

Barnes seeks questionable baby home

Appointment of guardian may add to cycle of abuse

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The baby will be born to a woman in prison. Soon, he may be raised in the home of an alleged child molester.

Julie Ann Barnes, the 19-year-old charged in the Dec. 3 warehouse blaze that killed six firefighters, wants her mother appointed guardian of the baby she is due to deliver next month.

Her mother, Evelyn Menard, is engaged to a minister whose parental rights were terminated by a probate judge who found that he sexually molested four of his children.

In Thursday's *Telegram & Gazette*, the Rev. Arthur Marchand told a reporter that he plans to set up a nursery for the baby in the office of the home he shares with Ms. Menard in Rutland. The pair met many years ago while in a group of parents who claimed they or their spouses were unjustly accused by the state of abusing their children.

"I know he's innocent and I know he's not going to do nothing to the baby," Ms. Menard said Friday. "My daughter loves him, too. She calls him 'daddy.'"

But not everyone loves the Rev. Marchand. One of his children, now 17 and living with adoptive parents, is seeking criminal charges against his former father for alleged sexual abuse that began when the teen was a toddler.

And in September 1994, Worcester Probate Judge Joseph Lian terminated the parental rights of the Rev. Marchand after numerous complaints of abuse and neglect -- spanning some 25 years -- were supported by the state Department of Social Services.

The judge's findings of fact are impounded, but a copy was obtained by the *Telegram & Gazette*.

Judge Lian wrote: "The court finds that Arthur Marchand is currently unfit to further the welfare of his children based upon his ongoing psychological dysfunction, his sexual molestation of four children, his failure to seek

appropriate services and therapeutic intervention to resolve his problems, and his long-standing pattern of abuse and neglect of all his children. This court further finds that Mr. Marchand's unfitness is not temporary, and as such there is no potential for future fitness.”

In a telephone interview last week, the Rev. Marchand, 52, said he never molested any of his six children. He noted, correctly, that he was acquitted in 1990 in Central District Court on a charge of indecent assault and battery against a stepdaughter. In 1991, a charge of rape of a child was dismissed after the alleged victim refused to testify.

“The whole thing was a set-up, and the judge was too blind to see what was going on,” said the Rev. Marchand, ordained by the New Testament Fellowship Church in Texas. “Sex is only when you're going to have children. I wish I could bring God and Jesus down to earth to show people the truth about me.”

Ms. Barnes is awaiting trial at Framingham State Prison and is due to give birth to a son June 10. She recently filed court papers asking that her mother be appointed guardian of the baby.

The adoptive mother of two of the Rev. Marchand's children said she was horrified to learn that another child could be placed in his care. The mother, who asked that her name not be used, became foster parent to the younger children when they were 6 and 8, and adopted them five years later when the Rev. Marchand's parental rights were terminated. Two of his older children -- also alleged to have molested the younger children -- were placed into foster care by DSS in 1986.

“It sent complete chills up my spine,” said the woman. “This man has made us very nervous for 10 years.” She said her children remember the past abuse and suffer from emotional problems.

During the hearing conducted by Judge Lian in 1994, 34 exhibits were entered into evidence and 15 witnesses testified.

The findings of fact notes that a stepdaughter, age 9, reported that the Rev. Marchand had fondled her and threatened to kill her if she revealed their “secret.” Another daughter, also 9, said her father and two older brothers “pulled down their pants and they did it to me.” The stepdaughter also testified that the Rev. Marchand hit his youngest children with the metal part of a mop when they cried.

“This Court finds that Arthur Marchand has demonstrated a pervasive and consistent pattern of sexual molestation of his children,” Judge Lian wrote. “The Court further finds that Arthur Marchand's now grown children ... were placed in care-taking roles for their younger sisters and brother and that during those times, both (older children) sexually abused (the younger children) ... This Court further finds that Arthur Marchand presented no credible evidence at trial nor did he testify on his own behalf to rebut the allegations of sexual abuse.”

On Friday, the Rev. Marchand and Ms. Menard said they don't live together, even though he told a reporter Wednesday that they share his home and that he was setting up a nursery for Ms. Barnes' baby.

Ms. Barnes was homeless and living in the Worcester Cold Storage and Warehouse Co. building when a candle started the fatal fire. She now faces six charges of manslaughter.

The Rev. Marchand said he has known Ms. Barnes since she was 3 years old -- and that he loves her. He also said that Ms. Menard's former boyfriend was accused of abusing her, which is why Ms. Menard became involved in a now-defunct parents' rights group he founded in 1975.

"I have to admit, there was some members who really did kind of abuse their kids," the Rev. Marchand said.

The woman who adopted his two youngest children said she knows that he is one of those abusers, and that he should never be allowed near Ms. Barnes' baby or any other child.

When told that this man is now an ordained minister, the woman sighed.

"God works in mysterious ways," she said. "He really, really does."

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