

Give Sandusky a Millstone

✘ I can honestly say, unashamedly, that before this week, I was probably the only person in America who didn't know who Joe Paterno was. The only professional football coach I could name is Tom Landry, and I only knew about him because he was so well dressed. I know absolutely nothing about college football. Neither my high school nor college had any sports teams so I never developed a sense of "school spirit" so I truly don't understand how a sport becomes more important than innocent lives.

When I first heard about the sexual abuse scandal at Penn State, I said to my husband, "Where did the "boys" come from? Why were young kids in a college locker room?" Well, I've since learned that Jerry Sandusky started a charity called "The Second Mile" where he had access to any number of vulnerable victims. Then it all made sense.

And before anyone starts writing that this scumbag is innocent until proven guilty, I say, "I'm not on his jury." I don't have to presume anything. There's far too much smoke surrounding this Sandusky guy to assume there's no fire. If I'm wrong, I'll apologize.

There's always going to be predators. I've worked in the field of child abuse and neglect for over twenty years and they come in all shapes and sizes, all colors, all religions, all economic backgrounds. Sandusky just happens to be a rich white guy and, apparently, no one wanted to rock the Penn State boat.

This is what I don't get. All states have mandatory reporting statutes which require persons in certain positions, teachers, medical personnel, caregivers, etc. to report suspicions of child abuse. How is a coach, like Joe Paterno, a mentor who was entrusted with the lives of young people, not a mandatory

reporter required to report to Child Protective Services instead of to some higher up in the chain of command at the school whose interest was clearly to hush things up and look the other way?

It didn't surprise me to learn, after reading about the so-called "charity" work Sandusky involved himself with that so many turned a blind eye to his predatory behavior. Sandusky was so good at what he was doing, as are many pedophiles, that when some children questioned his behavior, no one took the complaints seriously. His "charitable" works provided the perfect cover and all those politicians, sports stars and community leaders who praised him for his work with these children were his patsies.

There was plenty of money flowing into The Second Mile to spend on these children, grooming them, breaking down their inhibitions and establishing trust, for Sandusky's own deviant sexual needs. He held overnight sleepovers at his home, took the children to restaurants and bowl games. He wrestled in the swimming pool with kids who craved attention. He bought them golf clubs, sneakers, dress clothes, computers and gave them money according to the Pennsylvania attorney general's indictment.

But as far as I'm concerned, people like Joe Paterno, who were on notice when given direct information which should have amounted to what statutes refer to as "concerns of child abuse and neglect," failed miserably in their duty as mandatory reporters.

But what I truly don't get is the student body which protested after Paterno was discharged earlier this week and caused so much damage, as seen in the photos. Were they so blinded by their own self-interests and more concerned about a football game than for the broken souls of the innocent children destroyed by Sandusky? This reminds me of the moronic behavior of fans after their NBA team wins a championship.

I've written about the indifference of passers-bys when two toddlers were run over in China. I've also written about whether we've lost our moral compass in this country.

Reading about the behavior of those in power at Penn State, those who had to have known that something was going on, those who actually saw a sexual assault of a child, and those who care more about a sports event than the abuse of children, gives me pause and concern that we're no better than those people who walked by as a two-year old who lay dying in the streets of China. In this case, I'm guessing, and this is purely a guess, there must be lots of money involved in college football.

When I read stories like Sandusky's, I always remember the words of Jesus who said, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." At the same time, I always remember the words of my husband who says, "There's a special place in Hell for people like him."

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.