old boy with autism who wandered away from a children's home in Covington, Kentucky, and tragically drowned in the Ohio River in June 2022.

Judicial Branch announces results of external audit for FY 2026 financial statement

Submitted by Jamie Neal
Communications Specialist

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 4, 2026) – The Kentucky Judicial Branch has received an unmodified opinion, the highest level of assurance an auditor can provide, on its Fiscal Year 2026 financial statement.

The independent audit was conducted by Dean Dorton, which found that the Judicial Branch's financial statement presents fairly, in all material respects, the receipts, disbursements and changes in fund balances for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2026.

"Maintaining public trust in the Kentucky Court of Justice's management of taxpayer dollars is of prime importance," Chief Justice of the Commonwealth Debra Hembree Lambert said. "This latest clean audit underscores the Judicial Branch's ongoing commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship, accountability and transparency. The independent auditor's report reflects the integrity of our financial operations."

Dean Dorton reported no significant difficulties, disagreements or uncorrected misstatements during the audit and found no deficiencies in internal control or compliance issues.

The financial statement and the independent auditor's report are available on the Kentucky Court of Justice website at: https://www.kycourts.gov/AOC/Audits/Pages/default.aspx. The Administrative Office of the Courts publishes the KCOJ financial statement annually. The statement is audited by an external auditor in accordance with Section 4 of Supreme Court Administrative Order 2024-35.

Renee Shaw named new executive director and CEO of KET

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

LEXINGTON, Ky. (KT) – Renee Shaw retired from Kentucky Educational Television (KET) at the end of July, but her retirement didn't last long. She has been tapped as the public broadcasting network's new Executive Director and CEO.

A search committee comprised of current and former chairpersons of the Kentucky Authority for Educational Television, KET's governing board, began work on selecting a new executive director after Shae Hopkins announced her retirement earlier this year. They made their recommendation to the full board for a vote today.

Shaw, who spent nearly three decades at KET as a journalist, producer and host, succeeds Hopkins, who passed away last week.

"Renee brings to this role an extraordinary understanding of Kentucky, a deep commitment to public service and a genuine appreciation for the important role KET plays in the lives of people across the Commonwealth," said G. Dan Griffith, chair of the Kentucky Authority for Educational Television. "I have no doubt Renee will proudly take the torch from Shae and continue building on her great work."

During her career at KET, Shaw became one of Kentucky's most familiar voices on public affairs and public policy. As host and moderator of Kentucky Tonight, election coverage, KET forums and more, she interviewed policymakers, community leaders and Kentuckians from across the Commonwealth while exploring issues important to the state. As Director of Public Affairs, she also oversaw the expansion of this area for KET, including the nightly Kentucky Edition program.

In her new role, Shaw will lead all of KET's statewide public media services, including its work in classroom educational resources and original programming celebrating Kentucky's history and culture.

"KET has been such an important part of my life, and it is an incredible honor to have the opportunity to lead an organization that means so much to Kentucky," Shaw said. "Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of listening to Kentuckians and sharing their stories. Although we all are dealing with heavy hearts right now after the passing of Shae Hopkins, I look forward to building on the strong foundation she and others helped build and working alongside our talented staff and partners to ensure that KET continues to inform, educate and connect people across the Commonwealth for generations to come."