

'Only had one' a dubious defense

By Karla Kraynak Bruno

ARLINGTON

No surprise in Tuesday's verdict out of the Williamsburg-James City County General District Court: William & Mary Board of Visitor Laura Flippin was found guilty of public intoxication.

ESSAY

Yet there are surprises to be had in this tale of public humiliation and self-destruction.

Surprise 1: The "I only had one" defense in light of a .253 blood alcohol level, three times the legal limit for driving, and being found with her car keys in hand as she left a bar.

Note that Flippin did not deliver an unvarnished tale, but used "feel" as her verb of choice and offered no explanation as to how one drink could raise her blood alcohol level so high.

Note that no one raised the idea that Flippin's drink(s) were tampered with; no one proved that the breath analysis was faulty or that the arresting officer had made a mistake.

Nothing nefarious was going on that night, just drinking and poor judgment.

Surprise 2: A faculty member and another BOV member were directly involved that fateful night last September, people who were with Flippin at the Green Leaf.

That begs all kinds of questions about the behavior of two BOV members, not just one, plus a faculty member.

Who was that other BOV member? Who was the faculty member? Did they know Flippin was intoxicated? Were they intoxicated too? Did the others leave the Green Leaf and get behind the wheel of a car?

Did the drinking buddies willfully abandon Flippin in that sorry state? Did they realize Flippin was likely headed for her car?

Why were these drinking partners not

called to testify to the number of drinks Flippin consumed? Not called by either side? What's up with that?

Surprise 3: Flippin is appealing the Class 4 misdemeanor conviction. That is her right under the law, but one must question her judgment yet again.

In the absence of an alternative explanation of how Flippin's blood alcohol level got so high, and in light of the facts that have been presented and have gone undisputed by the defense, one must conclude that the verdict is fair and just.

Appealing a misdemeanor just prolongs an already-agonizing minor legal tussle and postpones the inevitable.

Surprise 4: Last Tuesday Ms. Flippin committed perjury in the eyes of the judge.

District Judge Colleen K. Killilea did not see obfuscation or disingenuousness in this "I only had one" defense. She saw an improbable fiction, a lie. Under oath.

According to the BOV bylaws (http://www.wm.edu/about/administration/bov/_documents/bylaws/bylaws_2011.pdf), the board is to "preserve the ideals and traditions of the institutions under its jurisdiction, including the student-administered Honor System that originated in the earliest years of the College of William and Mary."

The College's Honor Code lies in alcohol-soaked tatters under Flippin's leadership. What an unmitigated example of dishonor she is for the students.

Ms. Flippin, had she a shred of respect for our beloved college, would resign immediately and get her life back in order by seeking counseling if that would help, and then repenting her actions and asking forgiveness of the college community.

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Flippin

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