The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20120713083859/http://www.pinehavenabuse.org:80/2011/09/o-ricky-where-art-thou.html

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O Ricky, Where art thou?



In March of 2010, I posted a video on Facebook where I recalled the memory of a former roommate at Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch named Ricky Wagener. In the months following this broadcast, I was personally attacked and labeled by the Larssons as a liar because some of my recollections of the incidents surrounding Ricky's disappearance over a decade ago in November 1995 were not completely accurate. I have accepted full responsibility for these inaccuracies, and have worked very hard over the past year and a half to develop a much more accurate understanding of what happened, who was involved, and what it means to every child abused at the hands of Pinehaven.

While my recollections were inaccurate, they do not hold a candle to the beaming contradictions, attempted cover ups and web of lies surrounding the death of Ricky Wagener. This article intends not to give a concrete conclusion as to what happened on that cold November night in Northwest Montana, but rather to present multiple testimonies, possible considerations, and a basis for you to make your own conclusions, and ultimately, your own inquiries.

A Bit About Ricky

Ricky Wagener came to Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch at the age of 14, in the summer of 1995, from Kirkland, Washington. Brazilian by birth, Ricky was adopted at some point in his childhood to an American family. When he arrived at Pinehaven, this young man displayed very distinct emotional and mental development issues. Oddly muscular for his age (estimated 2-3% body fat), Ricky had an absolute obsession with fitness. Also evident were either psychological or physiological issues that prevented Ricky from controlling his "natural functions", resulting in embarrassing episodes on nearly a weekly, often daily basis. It was evident from the start that Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch had neither the experience, nor the operational capabilities to deal with Ricky's many issues.

In response to Ricky's self-defecating issues, both his houseparents made him masquerade in front of every other child in the Blue House with soiled sheets and clothing berated him in front of other staff and kids, even placing him into situations which might induce embarrassing episodes. In response to Ricky's obsessive concerns with fitness, his houseparents Ned and Maxine Kent, "grounded" Ricky from exercising in an attempt to realign his focus from a narcissistic worldview to a Christ-centered paradigm. Even though he was the most capable, Ricky was not allowed to milk cows with the rest of his house brothers due to the inevitable forearm exercise involved. Instead, he was assigned to "shovel duty" where he would stand with a scoop shovel, waiting for cows to poop. The irony of this task did not fall upon deaf ears. In response to this treatment, Ricky became introverted in his thoughts, refusing to speak to any of us, even in the darkness of night. Finally, when he had had enough, he did what the bravest of abused children do – he ran.

I do not recall how many attempts Ricky made at running away, but in on a cold night in November 1995, Ricky ran off into the night, never to be seen again. Last year, when I published my Facebook video, before extensive research that has prompted this article; I proposed that Ricky chose his destination and suicide in order to make an irrefutable statement, while simultaneously sparking an investigation into the abuses at Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch. Although I would like to maintain this perspective, my findings have made this conclusion inconceivable.

The Official Pinehaven Story

According to Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch, Ricky Wagener ran away from the Ranch on November 6th 1995. From the Ranch, Ricky headed 5 miles east in the middle of the night to Pinehaven's Headquarters Compound in St. Ignatius, MT, adjacent to St. Ignatius First Christian Church and an apartment complex owned by Pinehaven. Inside this secure compound, Pinehaven leadership stored many of their personal recreational vehicles, including an RV owned by Dewey

Video Bar

Additional Information about Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch Abuse

Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch Montana State Code Violation Report

The Pinehaven Conversation (Uncensored) Facebook Group

Reconsider Pinehaven: A Resource for Potential Parents, Staff and Church Supporters

SIA Organization - Survivors of Institutional Abuse Organization

Wiki Fornits - Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch

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O Ricky, Where art thou?
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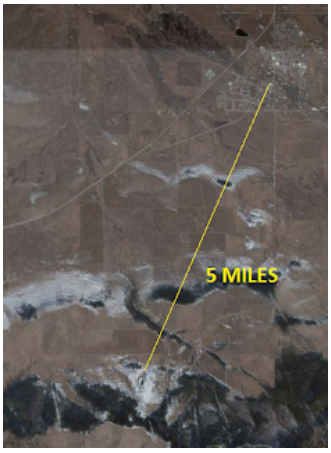
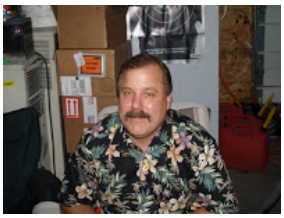
Obenchain (former lead pastor of Pablo Christian Church and short-term associate minister of St. Ignatius Christian Church). According to Pinehaven, Ricky entered this RV and, once inside, ingested brake fluid presumably acquired from within the compound. After ingesting this fluid, Ricky passed away.



Ricky's alleged 5 mile journey to his death

Seven months later, on May 30th, 1996, Andy Larsson was working at the office located at the Pinehaven Headquarters when, as he reported to a former staff member the day of the occurrence, he looked out the window and saw Ricky's shoulder through the window in Dewey Obenchain's RV. Rushing out to the RV, he found Ricky slumped over a table grasping a container of brake fluid.

The Official Lake County Sheriff's Office Story


Ken Scott

Upon initial examination of Ricky Wagener's death certificate, it would be easily assumed that Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch and the Lake County Sheriff's Office would agree on the timeline and details surrounding Ricky's death. I also made this assumption until I read the account of these events from the perspective of Ken Scott. Ken Scott is a high-profile resident of St. Ignatius, prominently known as the region's telecommunications "go to guy" and a former Lake County Sheriff Deputy. His involvement with the Larssons and Pinehaven include sporadic attendance at St. Ignatius Christian Church, consultation regarding the Pinehaven's internal radio communications capabilities, and most importantly, aerial and civic liaison assistance regarding runaways from Pinehaven.

In the past two years, Ken Scott has been voluntarily vocal in support of Pinehaven, particularly in regards to the flood of attention Pinehaven received when four boys ran away in the summer of 2010 within two weeks. It was within this vocal support that Ken Scott reaffirmed his decades-long involvement with Pinehaven during all runaway search operations. According to Ken Scott, he had personally interviewed every runaway and had developed an exhaustive profile of motives and practices.

At the time of Ricky's demise, Ken Scott was a Lake County Sheriff Deputy. According to him, on May 30th, 1996 he was on patrol throughout St. Ignatius when (for an undisclosed reason) he entered the Pinehaven Headquarters compound and found Ricky in an RV, dead. Obviously, this story is in direct contrast to that of Pinehaven's leadership, yet no part of his story is in any more conflict with Ricky's death certificate (other than the pronounced dead indication), making it of equal consideration.

The Death Certificate

Although it is public record, Lake County made it very difficult for many people to acquire Ricky Wagener's death certificate. Thanks to the vigilant efforts of former Montana State Representative Jeanne Windham, we were able to acquire this document from the Montana Office of Vital Statistics. Within this document, there are very interesting entries, which we will identify one by one,

1) The Manner of Death is listed as "Could not be determined" when the option of "suicide" was available. The Manner of Death is not listed as "Pending Investigation", indicating that an investigation was not being pursued beyond 4 weeks.

2) The original Place Of Injury was changed by hand by Joe Geldrich, Lake County Coroner, from occurring at Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch to Pinehaven's Office in St. Ignatius.

3) The Coroner's examination occurred a full 28 days following the date that Ricky was found and pronounced dead.

4) The Date of Death is listed as "estimated", while the Hour of Death is specifically recorded as Late PM, although both are contingent solely upon the testimony of Pinehaven's leadership.

5) The Method Of Disposition is listed as "Cremation" at Sunset Memorial Crematory in Missoula, MT – not in Ricky's home state of Washington. "Removal from State" is an option indicated in the same category.

Pinehaven's Response to Ricky's Disappearance

As is the case with most children who run away from Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch, they are pursued by Pinehaven staff and Ken Scott, usually to be found "within a couple of days" as Bob Larsson prefers to put it. Through the utilization of Ken Scott's aerial capabilities, and the rural locale of their facility, children are normally rather easy to locate. Most are picked up by the time they get to

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- Kaatje Camp (1)
- Ken Scott (1)

Ravalli or Arlee. From testimony given by Ken Scott, it was revealed that, upon apprehension, runaways are often taken to the Pinehaven Office (where Ricky's body was found) where they are questioned extensively.

It should be noted that in the past 18 months – 15% of all Pinehaven residents have not only ran away from the Ranch (or the associative Kootenai Christian Camp), but have made it to a regional metropolitan area such as Missoula or Kalispell. In February 2011, two boys who made it all the way to Missoula held up a movie theatre associate outside his place of work with BB guns stolen from Wal-Mart.



One of Ken Scott's helicopters, used to find runaways from Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch.

Pinehaven's documented policies to keep everything internal (as seen in their Policy Handbook) is further displayed by their voluntary non-disclosure to such agencies as CPS, local law enforcement, and the Montana State Missing Person's Clearinghouse regarding runaways. It should be noted that no report was made to the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse following the November 6th, 1995 disappearance of Ricky Wagener, nor in the seven months till the discovery of his body on May 30th, 1996.

In January of 1996, before Ricky's body had supposedly been discovered, Ned Kent responded to an inquiry by Blue House male residents regarding Ricky's whereabouts by stating, "You don't want to be where Ricky is."

Pinehaven's Response to the Discovery of Ricky's Body



Andy Larsson

Immediately upon discovering of Ricky's body, Andy Larsson took the time to visit Chris Hoppe at her home in St. Ignatius, a few blocks away from the Pinehaven Headquarters compound. In completely synchronized accuracy with the Pronounced Dead time of 1425, Mrs. Hoppe recollects this meeting taking place in the early afternoon. Andy Larsson told Mrs. Hoppe that Ricky had ingested brake fluid in order to commit suicide, relaying his story that he found Ricky slumped over the table, still clutching on to the bottle of brake fluid. It should be noted that Mrs. Hoppe was married to the St. Ignatius Judge.

Ricky's adoptive parents in Kirkland, WA were notified that Ricky had been found frozen to death in a trailer. They were never notified that his death had resulted from an alleged ingestion of brake fluid. Ricky's parents were not offered the opportunity to view Ricky's body before he was cremated at Sunset Memorial Crematory in Missoula – an action taken by Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch without any Power of Attorney beyond the rights authorized to them within the Parental Agreement and Consent Form. It should be noted that this Agreement provides Pinehaven with foster care authority, although they do not meet the Montana State requirements for foster care, nor have they ever held licensure for such.

Years after the discovery of Ricky's body, Andy Larsson related the story of his discovery to members of Pinehaven staff in an oddly contrasting manner. He told them that he discovered Ricky's body on May 30th, 1996 when he went out to his RV to clean it out – not the RV belonging to Dewey Obenchain.

***UPDATE** - It has been reported that, in 2010, Bob Larsson told a Missions Committee in Indiana that had begun to question Pinehaven's eligibility for missions support that Ricky's father had Ricky cremated, and that his ashes were scattered over the Pinehaven property. In addition to these actions, Bob Larsson informed the pastor in charge of the Missions committee that Ricky's father had set up a fund for building projects at Pinehaven. This was not recollected by Ricky's father during an interview. It should be noted that Pinehaven issues donation forms with all quarterly newsletters that provide an opportunity to apportion donations to specific operations, including the general building fund. Any donation annotated to this category could be interpreted as "setting up a fund for building projects" regardless of the monetary amount.*

Body Preservation Issues

Due to the lack of investigative operations performed by Lake County in the case of Ricky's death whose cause could "not be determined", it is important to identify the critical issue of decomposition of

Lake County Montana (5)
Lake County Sheriff (5)
Lake County Sheriffs Office (5)
Lauren McClary (3)
Lila Evans (1)
Lynn Wells (1)
Lynnette McClenahan (1)
Matthew Rosendale (2)
Maxine Kent (6)
Melissa Stasuik (3)
Mission Trip (1)
Mitch Camp (2)
Montana Family Foundation (2)
Montana State Code Annotated (1)
Ned Kent (9)
Paula Bowen (2)
Physical Abuse (1)
Pinehaven (6)
Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch (9)
Pinehaven Christian Childrens Ranch (13)
Residential Treatment Program (2)
Richland County (1)
Rick Bondy (4)
Ricky Wagener (2)
Safety (1)
Scott Reichner (1)
Sexual Abuse (1)
St. Ignatius (1)
Sterling Small (1)
Suicide (1)
Ungodly Discipline (3)
Vigilance Conference (1)

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CAFETY (7)

a fully exposed human body over a seven month period. In any other case, in other part of the country, if the seven month decomposed body of a child was found, it would garner massive amounts of media attention while undergoing an extensive state-level forensic investigation. While I am by no means a forensic expert, the following data presents a strong case for questioning why such a mild investigation and identification process was accepted by Lake County and ultimately the State of Montana.

The day that Ricky ran away and the following day had a low of 28 degrees with highs of 41 degrees. A day later, the temperature never even dropped below freezing, with a high of 51 degrees. Over the next three weeks, the temperature fluctuated achieving a lowest temperature of 19 degrees and a high temperature of 61, averaging 37 degrees.

Throughout the 207 days until Ricky's body was found, 65 days never reached as low as 32 degrees, maintaining ample time for complete decomposition as displayed in this case study involving a pig corpse.



Any remnants of Ricky's body would have been unrecognizable, leaving only bone, tooth, and clothing identification markers. It should be noted that in the State of Montana, the State Forensics Lab in Missoula, MT is only called in at the request of a county coroner. Within the 28 days between the discovery of Ricky's body and the issuance of his death certificate, no indication has been made that the State Forensic Office was utilized for identification.

Additionally, the cause of death (ingestion of brake fluid), would not have been readily evident beyond the presence of a container containing such materials if the body had decomposed. Both the Immediate Cause of death and the Hour of Death are handwritten on the death certificate (apparently on June 27th, 1996), indicating a strong reliance upon the sole testimony of Andy Larsson rather than from an exhaustive forensic investigation of which the Lake County Coroner's office had no capability of performing. This pattern of investigative behavior is indicative of other investigations into Pinehaven by Lake County Sheriff's Office such as that conducted by Detective Michael Gehl in May of 2010 where only the testimony of Pinehaven leadership was taken, no kids were interviewed, and Pinehaven was cleared of all concern.

The Pressing Questions:

1) Why, throughout the entire 207 days between Ricky's disappearance and the discovery of his body, did Pinehaven never submit him to the Montana Missing Person's Clearinghouse?
2) Why, throughout the entire 207 days between Ricky's disappearance and the discovery of his body, did Pinehaven never submit information to any press agency requesting public assistance in the recovery of Ricky?
3) Why, without any foreknowledge of events and before any investigation had been conducted, did Andy Larsson immediately relay a story to Chris Hoppe that happened to match the official investigation of Lake County Officials without any deviations?
4) Why, without request or prodding, did Ken Scott interject a completely different account of events surrounding the discovery of Ricky's body?
5) Why, during the investigation into the cause of and events surrounding Ricky's death were no inquiries made of Pinehaven staff and/or Pinehaven residents?
6) Why, in January 1996, without any apparent knowledge of Ricky's whereabouts, did Ned Kent tell the boys under his care that they "Don't want to be where Ricky is"?
7) Why, with the apparent knowledge regarding Ricky's cause of death did Andy Larsson inform Ricky's parents that he had frozen to death?
8) Why, without a confirmed cause of death, did Andy Larsson inform all members of the Pinehaven staff that Ricky had committed suicide?
9) Why, with the option to transport Ricky's body to Kirkland, WA, did the Larssons take it upon themselves to have Ricky's remains cremated without a Power of Attorney or any other legal status beyond that granted to them by the Parental Agreement and Consent Form.
10) Why, without any forensic evidence to prove specific data on Ricky's death certificate did Joe Geldrich, Lake County Coroner, use testimony from Pinehaven administrators as irrefutable fact regarding elements of Ricky's death?

Cary Smith (1)
Cassie Casteel (1)
Charlie Duke (1)
Child Abuse (5)
Christmas (1)
Christy Clark (2)
CNN (1)
Daniel Salomon (2)
Denise Bingham (3)
Donate (1)
Edward Greef (1)
Elsie Arntzen (1)
Emily Boyles (1)
Gary Tuchman (3)
Gordon Vance (1)
Graduation (1)
Harry Klock (1)
HB 394 (4)
Illinois (1)
James Mason (3)
Jeff Lazloffy (3)
Jonathan McNiven (1)
Judge Dunn (1)
Kaatje Camp (1)
Ken Scott (1)
Lake County Montana (5)
Lake County Sheriff (5)
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Lauren McClary (3)
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Mitch Camp (2)
Montana Family Foundation (2)
Montana State Code Annotated (1)
Ned Kent (9)
Paula Bowen (2)
Physical Abuse (1)
Pinehaven (6)

11) How, if Pinehaven administrators had no visual confirmation of the exact time of Ricky's death, did Joe Geldrich, Lake County Coroner, establish Ricky's hour of death as "Late PM"?
12) Why did Joe Geldrich, Lake County Coroner, record Ricky's date of death as "estimate", but recorded Ricky's hour of death as "Late PM"?
13) Why were inaccurate elements of Ricky's death certificate corrected by hand, but other elements, such as the Facility Name remain inaccurate (i.e. Pine Haven Boys Ranch instead of Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch)?
14) Why was the Time of Injury (in type) recorded as unknown, but the Hour of Death (Handwritten) noted as Late PM?
15) Why, with such a high profile case (the apparent suicide of a minor with exhaustive decomposition) was a certified physician not involved in any capacity during the investigation or autopsy?
16) How, through the entire 207 days that Ricky was allegedly lying dead in an RV trailer within 100 feet of Rick Bondy's residence above the Pinehaven Office, did he not notice any odors, infestations, or any other irregularities?
17) Why did Andy Larsson inform Pinehaven staff members that he had found Ricky in his own RV, when Ricky was allegedly found in the trailer of Dewey Obenchain?

My Theory

Disclaimer: The following is a description of my theory regarding the death of Ricky Wagener. While this theory is based upon verbal and written testimonies, in addition to a strong understanding of the character and practices of those involved, it is a hypothesis of events, not an accusation. I encourage all who have examined this report to make their own inquiries and conclusions.

I believe that on the night of November 6th, 1995 Ricky Wagener ran away from Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch in order to escape the mental, emotional and physical abuse he had suffered over the previous months at the hands of his houseparents, Ned and Maxine Kent. I believe he headed West, towards Washington, not East towards St. Ignatius.

I don't believe that Ricky ran away from the Blue House at Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch in order to commit suicide nearly five miles away in a RV trailer at the Pinehaven Headquarters compound. I don't believe he had a plan to ingest brake fluid, as he would have had no assurance of its availability, or that of any other chemical, upon his arrival.

I believe that upon discovery of Ricky's unauthorized departure from Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch, that Ned Kent notified both Andy Larsson and Ken Scott. I believe that the three of them set out on a search operation which culminated in the location and apprehension of Ricky Wagener.

I believe that, as is the case in many other run-aways, Ricky was taken to the Pinehaven Office compound for interviews and essentially, interrogation by Andy Larsson, Ned Kent and Ken Scott. During this interrogation, I believe that Ned Kent became physically aggressive towards Ricky which resulted in a negligent homicide.

I believe that all parties involved (Andy Larsson, Ned Kent, and Ken Scott) placed Ricky's body in the RV belonging to Dewey Obenchain within the Pinehaven office compound, forced Ricky's corpse to ingest brake fluid, and decided to wait until his body was conveniently discovered . I believe it was Andy Larsson's intention for Dewey Obenchain to discover Ricky's body, thus displacing attention and suspicion from Pinehaven's leadership due to Dewey Obenchain's crystal clear public record. I believe that years after the event, when Dewey Obenchain's involvement was no longer needed, that Andy Larsson recalled the events surrounding Ricky's discovery to Pinehaven staff such the contradictive manner.

I believe that the increased amounts of agitated behavior and abusive conduct by Ned Kent in the first half of 1996, in addition to his insightful comments regarding Ricky, were clear expressions of his frustration that Ricky's body had yet to be discovered.

I believe that as time drew on and nobody had discovered Ricky's body, that Andy Larsson became increasingly impatient, resulting in him "discovering " Ricky's body himself. I believe that Andy Larsson fabricated the story of Ricky's suicide, which he relayed to the Lake County Sheriff's Office and to Chris Hoppe, before any official investigation had taken place.

I believe that Ken Scott utilized his connection within the Lake County Sheriff's Office to expedite and streamline Lake County's investigation into the disappearance and death of Ricky Wagener, motivating them to accept the fabricated story generated by Andy Larsson as truth, rather than completing an exhaustive forensic investigation utilizing the services available to them through the Montana State Crime Lab in Missoula, MT.

I believe that Andy Larsson arranged for Ricky's cremation in Missoula, MT without the consent or Power of Attorney from Ricky's parents in order to erase any evidence regarding Ricky's death.

I believe that the negligent homicide of Ricky Wagener has become the keystone of corruption, coercion, deceit, and cover-ups throughout the past decade and a half at Pinehaven. I believe that the case of Ricky Wagener is the primary reason why Pinehaven leadership has worked overtime to isolate their operation, their personal lives, their affairs, their abusive actions, and their financial

Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch (9)
Pinehaven Christian Childrens Ranch (13)
Residential Treatment Program (2)
Richland County (1)
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Safety (1)
Scott Reichner (1)
Sexual Abuse (1)
St. Ignatius (1)
Sterling Small (1)
Suicide (1)
Ungodly Discipline (3)
Vigilance Conference (1)

extortion from the eyes of the public and supporters, and ultimately from the overview of a true board of directors.

Conclusion

Whether I am right or wrong regarding the events surrounding the death of my roommate Ricky Wagener, it is clearly evident that this case presents much more than meets the eye. It is obvious that many concessions were made by Lake County in favor of Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch that would not be made in any other case of alleged adolescent suicide.

It is imperative that the case of Ricky Wagener be reopened by State Investigators without bias for Pinehaven Christian Children's Ranch's religious or community standings.

I encourage you to spread this article throughout your social networks and forward it to the Montana Attorney General's Office Children's Justice Center.

Your inaction guarantees abuse at Pinehaven will continue,
but your voice can help save a child's life.

Labels: Abuse, Andy Larsson, CAFETY, Ken Scott, Lake County Sheriff, Maxine Kent, Ned Kent, Pinehaven Christian Childrens Ranch, Residential Treatment Program, Rick Bondy, Ricky Wagener, Suicide

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