

Editor's note: This story is based in part on depositions and other court documents filed in a pending Bullitt Circuit Court lawsuit, as well as interviews and police reports, court records and news accounts from more than five dozen jurisdictions.

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A hoax most cruel

She was a high school senior who had just turned 18 -- a churchgoing former Girl Scout who hadn't received a single admonition in her four months working at the McDonald's in Mount Washington, Ky.

But when a man who called himself "Officer Scott" called the store on April 9, 2004, and said an employee had been accused of stealing a purse, Louise Ogborn became the suspect.

"He gave me a description of the girl, and Louise was the one who fit it to the T," assistant manager Donna Jean Summers said.

Identifying himself as a police officer, the caller issued an ultimatum: Ogborn could be searched at the store or be arrested, taken to jail and searched there.

"I was bawling my eyes out and literally begging them to take me to the police station because I didn't do anything wrong," Ogborn said later in a deposition. She had taken the \$6.35-an-hour position after her mother lost her job. "I couldn't steal -- I'm too honest. I stole a pencil one time from a teacher and I gave it back."

Summers, 51, conceded later that she had never known Ogborn to do a thing dishonest. But she nonetheless led Ogborn to the restaurant's small office, locked the door, and -- following the caller's instructions -- ordered her to remove one item of clothing at a time, until she was naked.

"She was crying," recalled Kim Dockery, 40, another assistant manager, who stood by watching. "A little young girl standing there naked wasn't a pretty sight."

Summers said later that "Officer Scott," who stayed on the telephone, giving his orders, sounded authentic. He said he had "McDonald's corporate" on the line, as well as the store manager, whom he mentioned by name. And she thought she could hear police radios in the background.

Summers shook each garment, placed it in a bag and took the bag away. "I did exactly what he said to do," Summers said of her caller.

It was just after 5 p.m., and for Ogborn, hours of degradation and abuse were just beginning.

Scam seemed too bizarre but reports kept coming in

The first report of such a call came in 1995, in Devil's Lake, N.D.; another came later that year in Fallon, Nev. The caller, usually pretending to be a police officer investigating a crime, targeted stores in small towns and rural communities -- areas where managers were more likely to be trusting.

Most were fast-food restaurants, where the male and female victims were young and inexperienced, and assistant managers were likely to be working without supervision.

At first, nobody believed store managers when they insisted after the fact that they had just done what they were told to by someone they believed to be police.

"Did the manager tell a whopper?" a newspaper headline in Fargo, N.D., asked after the manager of a Burger King there insisted that he thought it was a police officer who had told him over the phone on Jan. 20, 1999, to slap a 17-year-old employee on her naked buttocks.

"It's just not conceivable to me that there's any reasonable justification for what happened," a North Dakota state judge said as she sentenced the manager to 30 days in jail for disorderly conduct.

Restaurant owners and police often said they assumed the caller and victims were in cahoots in a bizarre scam to extract settlements from individual franchises.

But the hoaxes continued -- by the end of 2000, there were more than a dozen. By the end of 2003, there were nearly 60.

Detectives eventually would conclude the calls were the work of one man because the methods of operation were practically identical, with only slight deviations:

On Nov. 30, 2000, the caller persuaded the manager at a McDonald's in Leitchfield, Ky., to remove her own clothes in front of a customer whom the caller said was suspected of sex offenses. The caller promised that undercover officers would burst in and arrest the customer the moment he attempted to molest her, said Detective Lt. Gary Troutman of the Leitchfield Police Department.

"We asked her why she hadn't called local police, and she said she thought it was local police who had called her," Troutman said.

On May 29, 2002, a girl celebrating her 18th birthday -- in her first hour of her first day on the job at the McDonald's in Roosevelt, Iowa -- was forced to strip, jog naked and assume a series of embarrassing poses, all at the direction of a caller on the phone, according to court and news accounts.

On Jan. 26, 2003, according a police report in Davenport, Iowa, an assistant manager at an Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar conducted a degrading 90-minute search of a waitress at the behest of a caller who said he was a regional manager -- even though the man had called collect, and despite the fact the assistant manager had read a company memo warning about hoax calls just a month earlier. He later told police he'd forgotten about the memo.

On June 3, 2003, according to a city police spokesman in Juneau, Alaska, a caller to a Taco Bell there said he was working with the company to investigate drug abuse at the store, and had a manager pick out a 14-year-old customer -- and then strip her and force her to perform lewd acts.

Kentucky employees say they never were warned

By the time the caller telephoned the company-owned McDonald's in Mount Washington in April 2004, supervisors had been duped in at least 68 stores in 32 states, including Kentucky and Indiana. The targets included a dozen different restaurant chains.

Managers of at least 17 McDonald's stores around the nation had been conned by that time, and the company already was defending itself in at least four lawsuits stemming from such hoaxes.

But Summers, who had worked for the McDonald's 25 miles southeast of Louisville for about eight months, said she had never heard a thing about the hoaxes. Neither had Dockery, or the store's manager, or McDonald's area manager, according to court depositions they gave later.

Company executives had sent out memos to owners and operators about the hoaxes, but as global security director Michael Peaster acknowledged in one of them in 2003, "It appears the information is not reaching our restaurant staff."

So unwarned, Summers said she did the bidding of the man she thought was a cop.

As Ogborn tried to cover herself with an apron, Summers took her clothes to her car; "Officer Scott" said police would arrive shortly to pick them up.

At one point, Summers said later in a court deposition, she asked herself why it was taking so long for police to show up -- the Mount Washington department was less than a mile away.

But "when I asked him questions about why," she said, "he always had an answer."

At the caller's instructions, she refused to tell Dockery, the other assistant manager, what was going on.

Dockery hugged Ogborn and tried to console her, and Jason Bradley, 27, a cook who Summers at one point called in to watch Ogborn, refused to go along with the caller's instructions to remove her apron and describe her. But neither of them called the police, nor demanded the search be aborted.

By now, Ogborn had been detained for an hour. Her car keys had been taken away, and she was naked, except for the apron. She would later testify that she thought she couldn't leave.

"I was scared because they were a higher authority to me," she said. "I was scared for my own safety because I thought I was in trouble with the law."

Summers then told the caller that she had to get back to the counter, and the caller asked if she had a husband who could watch Ogborn.

"She said no, I'm not married yet, but I intend to be," Bradley recalled in his deposition, adding that Summers "started laughing like she was talking to a friend." The caller told Summers to bring in her fiancé, and at about 6 p.m., she called Walter Wes Nix Jr., at home.

"I asked if he would help," Summers said. "I said I had a situation."

Knuckling under: Perceived authority carries much power, studies show

Psychological experts say it is human nature to obey orders, no matter how evil they might seem -- as was illustrated in one of the most famous and frightening human experiments of the 20th century.

Seeking to understand why so many Germans followed orders during the Holocaust, Dr. Stanley Milgram, a Yale University psychologist, took out a classified ad in 1960 and 1961, inviting residents of New Haven, Conn., to take part in what they were told was a study of the relationship between punishment and learning.

A man in a white lab coat introduced the participants to a student, and told them to shock the student each time he made a mistake, increasing the voltage with each error.

In reality, the machine was a prop, and the student was an actor who wasn't shocked. Yet nearly two-thirds of Milgram's subjects gave what they believed were paralyzing jolts to a pitifully protesting victim simply because an authority figure -- the man in the white coat -- had commanded them to do so.

"With numbing regularity, good people were seen to knuckle under the demands of authority and perform actions that were callous and severe," Milgram wrote of his results, which were later replicated in nine other countries.

Milgram died in 1984, but his biographer and protege, Dr. Thomas Blass, said in an interview that the behavior of the people duped in the strip-search hoaxes would not have surprised him.

"Once you accept another person's authority, you become a different person," Blass said. "You are concerned with how well you follow out your orders, rather than whether it is right or wrong."

'Scared for my life'

As his fiancée had requested, Nix showed up at the Mount Washington store.

"She told me there is a girl in the office who was caught stealing," Nix said in a court deposition. Summers also advised him that "Officer Scott" had accused the girl of dealing drugs -- that police at that very moment were searching her home in Taylorsville.

Nix, 42, a father of two and an exterminator by trade, attended church regularly and had coached youth baseball teams in Mount Washington. He is a "great, super guy, a great community guy," his best friend, Terry Grigsby, said later in a deposition. "He was a great role model for kids. ... I don't think he'd ever had a ticket."

Summers handed Nix the phone and left the office. The caller told Nix he was a detective. For the next two hours, Nix later told police, "He told me what to do."

And Nix did as instructed.

He pulled the apron away from Ogborn, leaving her nude again, and described her to the caller. He ordered her to dance with her arms above her head, to see, the caller said, if anything "would shake out." He made her do jumping jacks, deep knee bends, stand on a swivel chair, then a desk.

He made her sit on his lap and kiss him; the caller said that would allow Nix to smell anything that might be on her breath.

When Ogborn refused to obey the caller's instructions, Nix slapped her on the buttocks, until they were red -- just as the caller told him to do, Ogborn testified later.

Each time Summers unlocked the door and ducked back into the office, Nix handed Ogborn the apron back so she could cover herself -- as instructed by the caller. When Summers left, the abuse began anew.

Ogborn said the caller sometimes would talk directly to her, demanding that she do as she was told if she wanted to keep her job and avoid further punishment. She said she believed she was trapped. Nix outweighed her by 145 pounds and stood nearly a foot taller. "I was scared for my life," she said.

'A freak who plays God'

The caller was unusually persuasive, according to workers across the country who talked with him.

He had mastered the police officer's calm but authoritative demeanor. He sprinkled law-enforcement jargon into every conversation. And he did his homework.

He researched the names of regional managers and local police officers in advance, and mentioned them by name to bolster his credibility. He called some restaurants in advance, somehow getting names and descriptions of victims so he could accurately describe them later.

Summers said "Officer Scott" in Mount Washington knew the color of Ogborn's hair, as well as her height and weight -- about 90 pounds. He even described the tie she was wearing.

Around the country, many detectives initially assumed the caller had to be watching the stores from across the street with binoculars. But later officials would say he simply was a master of deception and manipulation.

For example, when the 17-year-old victim at the Fargo Burger King started crying, the caller told her to "be a good actress" and "pretend like it doesn't bother you" so the manager wouldn't "feel so bad" about what he was having to do.

Allan Mathis, the manager of a Hardee's in Rapid City, S.D, who strip-searched an employee in June 2003, said in an interview: "I didn't want to be doing it. But it was like he was watching me." Mathis spent 40 days in jail before he was acquitted on rape and kidnapping charges.

The caller wasn't always successful; phone records show he sometimes called as many as 10 stores before finding one where managers would take his bait.

Stanford University psychologist Philip Zimbardo, who conducted a renowned prison experiment in which college students assigned to play guards became so sadistic that the experiment had to be aborted, said the caller was "was very skilled in human psychology -- he may have even read about Milgram."

Zimbardo, who is a consultant to one of the restaurant chains targeted by the caller, described him in an interview as a "skilled confidence man."

The lawyer for Mathis, the Hardee's manager, told the Rapid City Journal that his client was a victim of "a freak who plays God."

Prizing obedience: Employees are trained to think, 'Can I help you?'

In her book, "Making Fast Food: From the Frying Pan into the Fryer," Canadian sociologist Ester Reiter concludes that the most prized trait in fast-food workers is obedience.

"The assembly-line process very deliberately tries to take away any thought or discretion from workers," said Reiter, who teaches at Toronto's York University and who spent 10 months working at a Burger King as part of her research. "They are appendages to the machine."

Retired FBI Special Agent Dan Jablonski, a Wichita, Kan., private detective who investigated hoaxes for Wendy's franchises in the Midwest, said: "You and I can sit here and judge these people and say they were blooming idiots. But they aren't trained to use common sense. They are trained to say and think, 'Can I help you?'"

Even supervisors at fast-food restaurants made ready targets, said Milton Prewitt, national editor of Nation's Restaurant News, a trade publication. "You dot your `i's, cross your `t's' and push the buttons, and after a year of that," he said, "you might be an assistant manager."

Quick-serve restaurants — as they are known in the industry — also may have been vulnerable because managers are trained to cooperate with law enforcement, said Gene James, president of the National Food Service Security Council, an industry group.

Ultimately, of the 70 confirmed locations where the calls triggered strip-searches, 53 were fast-food stores and nine were sit-down restaurants.

Escalating demands

Sexual abuse steps up as some are eager to obey

Some managers cried as they carried out the caller's orders. But court documents show that others performed with great zeal.

At a Burger King in Pendleton, Ind., a supervisor was so intent on finishing a search of a 15-year-old girl in December 2001 that when the girl's father arrived to pick her up from work, he had to jump over the counter to end her humiliation.

And in Dover, Del., a Burger King manager who was strip-searching an 18-year-old employee in March 2003 fought off the worker's mother and boyfriend so strenuously that state police had to be called.

Court records also show that over time, the demands in the hoax calls grew more perverse.

At a McDonald's in Hinesville, Ga., in February 2003, a 55-year-old janitor was told to put his finger in the vagina of a 19-year-old cashier, supposedly to look for contraband, according to court records. In Joplin, Mo., according to a police report, a caller in May 2004 persuaded a 16-year-old girl who was managing a Sonic restaurant to strip-search and perform oral sex on a 21-year-old male cook — and then got the cook to strip-search the manager.

`I have done something terribly bad'

Louise Ogborn had been in the back office for nearly 2½ hours when the caller said she should kneel on the brick floor in front of Nix and unbuckle his pants. Ogborn cried and begged Nix to stop, she recounted in her deposition. "I said, `No! I didn't do anything wrong. This is ridiculous."

But she said Nix told her he would hit her if she didn't sodomize him, so she did.

Like the rest of her ordeal, it was captured on a surveillance camera, recorded on to a DVD. And it continued until Summers returned to the office to get some gift certificates, and Nix had Ogborn cover herself again.

The caller told Nix then that he could leave but that Summers needed to find another man to replace him. She called in Thomas Simms, a 58-year-old maintenance man who did odd jobs at the store.

Simms would say in a deposition later that he was shocked by what he saw — a young woman trying to cover herself with a small piece of cloth. Summers insisted it was OK for him to watch her, that "corporate" had approved it.

Nix left, drove a few blocks to his home and immediately called his best friend, Grigsby, who recalls Nix saying, "I have done something terribly bad."

`Something is not right,' 9th-grade dropout decides

It was Simms, the Mount Washington store's maintenance man and a ninth-grade dropout, who refused to play the caller's game.

He had stopped by the restaurant for dessert and coffee when Summers pulled him into the office and handed him the phone. The caller told Simms to have Ogborn drop the apron and to describe her. Simms refused.

"He said, `Something is not right about this,'" Summers recalled in her deposition.

And finally, she realized the same. She called her manager — Lisa Siddons — whom the caller had said was on the other line. Summers discovered Siddons had been home, sleeping.

"I knew then I had been had," Summers said. "I lost it.

"I begged Louise for forgiveness. I was almost hysterical."

The caller hung up.

Ogborn was so cold she was shaking and so stunned that, as Dockery wrapped her in a blanket, she asked if she had show up for work the next morning.

Dockery told her no. "Take as much time off as you want," she said.

Illusions destroyed

Summers watched the store video later the same night, saw what Nix had done, and called off their engagement. She hasn't spoken with him since, according to her attorney.

She initially was suspended, then later fired, for violating a McDonald's rule barring nonemployees from entering the office. A couple of weeks later, she was indicted on a charge of unlawful imprisonment, a misdemeanor. Nix was indicted on charges of sodomy and assault.

Dockery was transferred to another restaurant.

Ogborn never went back to work at the store.

She began suffering from panic attacks, severe insomnia and nightmares about "a guy attacking" her, according to a court deposition from her therapist, Jean Campbell. Riddled with anxiety and depression, Ogborn was forced to switch from one antidepressant to a second, then a third and a fourth, before she finally found some relief.

"I can't trust anyone," she testified in a lawsuit she filed in August 2004 against McDonald's, alleging it failed to warn employees about the hoaxes. "I push people out of my life because I don't want them to know what happened."

She graduated from Spencer County High School, but was too shaken to enroll at the University of Louisville, where she had planned to study pre-med, Campbell said.

"She was dealing with a lot of issues of shame, feeling contaminated, feeling dirty, questioning herself," Campbell said in her deposition. "When anything like this happens, it destroys our illusions."

'Slow on the draw'

Restaurant chains failed to act quickly, ex-agent says

Despite the mounting number of cases across the country, restaurant industry officials failed to act more quickly or decisively, Prewitt said, in part because "nobody could believe it, it was so weird."

Some of the strip-searches weren't even reported to police, because embarrassed restaurant officials were reluctant to publicize them, said Jablonski, the ex-FBI agent. The fiercely competitive chains also initially were reluctant to talk to each other. "For a variety of reasons, they were slow on the draw," he said.

James, the head of the industry's security group, said the quick-serve chains acted "appropriately and expeditiously," although the group's previous executive director, Terrie Dort, acknowledged last year to The Associated Press that it took until 2003 "for the pieces of the puzzle to come together and for everyone to start comparing notes and realizing the scope of the problem."

Many police departments filed their case away under "miscellaneous" because they couldn't figure out how to pursue the caller, Prewitt said, or had trouble figuring out what crime, if any, he had committed.

Several departments were able to trace the calls to phone booths in Panama City, Fla. But that was as far as any had gotten until the Mount Washington hoax.

Lone detective hunts for suspect

The lone detective on the Mount Washington Police Department, Buddy Stump, had worked only a few weeks as an investigator when he got the call.

He had spent most of his career doing factory work and was home watching an "Andy Griffith" rerun when his deputy commander assigned him the case. "I joked that I was watching my training films," Stump recalled.

He was furious when he saw the store surveillance video. "It burned me up that this had happened to an 18-year-old girl," he said.

He was able to track down the phone number the call had been made from, but it was listed to a nonexistent phone and turned out to have been made on a pre-paid calling card. "I figured we didn't have a chance to catch him," Stump said.

He eventually learned the call had originated in Panama City, and that the largest seller of phone cards there was Wal-Mart. But that didn't help much — the largest seller of everything is Wal-Mart, and it has three stores in Panama City alone.

But a Panama City detective told Stump a bit of interesting news — an officer from West Bridgewater, Mass., was hot on the same trail.

Detective Sgt. Vic Flaherty had been assigned to lead a task force investigating the crimes after the caller hit four Wendy's in the Boston suburbs on one night in February 2004.

Flaherty had traced a calling card used in some of the hoaxes to one of the Panama City Wal-Marts, but that store's surveillance video only captured customers entering and exiting, not at the registers.

After hearing about the Bullitt County call, however, he helped Stump trace that calling card to its source. This time, they were in luck: It was purchased at 3:02 p.m. at another Wal-Mart in Panama City on April 9, 2004 — just hours before it was used to call the Mount Washington McDonald's.

The camera at that store was trained on the registers, and it showed the purchaser was a white man, about 35 to 40, with slicked-back black hair and glasses. The same man could be seen on Flaherty's video entering the other Wal-Mart, where he was wearing a black jacket with small white lettering.

Flaherty and a colleague flew to Panama City on June 28, 2004, and local officers immediately identified the jacket as the uniform worn by officers of Corrections Corp.of America, a private prison company.

When they showed it to the warden at the company's Bay Correctional Facility, he identified the man as David R. Stewart, 38, a guard on the swing shift.

Stewart denied making the calls, but when confronted, he started to "sweat profusely and shake uncontrollably," Flaherty wrote in a report. Stewart also asked, "Was anybody hurt?" and said, "Amen, it's over," according to the report.

Stewart insisted he'd never bought a calling card, but when detectives searched his house, they found one that had been used to call nine restaurants in the past year, including the Idaho Falls Burger King on the day its manager was duped.

Police also found dozens of applications for police department jobs, hundreds of police magazines, police-type uniforms, guns and holsters. "It was very apparent Dave Stewart wanted ... to become a police officer," Flaherty said.

Mount Washington became the first department to charge Stewart. Stump drove to Panama City to arrest him on June 30, 2004.

Stewart eventually was brought to Bullitt Circuit Court, where he pleaded not guilty to solicitation to commit sodomy and impersonating a police officer, both felonies, as well as soliciting sex abuse and unlawful imprisonment, both misdemeanors. He was released

on \$100,000 bond pending his trial Dec. 13. His bond was posted by his brother, C.W. Stewart — a retired police officer from Cheektowaga, N.Y.

Suspect considers himself a victim

Married 11 years and the father of five, Stewart had worked as a mall security guard, volunteered as an auxiliary sheriff's deputy, and driven a propane truck before taking the prison guard job.

He had worked 11 months there before his arrest; he was fired a week later.

His family has stood behind him — his mother said he is "a good boy" and another relative said he's well liked in Cheektowaga, the Buffalo suburb where he grew up.

Stewart declined to be interviewed, but in a letter responding to Ogborn's suit in Bullitt Circuit Court, he said: "I received your notice but I'm in no way responsible. I feel bad for your loss because I am a victim as well. I lost my job, my home and my car all over something I did not do."

In fact, he deeded his residence, a \$37,900 mobile home on a dirt road 20 miles north of Panama City, to his wife for \$100, according to Florida property records.

His Louisville lawyer, Steve Romines, said his client is not bright enough to have pulled off the hoaxes. "Based on numerous conversations with my client, I don't believe he is persuasive or eloquent enough to convince somebody to do these preposterous things," Romines said in an interview.

Stewart has been charged only in Bullitt County. Flaherty said prosecutors in Massachusetts are awaiting the outcome of the Kentucky case before deciding whether to proceed against him.

Detectives in other jurisdictions say they didn't press charges because the caller's crime would be a misdemeanor for which he could not be extradited.

There has not been a reported hoax call since Stewart's arrest, according to police and lawyers for the restaurant industry. Romines said there have been two, but he declined to say where, and none have been reported by news organizations.

Duped or stupid?

Across the United States, at least 13 people who executed strip-searches ordered by the caller were charged with crimes, and seven were convicted.

But most of the duped managers were treated as victims — just like the people they searched and humiliated.

They all "fell under the spell of a voice on the telephone," wrote a judge in Zanesville, Ohio, in an order acquitting Scott Winsor, 35, who'd been charged with unlawfully restraining and imposing himself on two women who worked for him at a McDonald's.

Chicago lawyer Craig Annunziata, who has defended 30 franchises sued after hoaxes, said every manager he interviewed genuinely believed they were helping police.

"They weren't trying to get their own jollies," he said.

Many of the supervisors were fired and some divorced by their spouses, Annunziata said. Others required counseling.

But the duped managers have been condemned by others.

"You don't have to be a Phi Beta Kappa to know not to strip-search a girl who is accused of stealing change," said Roger Hall, the lawyer for a woman who won \$250,000 after being strip-searched at a McDonald's in Louisa, Ky.

A Fox-TV commentator asked how the managers who went along could be so "colossally stupid."

While the incidents were triggered by a "perverted miscreant" wrote a federal judge in Georgia, the managers "still had a responsibility to use common sense and avoid falling prey to such a scam."

Though the Milgram experiment may help explain why supervisors went along with the caller, even Milgram's disciples say it doesn't absolve them of responsibility.

Just as one-third of the participants in Milgram's study refused to shock the subject, some supervisors refused to go along, including a supervisor at McDonald's Hillview store, who hung up on the caller the very night of the Mount Washington hoax.

"Nobody held a gun to their heads," said Blass, whose book about Milgram is titled, "The Man Who Shocked the World."

"They had the critical ability to decide whether to carry out their orders."

3 lives `destroyed'

In her suit against the \$19 billion McDonald's company, Ogborn contends it failed to warn Mount Washington employees about the hoaxes even though the company and its franchises were already defending lawsuits in Georgia, Ohio, Utah and elsewhere in Kentucky.

"This suit is about failure to warn, failure to train, failure to supervise," said Louisville lawyer Steven Yater, who with William C. Boone Jr., is representing Ogborn.

Although a McDonald's security executive had sent a 10- to 15-second voice message to every store in the region about hoax calls about a week before the Mount Washington incident, Siddons, the manager there, said in her deposition that it didn't mention strip-searches.

The company also failed to execute a plan it had developed to send warning stickers to be placed on the headset and cradle of the phone in every store, Peaster, McDonald's global security director, said in a deposition.

Ogborn's suit, which is set for mediation Oct. 31 and trial March 30, also names Summers and Dockery as defendants, saying they "forced Louise to remain imprisoned, in the nude, for over four hours."

Dockery declined to be interviewed, although in court papers, she denied wrongdoing and said Summers had kept her in the dark about what was going on.

Summers has filed her own claim against McDonald's, alleging that the incident would not have occurred if she had been warned.

She declined to be interviewed, but in her deposition, she angrily asked how McDonald's "could have failed to spread the word."

"You've destroyed three lives," she said. "Hope you're happy."

McDonald's: "Did it ever occur to you to scream?"

McDonald's blamed what happened on Stewart and Nix, over whom it says it had no control. The company has sued both of them.

Its Louisville lawyer, W.R. "Pat" Patterson Jr., said McDonald's employee manual clearly noted its policy against strip-searches. "The employees didn't read it," Patterson said in an interview. "That is all I can say."

The company admits it knew of the earlier hoaxes, but Patterson said it reacted appropriately by sending memos to owners and franchisees. "McDonald's did what every quick-serve restaurant did — maybe more."

In a prepared statement, a spokesman for McDonald's USA, Bill Whitman, said, "We are keenly aware of these unfortunate incidents and will continue to take appropriate actions to safeguard customers and employees."

Asked what additional steps the company has taken since the Mount Washington incident, he said it would be "inappropriate to discuss in detail specific security and safety measures."

In court papers, McDonald's also has blamed Ogborn for what happened to her — saying that her injuries, "if any," were caused by her failure to realize the caller wasn't a real police officer.

Questioning Ogborn during a deposition, Patterson suggested that although she had no clothes, she could have walked out of the office, but stayed voluntarily to clear her name.

"Did it ever occur to you to scream?" he asked.

Ogborn declined to be interviewed for this story on the advice of her lawyers, although she agreed to be identified by name.

Her therapist said she followed orders because her experience with adults "has been to do what she is told, because good girls do what they are told."

20-20 hindsight?

How would you react?

Bullitt District Court Judge Rebecca Ward initially dismissed the charge against Summers, saying she "definitely exercised poor judgment ... but was as much a victim as Miss Ogborn."

Ward later reversed herself and reinstated the charge; she set Summers' trial for Dec. 7.

Summers' lawyer, Wendi Wagner, said in an interview that "everybody agrees, in hindsight, 'How the hell could you let this happen?' ... But how many times did it happen over the past 10 years?"

In a brief interview, Nix insisted that he — like Summers — thought he was following a policeman's orders.

Nix is scheduled for trial Tuesday. If convicted of sodomy, he faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison — twice the penalty that could be meted to Stewart, although his lawyer, Kathleen Schmidt, noted that plea negotiations are under way.

"I can understand how people can question what he did," Schmidt said. "But they weren't in the same position. Maybe you and I wouldn't have done this, but how do we know?"

Postscript, 2010:

--Donna Summers, who was criminally charged after the hoax, entered an Alford plea to misdemeanor unlawful imprisonment, meaning she asserted her innocence while acknowledging there was enough evidence to convict her. She was given probation. She broke off her engagement to Walter "Wes" Nix Jr.

--Nix pleaded guilty to sexual abuse, sexual misconduct and unlawful imprisonment and served five years in prison.

--David Stewart, who was prosecuted only in Kentucky, was acquitted of soliciting sodomy and impersonating a police officer, although law enforcement officials said the hoaxes stopped after his arrest.

--Louise Ogborn won a \$6.1 million verdict against McDonald, and the judgment was upheld by the Kentucky Court of Appeals, which said the company's legal department was "fully aware" of hoax calls to its restaurants, yet its management made "a conscious decision not to train or warn employees or managers about the calls." The jury also awarded \$1 million, later reduced to \$400,000, to Summers.

--Ogborn, who has married and had a baby, still hasn't collected the verdict, which McDonald's appealed to the state Supreme Court.