



THE COMMUNITY PAGE

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Post Register Attacks the Scouts Again! *When Will It Stop?!*

The Post Register Attack on the Boy Scouts Continues

Members of our community will remember last year's five-day front page attack on the Boy Scouts replete with misleading headlines, innuendo, and accusations. The stories inferred that some sort of nebulous cover-up involving authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and local Boy Scout leaders had protected pedophiles and allowed them to operate unfettered among the ranks of the Boy Scouts.

Melaleuca President and CEO Frank VanderSloot was suspicious about the accuracy of the story and its headlines. He hired a group of well-respected attorneys from the law firm of Thomsen & Stephens to investigate the accuracy of the story. What they found was alarming! They reported that almost none of the conclusions drawn in the story had any basis of fact. The Community Page went public with the attorneys' findings and refuted the *Post Register's* story line-by-line with the facts of the case, including Judge Andersen's decision vindicating the Grand Teton Council of any wrongdoing. The *Post Register* immediately dropped its unfounded theory of any cover-up or of LDS Church involvement and later even denied that they had ever advanced any such theory. Having no facts to support any of their theories, they ultimately stopped their attacks on the Grand Teton Council leadership.

But recently in numerous articles and editorials the *Post Register* has launched a renewed attack on an innocent and well-respected member of the scouting community. It's as if the *Post Register* does not want to walk away without at least someone's blood, and the Grand Teton Council's Executive Director Kim Hansen seems to be their most recent and most vulnerable victim. The *Post Register* has made several attempts to incite the public against Kim Hansen, but those who know Kim Hansen and who know the facts of this case aren't buying any of it. Once again, the *Post Register* is making allegations that are not supported by the facts.

Biased Reporter

One strange aspect of the original story, last year, was that the *Post Register* had assigned a gay-rights advocate, Peter Zuckerman, to be the "investigative reporter" on the story. There is nothing wrong with having homosexual reporters, but since the Boy Scouts' policy of not allowing homosexual men to be scout leaders has produced so much anger against the scouts from the homosexual community, it seems that if the *Post Register* had wanted a fair and balanced story on the Boy Scouts, they would have assigned a reporter who did not have a personal ax to grind.

The recent attacks on Kim Hansen are just as unfair. The *Post Register* continues to use the phony premise created by Zuckerman as the basis for its most recent accusations.

Important Facts Left Out

Why hasn't the *Post Register* informed the public that on the day of Adam Steed's molestation and the resulting Scout investigation of Brad Stowell, Kim Hansen had just returned from a three-day stay in the hospital because of a severe foot infection and was on doctor's orders to stay in bed and keep his foot elevated? Why has the *Post Register* kept that information from us? It seems quite important to note that the person that you say is guilty wasn't even at the scene where the incident happened!

Kim Hansen was called by the Camp Director, Elias Lopez, as soon as the allegations about Stowell were reported to the Scouts. From his sickbed, Hansen instructed Lopez to investigate the allegations, and if Lopez found that the allegations had merit, to call the Sheriff. That is exactly what Lopez did. According to Lopez's testimony, the molestation was reported to the Scouts on Thursday, and the Sheriff arrested Stowell at camp on Friday. That is what should have happened, and that is what did happen. It seems difficult to blame Kim Hansen for anything. He wasn't even there. But then, the *Post Register* has conveniently left those facts out of its story. Our question: why doesn't the *Post Register* want the public to know these critical facts?

Impossible Affidavit

Why hasn't the *Post Register* pointed out to the public that the affidavit Jeff Bird signed could not be entirely true? No one disputes the fact that Dennis Empey molested Jeff Bird. Bird says that the incident happened in June of 1983 (23 years ago) at scout camp in Island Park. That was impossible because there was no scout camp in Island Park in June of 1983. The *Post Register* should be asking, "If Jeff Bird was mistaken about *where* it happened or *what* happened, could he also be mistaken about *what* Scout leader he talked to or *what exactly* he told the Scout leader?" By Jeff Bird's own admission, he was unclear in his message to whomever he reported the incident. He said he told the Scout official that Empey had "touched" him "in a bad way." Clearly, he was trying not to say what really had happened. The Scout Official was supposed to figure out what the young Scout was really trying to say without really saying it. When one puts oneself into the position of that Scout leader, one can only hope to have understood what the young man was trying to say. Jeff Bird believes that Kim Hansen was the Scout leader he talked to. When we asked Kim Hansen about that day 23 years ago, he told us he does not remember any interaction with Jeff Bird, ever. But he assures us that if he had received any information about any young man getting molested or even "touched in a bad way," he "would have moved heaven and earth to get to the bottom of it and would have protected the Scouts at all costs." We believe him!



Connecting the Dots

The Boy Scouts isn't the only organization that has drawn a law suit from the Steed family. The Steeds recently sued Wal-Mart for \$2 million because two lamps Mrs. Steed was reaching for at a local Wal-Mart fell on her head. Although the Steeds lost that lawsuit, it might be important for readers to know that the Steeds have been involved in other lawsuits with other parties as well as with the Boy Scouts. We're not faulting the Steeds for lodging lawsuits against whomever they think has deep pockets. Suing folks to gain personal wealth is now accepted by many as "the American way." But the *Post Register* has the responsibility to keep us informed as to what is really happening in regard to such cases. (It's hard to connect the dots if we are not aware that the dots even exist.) We are wondering why the *Post Register* has never mentioned the Wal-Mart lawsuit while the Idaho State Journal informed it's readers months ago. Could it be that it would have put more doubt on the *Post Register's* already dubious story?

National Award

In 2004, the Grand Teton Council was awarded the National Risk Management Award for the "best youth protection and health and safety plan" in all of Scouting, which recognized the Council for having one of the best programs for protecting the scouts from all dangers including pedophiles. Only 4 of the 308 Councils throughout United States received this award! This award is a testimony to how the national

Boy Scouts of America feel about Kim Hansen and the other Scout leaders of the Grand Teton Council in their efforts to build a solid program to protect the scouts from pedophiles. One would think that in its "fair and balanced" reporting the *Post Register* would have made reference of this prestigious award at least once. But the award obviously refutes the *Post Register's* wild accusations. Could that be why the *Post Register* has never mentioned it?

A Clean and Respectable Record

The *Post Register* would rather you not see Boy Scout Executive Director Kim Hansen as he is—a 33-year veteran director of the scouting program who



Kim Hansen

nurtured his wife for months as she died of lymphoma. They have not told their readers about the effective administrator who has seen thousands of proud boy scouts venture through the scouting program before entering adulthood. They'd rather you not know the music and art lover, who plays the piano for relaxation, whose friends and co-workers describe him as "steady," "kind," "decent," and who "does things for the right reasons at difficult times." They'd rather not show you the true face of a man who received a unanimous vote of confidence from the Grand Teton Council's Board of Directors at their annual meeting in February this year, a man entrusted by officials and Scout leaders with their children for more than a generation, one who bears that trust with a firm sense of responsibility.

Instead, they'll show you the face of a man whose only real mistake was being afflicted by an infection at the wrong time. Throughout the *Post Register* you will not read of the years of selfless service of this good man, nor will you read of the tremendous success of the Grand Teton Council under his leadership.

Staying Focused

In all of the questions put to Kim Hansen about this story, he has shown himself as humble, non-defensive, and honorable in his responses. He has never attacked his attackers, and is obviously careful to not exaggerate his position. Despite not knowing Kim Hansen prior to this, we have been impressed with his integrity and gentle demeanor and the manner in which he has handled this situation. Clearly, these allegations hurt him deeply, but rather than spend time defending himself, he has gone on about his business of building the Scouting program. Only the greatest of leaders can continue to stay focused on draining the swamp after the alligators show up in full force.

The Scouts Rally

The *Post Register* wants us to believe that the public is demanding Kim Hansen's resignation, another statement not supported by fact. The truth is that after dozens of articles trying to inflame the public against the Scouts and against Kim Hansen, in a community of tens of thousands, only eight persons have been gullible enough to write in letters against Hansen. It is not their fault. It is normal for folks to want to believe the local newspaper. It is obvious that most of these writers have never met Hansen. The vast majority of the community, however, have been supporters of the Boy Scouts and of Hansen. Current statistics tell a very compelling story of support for the Scout Leadership and for Kim Hansen. This last year, Camp Registrations have been at an all-time high! The Grand Teton Council Scout membership has increased each year for the past four years! And donations to the Council set an all-time high record this year—far surpassing all previous fundraising goals! What a great testimony of how people feel about Kim Hansen's leadership! Why didn't the *Post Register* tell us about these new records? Obviously they do not fit the story that the *Post Register* would have us believe. That is why we bought this page. We feel the people have a right to know the truth about what is happening with the Boy Scouts. It's unfortunate that it's a story that the *Post Register* does not want people to know.