

Speaking of which...

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Nothing earth-shattering happened last week in the legal world, however, several minor things happened that were rather interesting.

First of all, judges in northwestern Arkansas have decided that if people come to court in improper attire, they could be asking for trouble. A man was called to testify in a battery case in Rogers Municipal Court, and he arrived wearing a t-shirt that said on the front: "Wanna raise some hell?", while the back read: "Hell yeah!" After determining that this was not the man's only shirt, Judge Doug Schrantz found him in contempt of court. Circuit Judge Tom Keith upheld the ruling and sentenced the man to 24 hours in jail.

The judges explain that while suits and ties aren't required, a complete set of clean clothing is expected, and men should not wear earrings or any piercings on the eye, nose or lip. People who go to court are expected to follow these rules so judges can concentrate on the facts of the case and not be distracted by someone's attire. So if you don't want to spend a night in jail, women shouldn't wear revealing outfits and men shouldn't wear shirts advertising beer.

And speaking of advertising beer, Ross Hopkins, a former supervisor at a Budweiser distributorship, claims he was fired for drinking a Coors beer in public. Hopkins alleges he was fired after the son-in-law of the owner of American Eagle Distributing Co. saw him drinking Coors in a local bar. In its court filings, American Eagle stated Hopkins was fired "for conduct that relates to a bona fide occupational requirement that is reasonably and rationally related to the employment activities and responsibilities of a particular employee." Hopkins has sued American Eagle for wrongful termination because he believes his employer has no right to tell him what kind of beer to drink when he is off-duty.

And speaking of getting fired for conduct not in the best interests of your employer, Paul's Ice Cream Co. fired Nazzareno Didiano, an ice cream vendor in Pittsburgh, after he punched a 12-year-old boy in the face for complaining about the cost of his frozen treats. Didiano was found guilty of simple assault, was placed on probation and was ordered to attend anger management classes.

And speaking of needing anger management classes, a former nurse and a former nurse's aid lost their jobs and were sentenced to 10 months in prison for patient abuse after giving laxatives to nursing home patients to make them sick. The two gave the patients milk of magnesia, which caused them severe diarrhea and dehydration, to get back at a nurse on the next shift, who would have to deal with the after-effects of the laxatives.

And speaking of laxatives, a Wisconsin appellate court ruled that the Milwaukee police performed an unreasonable search and seizure when they forced a man to take laxative treatments for several hours until they recovered a baggie of heroin he swallowed. The officers claim they gave the detained suspect the treatment at a nearby hospital out of fear the bag would break and he would die of a drug overdose.

The court didn't buy their argument, however, and suppressed the evidence believing the officers gave him the laxatives solely to assist them in recovering the suspected heroin. No wonder they say drugs are such a filthy habit.