

Epilogue: Waiting for the Dasen Trial

by Hal Herring

For the many Flathead Valley residents touched by the Dasen case, this is a time of limbo, waiting for the trial to begin, or for a settlement to be announced, or perhaps for some meteoric revelation that it was all a terrible dream. Contradicting the idea that it was a dream are the many women waiting to be called as witnesses.

The limbo is particularly difficult for them, as most of them are also struggling to establish lives beyond the grip of methamphetamine. The Montana winter that sputtered and gave way to brilliant sunny days this January and February has now reclaimed the Flathead Valley with dark skies and sweeping snowstorms and freezing winds, a kind of limbo, too, a waiting that is not conducive to turning over new leaves.

Twelve of the women involved in the Dasen case meet in a support group at Kalispell's Glacier Mountain Fellowship, under the guidance of Pastor Noe Gomez and his wife, Susan. Connie Guzman is a member of Glacier Fellowship, and so are some of the officers at Kalispell Police Department, where Noe Gomez works as chaplain. Glacier Fellowship is a different kind of church.

"We have a lot of people that are not, you know, your typical churchgoers," says Noe Gomez. "But it's a place where the cops sit in the pews and worship with the people who have

outstanding warrants. That kind of church." Gomez' son was a good friend of Angela Guzman's. He was also killed in a car crash, on Highway 93.

Jenna Clark and Summer Rae Mahlen are in the support group at Glacier Mountain Fellowship. Everyone realizes that the longer the trial is postponed, the greater the risk that some of the witnesses—some of the women in the group—will descend back into meth or other trouble that will diminish their credibility. Time, especially stressful waiting time, is not on their side.

Gomez grew up on the streets of East Los Angeles. He says that he enjoys a good battle like this one, especially when he has a lot of help in the community. "We have a dentist who has volunteered his time to help the girls with their teeth, since there's something in meth that destroys teeth, and a lot of them have trouble with that." A doctor has also volunteered to provide care for them free of charge, and a local car dealer has donated cars for them to use to get to jobs. "We deal also with the most fundamental problem of all," Gomez says, "DAYCARE." He readily admits that sometimes, the whole group drives him crazy.

Kim Neise is now in a treatment program at a prison facility called Connections Corrections, in the old mining town of Butte, Montana.

Deana Dimler is out of jail. She's been free of meth for eight months, plans to stay that way, and still supports Dasen. She agrees that he might never have run into trouble if meth had not been involved. "This deal was the who's-who of meth in Kalispell, and you know meth people, they just can't ever shut up about anything."

Dick Dasen is still in Arizona.

Ron Clem spends a lot of time working on outreach to families with meth problems at Teens in Crisis. He urges anyone who needs information to contact him at 406-752 3703, or PO Box 213, Kalispell, MT. 59904, or visit Stopmeth.

Anyone interested in contacting Noe or Susan Gomez or finding out more about their work at Glacier Mountain Fellowship can best reach them at Susan's email, ssusan@centurytel.net.