

August 13, 2012

Dear Mr. Dean:

First of all we want to again express our gratitude to you for the story you did on our son and brother Jason Payne one year ago (July 31, 2011) in the Tyler newspaper. That article was very helpful in getting people to see the injustice that was done to Jason. It even played a part in getting a national advocacy group, Advocates 4 Wrongfully Convicted (A4WC) interested in Jason's case. When we first contacted A4WC they told us they were very busy and not taking on any new cases at that time. However, we stayed in touch with them and they finally agreed to look into and investigate Jason's case. We remember very well a comment they made to us stating "we'll investigate Jason's case but you have to be aware that every case we go into we assume the party is guilty, and the facts and evidence of the case must prove innocence beyond any doubt." They told us if they couldn't prove actual innocence they wouldn't be able to take the case. We told them we understood and if their investigation proved Jason guilty we would have to accept their conclusion. We were certain they would find Jason innocent which they did, but if they hadn't we would still love Jason, support him and be forced to recognize he was being punished for his guilt.

A4WC has done a wonderful job in supporting Jason and our family, and getting the truth out to the public over the Internet, through Jason's web site (www.wcojp.org) and on Facebook. They even got his case covered on a Blog Talk Radio show in which they interviewed us and Dick Blanchard, Executive Director of A4WC.

A few months ago we asked Mr. Blanchard if he would contact you about doing a follow up story on Jason's case and his current status. Mr. Blanchard said he would and told us that some emails were exchanged between the two of you, and a phone call was made about doing a follow up story on Jason's case. Mr. Blanchard said you felt at that time it didn't seem feasible to do a follow up story because there was really nothing new in Jason's case. Mr. Blanchard also said you stated that you and your editor had taken some heat about that story. In addition Mr. Blanchard stated you told him you believed Jason is most likely innocent. We would like to comment on these three points.

First of all we feel there is new information about Jason's case from the time you did your story one year ago. Here are four items we feel that are new and newsworthy to your audience:

1. A national advocacy group, A4WC has taken on Jason's case and they only take cases where actual innocence can be proven.
2. You did a very good job covering Jason's case but since then A4WC has uncovered more facts, not covered in your story relating to Jason's innocence.
3. At the time of your story there wasn't a web site built for Jason, now there is (www.wcojp.org). This site tells the complete story of Jason's innocence and how he was wrongfully convicted. At the very least we would like to make this web site known to the people of Quitman and Wood County.
4. At the time of your story you did a real good job inferring that Jason was innocent. A4WC has gone further and stated Jason IS innocent and that it would have been impossible for him to commit that crime.

The second part of what Mr. Blanchard said he heard in your conversation was that you and your editor took a lot of heat over that story. We are not in the newspaper business but isn't that what a reporter is supposed to do is take heat for doing an investigative story. It would seem to us that if your were taking heat that there were certain people (possibly D.A. Wheeler and Lt. Tucker) that didn't want your story to be made public and probably don't want to see any more being discussed in the news media about

Jason's case. If you won an award on your first story we feel you could certainly win an award on your follow up story. Before Jason was wrongfully convicted we had no idea this sort of thing happened in America. Since Jason's wrongful conviction we have found out it happens far more frequently than we and most people realize. One has to go no further than the state of Texas to see how many wrongful convictions have been overturned including many on death row.

The third point is if you feel Jason is most likely innocent, as an investigative reporter don't you feel an obligation to right the wrong that was done and make people aware of Jason's wrongful conviction by D.A. Wheeler and Lt. Tucker?

We dearly love Jason and want to see his story told and the people that wrongfully convicted him punished for what they did because it is just not right. Jason's wrongful conviction has destroyed our family, and we feel the only way we can be healed is for him to be exonerated; we will do whatever possible to obtain that goal of exoneration.

In the last sentence of your July 31, 2011 story, Noel Martin stated "I have never been called to the scene by the state only to testify for the defense, and I have never called the media in regard to a case I am working on," he said. "This case was different. I will testify for Jason Payne all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court." Noel Martin has been helpful to us and continues to support Jason's innocence.

We pray you will do a follow up story on Jason's case and get the truth out to the community of Wood County.

Thank you so very much, and God bless you.

Faye Payne, Mother of Jason Payne
Melisa Thickstun, Sister of Jason Payne

cc: Dick Blanchard, Advocates 4 Wrongfully Convicted
Noel Martin, Smith County Sheriff's Office