

Fighting Teen Crime in Shelby, NC—Loses to the Skunks!!! Murderer set Free by Plea Bargain from DA!!! Judge Bridges “Holds His Nose” When he signs the Order!!! “Blast from the past” article by Robert A. Williams

Editor's Note: Teen Crimes and black on black crimes are in the Shelby news almost every day now. For years even. I found this article I published 15 years ago and it still applies today to at least one or more parts of the Shelby crime problem. DA Plea Bargains setting the criminals back on the streets with plea-bargains. Last time I checked the Court Calendar for Cleveland County Superior Court, almost 80% of the docket was for Probation Violations. Some were Probation Violations on top of probation violations. I thought this article is just as appropriate today as it was in 2006.

Judge Holds His Nose To DA's Plea-Bargain

By Robert A. Williams

Judge Forrest Donald Bridges is the Senior Superior Court Judge in the 27B Judicial District. The 27B Judicial District includes Cleveland and Lincoln Counties. Some would say that Judge Bridges is the most powerful man in Cleveland County. We would agree.

We would also agree that the North American Grizzly Bear, weighing in at over 1,000 pounds, is much more powerful than a five-pound Skunk. But the stink from a Skunk will cause the mighty grizzly to give way to the skunk-every time. So, goes Judge Bridges against the Cleveland County District Attorney's Office, inhabited by Bill Young and Richard Leroy Shaffer, Junior. The Judge steps lightly, not wanting the stink to land on him.

CGG.org Court watchers were amused to learn that Judge Bridges reads the Citizens For Good Government.org too. And sometimes repeats an appropriate phrase that is sometimes printed therein. No, we haven't heard Judge Bridges refer to the Star Editor as "Skippy". No, we haven't heard Judge Bridges refer to the Star as the "Shelby Daily Liar." What we heard Judge Bridges say was that "I will have to 'Hold my Nose' when I sign this plea-bargain". A plea-bargain the DA's Office had offered an accused murderer. "Hold Your Nose" is a phrase I use sometimes around election time, like when I recommended voting for Charlie "the Skunk" Horn. Instead of J. Keaton Fonvielle for Judge a few years back. "Hold your nose and Vote for Horn" I recommended. That must have stuck with Judge Bridges when the DA's plea-bargain with the murderer was put in front of him to sign. A plea bargain that might even allow the murderer back on the street in time for Election Day. When the District Attorney's race between Leroy Shaffer and Colin McWhirter will be decided. I have to wonder who the murderer would vote for?

But forget about Election Day for a minute, here are the details of what has become a typical day in Cleveland County Court. The minute is over. Court watchers didn't say who actually did the plea-bargain since Bill Young and Rick Shaffer were both in Court when Judge Bridges was holding his nose. OK. The details of this murder case are reported by two reporters. A CGG.org Court watcher and the Shelby Star. Who left what out?

Scottie Brent Webber, a convicted felon, shot and killed Walter Sylvester Dawson over a woman on the road right behind K-Mart on October 14, 2004. Webber was arrested and jailed, charged with murder. NOT charged by the DA with possession of a firearm by a felon. NOT charged by the DA with other serious crimes that were committed. But a murder charge was sufficient to keep Webber in jail awaiting trial.

So, two and a half years later, the DA's office offers Webber a deal that will set Webber free. Plead guilty to involuntary manslaughter, serve a few more months and with time already served in jail, you're out. Free as a bird. Depending on getting by with a drug charge too.

Webber would have been stupid to turn it down the DA's offer and he didn't. Judge Bridges sentence for the plea-bargain manslaughter charge, according to the plea-bargain, would be for two to three years. With a little "good behavior" Webber would be out soon, maybe already, if Judge Bridges had not stuck Webber with a four-year sentence on the drug deal charge. The Skunk must have not thought about including that drug charge onto the plea-bargain he put on the bench for Judge Bridges to sign.

"Will I have to "hold my nose" when I sign this plea-bargain," Judge Bridges said. He didn't actually have to sign it. But like the grizzly bear not wanting to get stinked-up by a skunk, he knew if he didn't sign it, the DA could have dismissed the charges outright. The murderer could have walked right out the door. So, Judge Bridges signed it and justice, Cleveland County Style, was served. (NOT!)

Now, for the Star report printed July 14, 2006. Notice Skippy edited out the Judge holding his nose comment and DA Rick Shaffer's involvement in the Courtroom.

Man pleads guilty in '04 shooting

Pete DeLea – Jul. 14, 2006

SHELBY – A man charged with murder pleaded guilty Thursday to involuntary manslaughter instead and will serve less than three years in prison.

Scottie Brent Webber entered his plea in Superior Court for a 2004 shooting that left 38-year-old Walter Sylvester Dawson dead in an intersection behind Kmart.

Cleveland County District Attorney Bill Young said it would have been difficult to get a murder conviction based on the evidence and witness available.

Superior Court Judge Forrest D. Bridges sentenced Webber, 35, to about two to three years in prison.

Dawson's brother, Steve Degree, said Webber should have received a tougher penalty. "My family doesn't feel he deserves a plea bargain," Degree said.

"I'm not going to say my brother was a top-notch citizen, but his life is worth more than two years," Degree said. "He's getting more time for his drug charges than for my brother's life."

Degree said family members would like to just put the case behind them. "My mother really wants to get the case over with," he said.

Here's Young's description of the Oct. 14 shooting:

It involved a dispute over a female. Dawson called his estranged girlfriend, who lived at Holly Oak Apartments, and Webber was at the girl's home.

Dawson, who was banned from Holly Oak Apartments, borrowed a car that wouldn't be recognized and drove to the complex.

At some point, Dawson and Webber were traveling on the road near Kmart and approached a traffic light. Dawson pulled up behind Webber and approached his car.

Young said Webber and a witness had different stories about what happened next.

"The defendant said the gun accidentally went off," Young said.

Webber's attorney, Brent Ratchford, said his client regrets the incident.

"He stated to me that he never intended for this to happen," Ratchford said.

Degree said he was disappointed with the sentence and that Webber was not charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Webber has several previous felony convictions, including drug trafficking. He was sentenced to about four years in the drug case.

Also, in court Thursday:

Jason Nicholas Alderman's case was continued to Sept. 11, so he can have a mental evaluation at Dorothea Dix Hospital.

Alderman is accused of handcuffing a Cleveland County detention officer and beating him with a piece of wood in an attempt to escape jail. He is charged with misdemeanor escape from jail, first-degree kidnapping, common law robbery and attempted first-degree murder.

Editor's Note: Wouldn't it have been nice for the DA to have left this trial for the next DA to try? What were Bill Young and Rick Shaffer thinking? Maybe they were thinking they didn't want voters to know a murder charge was over two years old and nothing was done. Better to let off a murderer than have to explain all that bicycle riding. Now, Webber will have another victim for his crimes, or two or three, before a REAL District Attorney and a REAL Sheriff can build another case to

put this guy away for a long time. Hopefully those victims are not you or me. See you on Election Day. Take someone with you.

Editor's Note Pt II: 15 years later and serious crime in the City of Shelby has gone UP, WAY UP, not down. Probation and plea-bargains are NOT working. And, proactive solutions like Willie Green's Sports Complex proposals have been ignored. More than ignored, Rejected, because Mr. Green is being discriminated against by the Shelby Mayor and City Council. Since the Courts and the City of Shelby never seem to learn their lesson, and Civil Rights law violations are not prosecuted, maybe the voters in Shelby can make some personnel changes the City Council in this year's elections.