

CC 2006-68.60

March 17, 2017  
 14451 Market Street  
 Suite 300  
 Moulton, Alabama 35650

Amy Rakestraw  
 2129 Eastbrook, SE  
 Decatur, Alabama 36501

Dear Judge Craig,

I was a social worker at the Morgan County Department of Human Resources (DHR) from 1997 - 2001. Evan Miller's family was among my caseload. I met him when he was about nine years old. I spent an inordinate amount of time with this family as they required constant intervention. Suzi Miller, Evan's mother, was essentially a fourth child. David Miller, Evan's father, was absent during my familiarity with them.

You have heard many hours of testimony regarding the history of Evan's family, mental health, and substance abuse, so I'll not belabor those issues. The prosecution brought up an incident from my case notes in which Evan choked his foster sister during a basketball game and also threatened to kill her. Though I do not specifically remember this event, I would imagine it was "the outburst of the week" with the Millers. All four of them initially bucked the much-needed structure and rules of Robin and Mike Adamson's home. At any rate, the incident was not deemed serious enough for either DHR or the Adamson family to warrant the removal of Evan from the home. The situation was apparently resolved with minimal disruption. The Miller children were explosive when faced with frustration. Evan's violence toward Tiffany was more likely a physical manifestation of impulsiveness, immaturity, and minimal coping skills than an indicator of future behavior.

The Adamson's therapeutic foster home provided the only 18 months of structure, connection of action to consequence, true parental love, guidance and stability that the Miller family had ever experienced. Through all the daily drama, the entire Adamson family continued to endure with the Millers, modeling appropriate boundaries, being supportive, loving them and exposing them to God's love. They taught them the ebb and flow of a functional family.

Though Evan Miller lived in a "regular family" for only a year and a half and has been raised by the Department of Corrections, he could be successfully reintegrated into society. While I do not negate Evan's role in the murder of Cole Cannon nor the necessity for harsh punishment, I believe Evan's involvement to have been situational and not an indication of an incorrigible soul. He **DOES** deserve a second chance at the second half of his life. His next chance will need to include structure, accountability, counseling and an emotionally supportive group of friends and family, rather than a free-reign release. It would behoove him to live away from his mother as well. Evan has taken notable initiative while incarcerated with obtaining his GED and welding training, speaking to at-risk youth, and achieving residence in the honor dorm. The Miller family was particularly special to me. I care deeply for Evan.

I shudder to think how I would have navigated this life with only eighteen months of guidance and parental love. Thank you for your valuable time.

Respectfully,

  
 Amy Rakestraw

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 JUDGE CRAIG  
 CIRCUIT CLERK  
 MORGAN COUNTY ALABAMA