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FBI arrests Cascade-area man over 1996 parental kidnapping warrant

By SANJAY TALWANI

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HELENA — A Cascade-area man is in jail on a 14-year-old warrant from Tennessee for allegedly kidnapping his small children, who are now adults, back in 1995.

But his daughter — one of the alleged victims — called her father a role model who always acted in the best interests of his children.

“My dad is the greatest dad you'll ever meet,” Brittany Dyman, now 22, said Monday.

“I've had an awesome life. ... We've been raised really well, and I would not trade anything about my life.”

Thomas Stanley Dyman, 40, was arrested Jan. 16 and is in Lewis and Clark County Jail without bond, probably facing extradition to Tennessee.

The arrest follows years of searching by Dyman's ex-wife, Tammy Young, who a friend described as “broken-hearted” and living in Florida.

One current family friend of the Dymans called the situation a “miscarriage of justice” and a “waste of taxpayers' money.”

“This is a God-fearing family,” said Theresa D'Angelo, who lived near the Dymans outside Craig and now lives in the Helena Valley. “This whole thing is so dumbfounding to me.”

The custody dispute over Brittany and her brother, Jeremy (Jeremiah), now 20, goes back more than 15 years.

In February 1996, Young, then Tammy Dyman and living in Milan, Tenn., filed a complaint that Tom had fled with the children, then 7 and 5, the previous November.

A federal court in Tennessee issued a warrant for unlawful flight to avoid prosecution for parental kidnapping in December 1996.

Tom Dyman married his current wife, Tami Dyman, in 1994, and Brittany said that's who she calls her mother.

“We left, and we have just stayed under the radar since,” Tami Dyman said.

The family lived in Colorado and Idaho and settled in Montana about 10 years ago.

The family ran Britt's, an ice cream parlor in Cascade, for about three years, ending about two years ago.

Tom Dyman has also worked as an independent contractor.

The custody of the children at the time of the conflict remains in dispute. Tammy Young said in her 1996 affidavit that she had custody; Tami Dyman said that Tom had full custody at the time.

Melissa Alaniz, a friend of Tammy Young, said she and Young had worked nearly daily for years trying to find the family and had frequent interaction with the FBI.

Tom, Brittany and Jeremiah are listed on websites that highlight missing children.

Alaniz said the Dymans have used “Garcia” as a last name to avoid detection. Tami Dyman and Brittany both denied ever using that name.

Brittany said she's never wanted to return to her biological mother. The two have been in recent contact, but Brittany is not in a hurry to renew that relationship.

"It was weird, it was like talking to a complete stranger," she said. "She said our main concern is our well-being."

Brittany said she's known about the family situation since the time they left Tennessee and took offense at the FBI's insistence that she meet with a counselor for crime victims.

"I kept telling her I wasn't a victim," she said

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"They were trying to make this into a happy reunion. If that happens down the road, that happens."

But the Dymans' first concern is Tom.

"I just want to be able to hug my dad," Brittany said.

Tami Dyman said a fundraising yard sale and bake sale will take place Saturday at Wolf Creek Baptist Church to help with Tom's legal situation.

Brittany and Jeremy were both home-schooled and live at home, Tami Dyman said.

D'Angelo described the family as closely connected, self-sufficient and able to live off the land.

"If I needed spiritual help, that's where I would go," D'Angelo said. "They are, I'm sure, at peace knowing that God is going to make this all right. God's will will be done in this situation, and I believe that they believe that because they do have that strong faith in God."

Reached by e-mail, Tammy Young declined comment.

"It's just heartbreaking," her friend Alaniz said. "I just wish these kids would know how much their mother has waited and searched and cried for them."

Lewis and Clark County Attorney Leo Gallagher said Dyman may have a hearing in District Court this week, but the grounds for avoiding extradition on out-of-state federal warrants are very narrow.

If Dyman waives his right to an extradition hearing, as most such defendants do, Tennessee will have 10 days to move him. Dyman would be able to contest the charges in Tennessee, not in Montana.

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