

The friends of Brett Kimberlin The Washington Times January 24, 1995, Tuesday, Final Edition

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BODY:

The Washington snickering has no doubt already started. The **Supreme Court** will hear the appeal of paroled inmate Brett Kimberlin - the man who says he sold marijuana to Dan Quayle in the former vice president's college days.

Kimberlin has been suing federal prison officials he claims locked him in solitary confinement to keep him from telling reporters about the veep's past. That suit was thrown out by an appellate court, but now the justices will determine whether to reinstate Kimberlin's complaint.

The giggling there will be at the prospect of Mr. Quayle's embarrassment: The bogus story that he bought drugs will be aired once again, this time in front of the high court, and just as he is preparing a presidential bid. This takes place despite the fact that a Justice Department investigation found Kimberlin's claims to be false.

Before the hilarity becomes too pronounced, however, a sober and sobering look at Mr. Quayle's accuser is in order. For he is not just a convicted drug dealer, as he is most often referred to by the press. He is a convicted serial bomber who's cruel Indianapolis terror spree in the late 1970s resulted in maimings, and ultimately, one death.

You wouldn't know it, however, based on most of the stories written by most journalists. Consider how the Reuter's wire service handled Kimberlin's curriculum vitae in its article last Friday about the **Supreme Court** case. Buried in the penultimate paragraph was a brief and euphemistic description of the crimes that landed Kimberlin in jail in the first place: "Kimberlin was convicted on charges of drug smuggling and using explosives. Sent to prison in 1980, he was released last year." Using explosives? Is that really the most accurate way to describe the act of blowing a man's leg off with a package bomb?

Reuter's delicate choice of words is squarely within industry standards for dealing with Kimberlin. Indeed, the author of the Reuter's story was more forthcoming than most reporters, who regularly refer to Kimberlin simply as a convicted drug dealer. Funny how that description resonates with the implication that Kimberlin could be telling the truth about Mr. Quayle scoring dope: After all, he says he sold drugs to the veep, and he's in jail for selling drugs.

The truth about Kimberlin is much uglier. And nearly as ugly is the way that Friends Of Bill have helped to promote him and his calumny.

Kimberlin was not a garden variety drug pusher. He was a full-blown smuggler, bringing in plane-loads of marijuana through Texas. Police ultimately found a half-ton of marijuana on his property in Indiana.

In 1980, Kimberlin was sentenced to four years for the drug conspiracy. But that is not why he was in federal prison in Oklahoma during the 1988 presidential campaign. There he was serving a 51-year sentence for making and planting eight bombs near the neighborhood around the Indianapolis Speedway. Early in 1994, he was released on parole, and moved to the Maryland suburbs of the District.

Over a period of five days in 1978, eight bombs went off in the community of Speedway, on the west side of Indianapolis, leaving the city in shock and fear. The worst injury caused by the explosion was suffered by Carl DeLong, a Vietnam veteran who had been an Army airborne ranger. Mr. DeLong and his wife Sandra were attending their son's freshman football game at Speedway High School when they came across a gym bag left in the parking lot. When Mr. DeLong went to pick it up, a bomb in the bag detonated, mangling his leg. The torn and shattered limb had to be amputated. Mrs. DeLong was also injured, but not as severely. Her husband never overcame the lingering physical pain of his wounds or his depression at having been crippled. In early 1983, he killed himself.

Kimberlin was caught, and was convicted on all 22 counts in the bombing indictment. The crimes and the trials riveted Indianapolis, but it was not until 1988 that Kimberlin earned national notoriety.

His claim to have dealt drugs to Mr. Quayle was snapped up by a number of eagerly credulous journalists, who were more than willing to disregard his obvious credibility problems. None was more enthusiastic, perhaps, than Garry Trudeau of "Doonesbury" fame. He happily used the funny pages to argue Kimberlin's case and to ridicule Mr. Quayle - even though friends (and refreshingly honest journalists) at the New Republic, for example, warned Mr. Trudeau that he was being bamboozled by a cruel and dangerous liar. Either Mr. Trudeau still - inexplicably - believed Kimberlin, or he just decided that the target of his barbs was worth it.

Mr. Trudeau is not Kimberlin's only friend. His other prime patron is Cody Shearer, who reportedly helped to arrange Kimberlin's parole and whom the bomber calls one of his "guardian angels." Mr. Shearer, for those not familiar with the ranks of presidential pals, is the brother of Derek Shearer, whom Mr. Clinton named ambassador to Finland. Brooke Shearer - Cody's sister - is the head of the White House Fellows program and is married to no less an FOB than the State Department's No. 2, Strobe Talbott.

Cody Shearer has done more than just help Kimberlin to win his release. He is also helping the felon - together with the New Yorker's Mark Singer - write a book about his quest to bring down Mr. Quayle. Kimberlin seems to have received a handsome advance from his publisher - a deal rich enough for Kimberlin to have traded up from a prison bus to a Mercedes.

With such high-profile Clintonites in the Kimberlin orbit, a troubling question comes to mind. The **Supreme Court** did not decide all on its own to hear Kimberlin's complaint that he was mistreated by prison officials: The justices were urged to do so by Mr. Clinton's solicitor general, Drew Days III, who thereby reversed the position the Bush administration had taken. Did partisan politics at the Justice Department play a role in the decision to lend the government's support to Kimberlin's endless litigation?

Regardless, those who have befriended and promoted Kimberlin should be ashamed. Kimberlin committed a truly monstrous crime. He planted a bomb in a high school parking lot on game day - an act that was random, brutal and targeted at children. It is a testament to the viciousness of Washington politics that such a man has been embraced by some in the firmament of the Democratic establishment.

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