

August 18, 2007

**E-4**

Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich  
and Chief of Police Anne Kirkpatrick  
Spokane County Sheriff's Office and Spokane Police Department  
1100 W. Mallon Avenue  
Spokane, Washington 99260

Regarding: Citizen complaint request for felony investigation, Manslaughter in the first degree.

Dear Sheriff Knezovich and Chief Kirkpatrick:

As the result of a comprehensive Spokane history book project my wife and I are working on, we have had occasion to discover and investigate a number of alleged clandestine frauds and/or criminal actions committed by various members of the Cowles family and Spokane city officials. One of these criminal actions involves what appears to be a willful and reckless omission of an official duty that resulted in a death. I recently learned this incident was never criminally investigated but was settled monetarily behind the scenes by the Cowles family's insurance carrier, Safeco Insurance.

We concern ourselves with accurate investigations, documentations and authenticity in our writings. We strongly believe history is a science and should be approached as such. Consequently, we are avid truth and justice seekers. In our research, we have discovered the commission of a Class A felony, wherein a death occurred as the result of a reckless and deliberately orchestrated violation of a city safety inspection policy, followed with a subsequent cover-up by specific people in positions of power and public trust. It appears, because of the status and positions of the perpetrators involved, this horrific and preventable death has never been officially reported as a crime or brought to justice.

The death of Jo Ellen Savage on April 8, 2006, came about as the direct result of certain city officials who, with deliberate intent and disregard for the public's safety, appeared to have colluded to bypass mandated city safety-inspection rules in favor of the financial interests of Spokane's most powerful family – a family who controls 80% of Spokane's media and, indirectly, the political careers of Spokane's elected and appointed officials. As a result of what strongly appears to be reckless collusion with total disregard for the public's safety and the violation of RCW 9A.32.060, a terrifying death occurred.

As a former three-term elected sheriff of a Washington State county, and a 25-year veteran law enforcement officer, I easily recognize the elements of felony crimes contained in the Revised Code of Washington. I strongly feel there is exceptional probable cause and strong evidence to charge one or more persons with manslaughter in the first degree for the death of Jo Ellen Savage. The elements of that statute are quite clear and concise and appear to easily fit the probable cause and available evidence requirements applicable to charge that crime.

The statute (RCW 9A.32.060) reads:

“Manslaughter in the first degree.

(1) A person is guilty of manslaughter in the first degree when:

(a) He recklessly causes the death of another person; or

(b) He intentionally and unlawfully kills an unborn quick child by inflicting any injury upon the

mother of such child.

(2) Manslaughter in the first degree is a Class A felony.”

At this time, I respectfully request that either one or both of you, as Spokane’s chief law enforcement officers, initiate a criminal investigation into this death. I am enclosing, among other evidence, a copy of information containing probable cause developed by one of Washington State’s foremost and highly respected, award-winning, investigative journalists, Larry Shook, who was also at one time a correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine. I have also studied and corroborated the majority of Shook’s research and find it to be highly credible. Based on what I have uncovered and discovered to date, I believe extensive and incriminating evidence will be found through an investigation. I ask that you both carefully study this information and please contact me if you have any questions.

Conveniently, a majority of the investigative work involving this case is probably already documented. Typically, in these types of deaths, insurance carriers conduct extensive investigations prior to settling. Based on the nature and circumstances of this accident, and the fact that it was quickly and quietly settled for an undisclosed amount, there is certain to be an extensive file generated by Safeco’s investigators. These types of insurance investigative and settlement files are excellent resources for criminal investigators and usually packed with substantial amounts of evidence. In the case of a criminal investigation, and through the process of discovery, Safeco Insurance Company officials would be required to share this information per a subpoena.

I am enclosing six memorandums and documents. These documents corroborate the facts that the Cowles parking garage had serious structural problems that specific city officials and Cowles family members were made aware of, yet took no action. Most alarming is a statement issued on August 21, 1998 by Spokane City council members Barnes, Holmes, Green, Colliton, and Higgins, voicing their strong support for the city’s purchase of the Parking garage. This was less than two years from the time they received the Walker report, which stated the parking garage needed immediate repairs. This letter also corroborates an Internal Revenue Services report and finding stating they (the IRS) recognized that “developer (Cowles) maintained a relationship with city officials wherein the developers were in a “position to control or influence its activities.” Most importantly, evidence proves both city and Cowles family members knew of these dangerous conditions, yet recklessly ignored them. The motive was to relieve the Cowles family from the expense for these costly repairs and pass those costs to the city once the deal was closed. These reports are listed as follows:

1) The Walker Condition Assessment Report issued in 1996. This report documents the deteriorated condition of the garage and the dangerous lack of safety repairs. It specifically addressed the concern that the pre-cast panels were in need of replacement or repair, stating some have deteriorated “so far as to threaten the immediate stability of the panels.” In fact, it was a failure of one of these panels that caused the death of Jo Ellen Savage. Ten years later, when Jo Ellen Savage’s car bumped a precast panel and was pulled by the lip of that panel over the side of the garage to her gruesome death four stories below, the recommended repairs from this report had still not been completed. Even more reckless was the fact that following her death and months after, throughout the summer, other than securing a piece of plywood in place of the panel that had pulled Savage to her death, repairs were still not made. Cars were allowed to still park directly below the exact location of the failed pre-cast panel.

2) The Jacobson & Associates, Inc. Report. This was an engineering report completed in 2003 for the purpose of assisting with the appraisal work required to sell this garage to the city. This reports scathingly

condemns the condition of the garage and strongly accentuates that the recommendations in the Walker report were not followed. (It should be noted that the RPS garage was not a new garage, it was built in 1973-74.) It again greatly emphasizes the dangerous condition of the parking garage and blatant disregard of the known and immediate recommended repairs – repairs that were recommended, but ignored, as needing immediate attention in 1996. Page three of this report specifically brings to the attention of all concerned that the recommendations concerning the dangerous conditions outlined in the 1996 Walker report had not been performed stating: “These finding are serious and indicate an imperative for actions to repair, restore and protect it as a safe low life-cycle cost facility.”

3) Internal Revenue Report, June 29, 2004. This report recognizes that the developer (Cowles) maintained a relationship with city officials wherein the developers were in a “position to control or influence its activities. (This is an extremely important and damning piece of evidence.)

4) An August 21, 1998 written and signed statement by Spokane City council members Barnes, Holmes, Green, Colliton, and Higgins, voicing their strong support for the city’s purchase of the Parking garage. This was done in opposition and contempt of Mayor Talbot, who voiced his opinion that the city was being taken advantage of.

5) Operations Memorandum, December 9, 1998. This memorandum was generated by Nick Dragisich, Assistant City Manager of Operations, and identifies 16 committee members who attended a meeting wherein a consensus of the Public Works Committee was to not do any inspection of the parking garage.

6) An investigative news story written by Spokane journalist Larry Shook, titled *Death by Parking*. This investigative piece of journalism lays out the entire scenario concerning the cover-up, proceeding and following Jo Savage’s death. Of great significance in this report is the statement of Rex Franklin, a Cowles bookkeeper, who was also identified as the garage manager. On May 18, 2006, the *Spokesman-Review* published a picture of Rex Franklin. The picture was dated 1991. It showed him trying to pull back a cracked precast panel, just like the one that failed when Jo Savage died. Franklin will be an important witness to contact. He has made statements that he was ordered to falsify the parking garage’s books. This investigative story is must read as it identifies numerous witnesses and criminal actions.

As both a student and researcher of Spokane history I have discovered that various members of the Cowles family, through their news monopoly and wealth, have established a 92-year-pattern of controlling the majority of our elected and appointed officials for the benefit of their family’s own financial interests. Often, their financial gain is against the public’s best interest and kept secret, as they control a large segment of the news media. In this specific complaint, they (with the help of certain public officials) have been allowed to avoid a Class A felony manslaughter investigation – an immunity not afforded lesser citizens.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter. I also ask that you advise me of whatever actions you decide to take regarding my official complaint.

Sincerely,

Tony Bamonte  
P.O. Box 8625  
Spokane, WA 99203 (509) 838-7114 August 18, 2007

August 18, 2007

The Spokesman-Review  
Steven Smith, Editor  
P.O. Box 2160  
Spokane WA 99210

Regarding: Citizen request for a journalist investigation on the death of Jo Ellen Savage based on the standards of the Associated Press Managing Editors statement of ethical principles.

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am enclosing a copy of a criminal complaint I recently filed. You will find it self-explanatory and probably of interest. As the editor of Spokane's only newspaper and considering your obligation to the public according to the Associated Press Managing Editor's Statement of Ethical Principles, which state you should "vigorously expose wrongdoing, duplicity or misuse of power, public or private," I formally request that you follow-up on this complaint to the point of doing your own investigation. Try to think of this felony crime as though the Spokane Police Department or the county sheriff's department were the suspects and, as such, devote the same attention and coverage you would if this crime had been committed by members of our law enforcement agencies.

I am also enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote to Stacey Cowles on August 8, 2007. Isn't it newsworthy that your employers were successfully sued for close to \$9 million by someone who formerly contracted for them, especially when a bankruptcy judge ruled that your employers acted in "bad faith"? Was the judge in this case not credible? Will that story ever appear in the *Spokesman-Review* or any of the television stations, especially Channel 6? (please also refer to the APME statement of Ethical Principles)

Yesterday on the Mark Fuhrman show, I listened to the reading of a letter you wrote explaining why you were not going to respond to questions regarding anything to do with allegations of wrong-doing by your employers. You appear to be out-of-line and arbitrary in your accusations against all parties who are contrary to your championed position. Can you actually prove or provide evidence that any of the people you have demeaned are not truly credible? If you can't, you shouldn't defame those who are honest, but challenging to your or your employers positions. I am also aware of negative and demeaning comments you have made about me to various journalist. This is disappointing and unjust as we have never met.

When first hired by the Cowles's you appeared to have integrity and be above the type of journalism you are now involved with. Maybe you should ask yourself! Are you truly free of obligations to any interests other than the public's right to know the truth? Are you avoiding conflicts of interest, real or perceived, and are you free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility. Over time, truth and justice seem to always find the light.

As I'm sure you are aware, those who will not answer legitimate and sincere questions from concerned members of the public generally have something they wish to hide. Isn't that a fact you may have learned during your many years of journalist experience?

I openly wonder if, when you made the decision to work for the Cowles, you truly knew their expectations and clandestine business dealings. In the May 6, 2007 edition of the *Spokesman-Review*, you state: "This is not about an investigation into the appropriateness of the River Park Square development or the public private partnership . . ." In truth, this entire scenario does center around the RPS. The Cowles have already been caught committing a number of illegal activities, which they to date, have used their political connections and media empire to cover up. Currently, a number of actions are about to commence that appear to have

the strength necessary to procure justice.

Although I am disappointed in your apparent recent compromised integrity, I still have some faith in you for the fact that you did call for an audit. At this time, I have two questions. What happens if a reporter reports in a way that causes a crime to be covered up or attempts to cover up a crime and gets caught? What happens when certain facts are brought to your attention that show your employers may have committed a crime and you make efforts to conceal their criminal actions? At this time I would urge you to seek your own independent legal counsel and ask those questions.

I have one last question. In the same article I quoted above, you state: "It's not about the checkered record of other journalists who reported on the controversy." It appears you are alleging that some dishonest journalists have falsely reported on RPS. I would like to know who you are referring to and what exactly do you mean by "checkered record."

I learned this morning that a major fraud complaint against the Cowles has been filed with the United States attorney for the Eastern Washington district. This was filed by a former nine-year veteran Spokane City Council woman, Cherie Rodgers, and the highly acclaimed award-winning journalist, Tim Conner. This complaint was filed by invitation of United States attorney, Jim McDivitt, during a time he called in to the Mark Furhman Show and was on the air for about 15 or 20 minutes. McDivitt's only qualification for accepting this complaint was that it be credible. I ask you, are Rodgers and Conner credible and if not, why aren't they? To the best of my knowledge, they are both highly respected and honorable.

There is a good chance your employers may be on their way to receiving national attention for a number of disgraceful actions and crimes they have committed. In the best interest of the public your profession dictates you serve, I hope you will conduct a fair and open investigation.

Sincerely,

Tony Bamonte  
P.O. Box 8625  
Spokane, WA 99203 838-7114