

February 25, 2001

The View From Here

## **Carroll case no real credit to Ken Bruno**

By CARL STROCK

---

I refer the reader to page F2 of this newspaper, where District Attorney Ken Bruno of Rensselaer County in a letter to the editor expresses his dismay with what he calls my warped reporting of the Jack Carroll case, exudes sympathy for the girl who accused Carroll, and lavishes praise on his assistant, Trish D'Angelis, who, twice now, successfully prosecuted Carroll on charges of sexual molestation.

I certainly concede that I took a drubbing on the case, since after much pleading on my part Jack Carroll got his original conviction reversed by the Court of Appeals only to get convicted all over again in a fresh trial, which is not exactly what I had looked for by way of outcome. But to contend as Mr. Bruno does that Jack Carroll is therefore clearly guilty is to diminish the persuasive powers of his own prosecutor, the redoubtable Ms. D'Angelis, who put on an emotionally charged presentation before the jury which rendered actual evidence - or actual lack of evidence - irrelevant.

That 12 ordinary men and women who had nothing better to do that week bought the performance and convicted Carroll by no means persuades me that he is really guilty. The case came down to the girl's word against Carroll's. She said he sexually fondled her; he said he didn't. Sure, someone might want to ignore the presumption of innocence that is supposed to be accorded a defendant and give the benefit of the doubt to the girl, which I can understand, but to pretend that the defendant in this case was actually proven guilty, for anyone who sat through the trial, is a joke.

The evidence against him, apart from the highly rehearsed and choked-up testimony of an admittedly troubled girl, consisted of such tomfoolery as should have been laughed out of court, including, most conspicuously, the testimony of two cops who conceded they did no investigation but relied instead on their interpretation of body language and one nurse (girlfriend of one of the cops) who conceded that her medical report omitted critical exculpatory findings. That, and Ms. D'Angelis's impassioned twisting of Jack Carroll's protestations of innocence, which was about as shameful a thing as I have seen in a courtroom. If anyone wants to talk about warped, I would be happy to talk about that.

No, ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid what the trial demonstrated was not Jack Carroll's guilt but merely the continuing power of charges of child sex abuse. It demonstrated that there are people in this country who see pedophiles lurking everywhere, much as people in the 1950s saw communists lurking everywhere or as people in the 16th century saw witches lurking everywhere, people who are eager to interpret evilly every word and

act of a sex-abuse suspect and believe without supporting evidence that any sex-abuse suspect is necessarily guilty. (These are people who, in my view, might benefit from a cold shower.)

It demonstrated that well-meaning folks plucked off the street to serve on a jury are sufficiently conditioned by the prevailing concern over sex abuse that they will believe these professional pedophile-seekers no matter how buffoonish their demeanor or how transparently false their testimony rather than take the chance that a real child molester might go free.

This is no credit to the office of Ken Bruno, in my view, but is just a reflection of a curious social trend, one that has been with us for about 20 years now. So I by no means repent of my reporting on this case but rather stand firmly by it.