

DeAngelis as DA: chilling prospect

I note that Patricia DeAngelis is running for district attorney of Rensselaer County, a job that she now holds on an acting basis, and this is interesting to me, as she is the one who, along with her team of witnesses and noninvestigators, sent Jack Carroll of Troy to prison for sex crimes that I strongly suspect he probably didn't commit.

She did it in a way that, if you were in the courtroom, positively made you hold your head in your hands — all theatrics, all sarcasm, all distortion, all leering innuendo.

She did it by arguing along with her cop witnesses that Carroll's every denial was a coded admission ("admission by denial"), by coaching and rehearsing Carroll's accuser to within an inch of the girl's life, by presenting testimony that misrepresented the results of a medical exam ("Doesn't matter . . . means nothing," she told the jury), and finally by taking the strongest evidence in Carroll's favor, a tape recording in which he expressed astonishment at what he was accused of, and turning it against him, twisting the plain meaning and the plain tone of it into their opposites.

It's disheartening to me that she's allowed to practice law at all, much less be chief prosecutor of a county, though I have no confidence that the general run of voters in Rensselaer is aware of any of this. She promotes herself as a protector of children and largely gets away with it.

I don't have the time, the space, or frankly the stomach to recount to you all the devious moves she executed in Jack Carroll's trial! , in the Rensselaer County Courthouse, in downtown Troy, in January of 2001, or I would give you plenty to stew over.

But there she was escorting Carroll's accuser, a by-now 17-year-old girl, into the courtroom and ostentatiously running interference for her, putting herself between the girl and Jack Carroll as they walked by the defense table, casting apprehensive looks over her shoulder as if Jack was an unpredictable fiend who might at any moment lunge at them.

There she was rigidly folding her arms for the jury to demonstrate how Jack "locked down" under interrogation (a sign of guilt).

There she was presenting a hired witness, a psychologist, to testify that all of

Jack's normal, fatherly behavior was consistent with that of a sex abuser.

There she was insinuating that another girl, the teen-age daughter of Jack's girlfriend — who regards Jack as her stepfather and is devoted to him — may also have been sexually abused by him. "Do you think in a million years if the answer to that question was yes, she ever would have said it?" DeAngelis wondered aloud in court.

And, "She is such a liar, she is such a liar," she also declared.

It made you ashamed to be a human being if you were in the courtroom to hear that.

There she was playing the critical tape recording for the jury and interjecting, with sneering indignation, "Give me a break," "Garbage" and so forth, as Jack said things like, "Oh, my God, I never did anything to you!" "I wouldn't do that" and so forth.

There she was explaining to the jury that Jack was making the girl "feel guilty," "putting the blame on her," and whatnot, when all he was doing was what any innocent man would do, which was express disbelief that anyone could accuse him of such a thing.

Finally, there she was explaining to the jury — a big challenge here — why Jack would urge the girl to go see a doctor, which would seem to be a clear indication he was innocent.

Her ingenuous explanation: Jack had molested the girl only with his fingers: "He never believed that there would be any evidence, because he never put his penis inside of her."

And never mind the little fact that this same Patricia DeAngelis had prosecuted this same Jack Carroll in an earlier trial of the same case for first-degree rape, in other words, for exactly what he was now not supposed to have done, and had won a conviction, albeit a conviction that was thrown out on appeal.

So it was pure legal opportunism. The first time she nailed him for rape; the second time she nailed him for not-rape.

I do not go into other sexabuse cases that Ms. DeAngelis has prosecuted because I did not follow them in detail, but there have been others, employing the same team of witnesses — the same state police investigator who weirdly concentrated on getting girls to talk about "the big V" (meaning the vagina); the same Troy cop who as much as admitted to me that he lied; the same psychologist from New York City who sees everything as indicative of sex abuse; the same nurse practitioner who reported that redness on the girl was consistent

with sex abuse but neglected to mention that the girl had a simple yeast infection.

The Jack Carroll case was not an isolated case but is part of a pattern in Rensselaer County over the past several years, since Ms. DeAngelis has been prosecutor.

And for that matter, Ms. DeAngelis is not an isolated prosecutor. She is part of a larger movement — a movement that I believe might finally be abating — of ! sex-abuse hysteria, which consists of seeing signs of sex abuse everywhere and of believing that every little hint, every accusation is necessarily a "disclosure," which is a cult word of the movement's members, and that all those accused are necessarily "perpetrators," which is another cult word of theirs.

She is not merely that stereotypical character, the overzealous prosecutor, which would be bad enough, and she did not just get a little carried away and take a few liberties in the matter of Jack Carroll.

She is part of something that has put a lot of innocent people in jail, people whose cases have been amply reported and are becoming part of our history. A shameful part, if I need state the obvious.

The View From Here presents Carl Strock's personal commentary and appears on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Strock can be reached at 395-3085. The opinions of the newspaper appear in editorials on the Opinion Page every day.