

October 14, 2004

The View From Here

DeAngelis' sex case goes poof

By Carl Strock

Perhaps you're wondering what has become of the charges against Thomas Levandowski, one-time police chief of Cambridge, Washington County, who a couple of years ago was convicted in Troy of sex crimes and then, this summer, had his conviction overturned on appeal because of misconduct by District Attorney Patricia DeAngelis.

Perhaps you're wondering if Ms. DeAngelis, who presents herself as an avenging angel when it comes to sex crimes, took Levandowski to a second trial to get him convicted again, as she took Jack Carroll to a second trial and got him convicted again. The charges against Levandowski were hardly of the sort that an angel of integrity would let go. They involved the repeated rape over a period of time of a 10-to-11-year-old girl, in Levandowski's Hoosick home, with the cooperation and connivance of his wife, who allegedly gave the girl birth-control pills so she wouldn't get pregnant and who even videotaped the sexual acts.

Horrible stuff, if real, though as regular readers of this column know, it can be hard to tell what's real in a DeAngelis case.

Well, I won't keep you in suspense. Ten felony counts remained against Levandowski after the most serious ones had been reversed, and the other day in Rensselaer County Court, DeAngelis moved to dismiss them all. So I am informed by Levandowski's lawyer, Peter Lynch.

Yes. Out the window. After all the hullabaloo. After all the outrage. After one jury had even been talked into them. See you later.

Just as DeAngelis also did with the wife, Sharon Levandowski. Out the window with all the spectacular felony charges against her too.

The deal?

That Thomas Levandowski plead guilty to four misdemeanors of violating an order of protection, because he went to the girl's school to pick up some records when he was not supposed to, and to one misdemeanor of endangering the welfare of a child, because he had once grabbed the girl by the arm.

Combined sentence: two years, meaning only what he has already served, since he has been in prison since June 2002.

No sex counts at all. Just as with his wife no sex counts remained, after all those fevered accusations of feeding the kid birth-control pills and the rest. Just a misdemeanor technicality and a sentence of face-saving probation.

In other words, forget about it. Isn't that wonderful?

I don't know if the voters of Rensselaer County, who made DeAngelis district attorney, are aware of these developments or if they're disturbed by them.

When she ran for the office last year, already with a self-created reputation as a fiery

prosecutor focused on sex offenders, one of her campaign fliers, headlined "Protecting Our Families," carried a picture of Thomas Levandowski with the legend "50 years," referring to how long she had put him away for.

Yes, voters, 50 years, which now, post-election, has melted down to the two years he has already served, and with the florid tales of child rape having dissipated into the ozone. I don't know if the alumni of Albany Law School are aware of these developments either, after they just bestowed on Ms. DeAngelis their Outstanding Young Alumni Award. Now, I hasten to add that Thomas Levandowski will not be getting out of prison right away. Apart from the rape and sex-abuse case which just went poof, he later pleaded guilty to possession of child pornography on his home computer and was sentenced to four to 12 years for that crime. His earliest release date, if he wins parole, is June 20, 2006.

I hasten to add, also, that I do not know Thomas Levandowski, have never met him, and I in no way minimize the seriousness of the child-pornography plea.

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.