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Tale of the tape: Did video capture principal's fetish?

Experts weigh in Nasty or Normal?

By Molly Belmont

Is there a difference between someone who enjoys sex scenes in movies and a voyeur? Can voyeurism be part of normal behavior? How does videotaping subjects fit into the behavior? Two New York psychologists discussed the topic of video voyeurism, and related issues like paraphilia and fetishism, with *The Enterprise* this week.

A voyeur is someone who is sexually aroused, not necessarily gratified, by observing others, said Dr. Rudy Nydegger, chief of psychology at Ellis Hospital and President of the New York State Psychological Association. This is usually done in secret, he said.

Voyeurism is the impulse to spy on people, usually strangers, often in public spaces, but not necessarily, said Nydegger.

"You wouldn't diagnose someone who just watched a movie as a voyeur," said Nydegger.

Voyeurism is a type of paraphilia, he said. Paraphilia is inappropriate or dysfunctional behavior that falls outside the range of normal sexual behavior — a disorder, he said. Sadomasochism and exhibitionism are other types of paraphilia, he said.

There is no single cause of paraphilia, but there are consistent traits, he said. It usually develops over a period of years, he said, and it is most often diagnosed in young males, he said. Paraphilia is usually a learned pattern of behavior as opposed to a deep underlying problem, but it can be a symptom of a larger problem, he said.

Paraphiliacs can become dependent on this behavior, he said, and for some people it can become the preferred mode of arousal, Nydegger said.

Nydegger makes a distinction between voyeurism and fetishism. Fetishism is deriving sexual arousal from inanimate objects, Nydegger said. Women's underwear is the most common object, he said. Videos are not considered an object, unless it is the tape itself, and not the act of watching the tape that stimulates the individual, Nydegger said.

Voyeurs need to be evaluated for other kinds of problem behavior, like anti-social tendencies or drug and alcohol dependencies, he said. Typically, voyeurs are "just that," he said, but it's important to confirm that their voyeurism is not a symptom of a larger problem.

Another point of view

Voyeurism can be both common and normal or it can be pathological, said Dr. Peter Ke-

(Continued on Page 19)



The Enterprise — Melissa Hale-Spencer

Principal John Wagner posed with the Farnsworth Middle School mascot on April 11 in front of a giant American flag made of 600 personal messages from staff and students — a project he spearheaded. The day before, the district learned that a videotape Wagner made about the project also contained other footage — which the district describes as focusing on the groin areas of fully-clothed male students — that led to Wagner's being placed on leave.

Editorial on Page 2

School warns of Wagner

By Melissa Hale-Spencer

GUILDERLAND — A long-time and highly respected house principal at Farnsworth Middle School, John Wagner, has been placed on administrative leave after district officials say they learned he had focused on the groin areas of fully clothed male students while making school videotapes.

If Wagner does not resign, Aidala said charges may be filed under section 3020A of state law, which outlines a costly and lengthy hearing procedure used to discipline or remove tenured faculty members.

Wagner has worked for the Guilderland School district since 1971, first as a science and health teacher and then, since 1987, as

'This letter is an act of character assassination.'

Both the school district and the Guilderland Police Department are conducting investigations.

The discovery was made when Wagner, who frequently taped school events, handed over a videotape meant to celebrate the middle school, Superintendent Gregory Aidala announced at a press conference on Tuesday.

An employee rewinding the tape "saw some parts of great concern to her," said Aidala, and she "brought it to the attention of school administrators."

Aidala said the district has asked for Wagner's resignation. Wagner did not return calls from *The Enterprise* this week.

principal of Tawasentha House, one of three houses at the middle school. He is also an assistant varsity coach for the high school boys' cross-country team. His salary is \$82,815.

Parents react

At Tuesday's school board meeting, Michael Rhodes-Devey spoke in defense of Wagner. His comments, and a brief response from Aidala, were the only mention made of Wagner's case at the meeting, which was largely a celebration of teachers receiving tenure and a lengthy look at the district's state report card.

Rhodes-Devey said that his

(Continued on page 18)

Legislature takes on voyeurs

By Nicole Fay Barr

ALBANY — Both houses of the state legislature have passed bills that would make secret, inappropriate videotaping a felony. They must iron out differences in the bills, however, before the law can be enacted.

When news broke this week about a seasoned middle-school principal caught with videotapes that focused on male students' clothed crotches, some members of the state Assembly were outraged.

Not everyone feels that way, though. Democratic Assemblyman Jack McEneny, who supports the same bill Nesbitt does, told *The Enterprise* Wednesday that the Wagner situation has nothing to do with the video voyeurism bills proposed.

In Wagner's case, McEneny said, the videos were taken at sporting or school events, where a person should have a reasonable expectation that they might be videotaped.

"I don't think he was

'I don't think he was endangering the welfare of a child.'

John Wagner, a house principal at Farnsworth Middle School in Guilderland, was put on administrative leave and asked to resign after police say he was found to possess over a dozen tapes of sporting events and school activities where he zoomed in on boys' groin areas. (See related story.)

Waiting for the law to pass is "absurd," Chris McKenna, a spokesman for Charles Nesbitt, the Republican leader of the state Assembly, told *The Enterprise*. Nesbitt plans to use this incident to push the legislation, McKenna said.

endangering the welfare of a child," said McEneny.

The legislative bills involve taping without a person's permission, where he or she would expect to have privacy, like a dressing room or bathroom.

"Very frustrated"

Guilderland Police received a call nearly two weeks ago from Farnsworth Middle School administrators, saying they had a tape the police should look at, said Chief James Murley.

Investigators reviewed the tapes and then spoke with Wagner, Murley said. Wagner admitted.

(Continued on page 18)