

# AdultFYI.com

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## The Poop on GirlsPooping.com

Government Impounds Adult Website

--Gene Ross

Beckley, West Virginia- Several months ago Kasey Warner, United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, Andrew G. Oosterbaan, Chief, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, United States Department of Justice, and Robin Dalglish, Inspector in Charge, United States Postal Inspection Service, Pittsburgh Division, announced guilty pleas in criminal cases against Michael J. Corbett and Sharon E. Corbett, of Lewisburg, West Virginia, and Joseph Tanner and Randall Rogers, of Quitman, Georgia.

Based upon a joint business venture producing and selling obscene videos, the four were indicted by a federal grand jury on April 9, 2003, and charged with three counts of mailing obscene materials in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1461, and one count of conspiracy to mail obscene materials and conspiracy to use the Internet for the purpose of sale and distribution of obscene material, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.

The investigation conducted by Postal Inspector Thomas Svitek revealed the Corbetts, through their Internet website, offered for sale a total of 53 videotapes and DVDs depicting graphic and sexually explicit scenes of defecation and urination. Tanner and Rogers, the owners and operators of Tdigital Services Inc., managed and maintained the website with knowledge of its content and shared in the profit.

The Corbetts each pled guilty to one count of mailing obscene material. Tanner and Rogers each pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to mail obscene material and conspiracy to use the Internet for the purpose of sale and distribution of obscene material. Each count carries a maximum potential penalty of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Additionally, the Corbetts have forfeited \$15,010 seized from their bank accounts, the domain name associated with their website, and all obscene materials and equipment used to produce or manufacture obscene materials. In addition, the Corbetts have agreed to pay the United States \$60,000 in lieu of forfeiting their home which was used in the sale of obscene materials. Joseph Tanner forfeited \$80,000 and all obscene materials and equipment used to produce obscene materials.

The prosecution is being handled by Trial Attorney David Szuchman and Stephanie Thacker of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia.

**Gene sez:** I had been in touch with Michael Corbett since the beginning of this case hoping to get a statement. He writes the following:

**Michael Corbett:** Gene, Although I would love to add some of my own emotional comments and opinions about what happened, I must be very careful about what I say since this case is not over yet. My wife and I are scheduled for sentencing on December 19th. We have no idea about how much prison time we may get. Here's my account of what has happened so far. You have my authorization to publish this.

I operated an adult website known as GirlsPooping.com, which offered videos for sale depicting voyeuristic videos of women using the bathroom. Most of the videos were relatively softcore; some of which would have been considered R-rated by most standards.

My business had a reputation of excellent customer service, unique video selection, and "mom & pop" online atmosphere. GirlsPooping.com was one of the few adult businesses that paid models honestly and generously through consignment and verbal agreements.

All minimum age laws were strictly observed - both with the models in the videos, themselves and the customers who purchased them. None of the videos featured violence or child exploitation (rape, murder, S&M, child porn, etc.). I had no reason to believe that any of the videos offered at the GirlsPooping.com website could be classified as illegal or "obscene" as vaguely defined under USC Title 18, Section 1461.

On March 26th, 2003, the United States Postal Inspection Service conducted a search of my home. My wife and I were not home at the time. The federal agents gained access by breaking a window and proceeded to remove videos, office equipment, and many personal family items as evidence.

When my wife and I arrived at the scene, we were immediately arrested. I was taken into custody, and my wife was interrogated at our home. During her questioning, Postal Inspector, Thomas Svitek repeatedly asked Mrs. Corbett about the monetary value of items in our home. I believe this information was requested so the government could determine how much money we made and also how much property the government could seize from us in a forfeiture.

My wife and I were taken to Southern Regional Jail in Beaver, WV. Once in jail, we were given explicit instructions prohibiting us from making any telephone calls. We were held there for 6 days. Our immediate release was arbitrarily denied by a "rubber stamp" Motion For Detention Hearing, which indicated that both my wife and I were "serious risk defendants that will flee", and posed a risk to the "safety of any other person and the community" - even though we had not been charged with any violent crime, nor had we resisted arrest in any way. Neither of us had a police record, and neither of us had ever been to jail. Because we were held for nearly a week in jail, I was prevented from protecting any bank assets and organizing an immediate and effective legal defense.

We were released from jail after I agreed to use the equity in my home to pay a \$30,000 bond. Upon arriving home, I discovered that The U.S. Postal Inspection Service had seized \$15,010.97 from my bank account. This money was taken, even though no indictment had yet been handed down, nor had the matter been taken to trial in order to determine the validity of the seizure. I felt that this premature measure might have been an attempt to financially tie my hands so I would not be able to afford proper and effective legal counsel. Fortunately, I still had access to credit cards, which I had to use in order to survive without any money.

Local newspapers published misleading articles about our arrest that led the public to believe that my wife and I had been charged with child pornography. Besides the obvious humiliation we felt (living in a very small town), I was extremely worried about the impact such deceptive information could have on a potential jury pool. We also received threatening telephone calls from anonymous individuals, most likely the result of the newspaper stories. We decided to remove our address sign from the driveway in fear that our lives and property could be in jeopardy. My wife and I could not find employment because of our tarnished reputation.

We soon learned that the government was planning to seize our home because it had been paid for by "illegal" means. For months, my wife and I had to endure the stress of financial loss, the inevitable loss of our freedom, and even the loss of our home. I wouldn't wish this on anyone, including the same people in government who were attempting to take everything away from us.

Because my wife and I had no money and because we were unable to find a job, I found it unrealistic to take the matter to trial. I had already spent nearly \$40,000 in legal fees, which was all debt. Free Speech organizations and the adult industry seemed unwilling to assist us financially, so we agreed to a plea bargain with the government. As part of this bargain, we accepted to pay the government \$60,000 (on top of the \$15,010.97 that they already seized) in lieu of the forfeiture of our home. More debt for us, but at least we weren't homeless.

Because there is no specific definition of "obscenity" under federal law, the government indicated that during a trial, our guilt would have been determined by a jury to conclude if the videos were indeed obscene. In other words, what the government had proposed was to use a jury not to determine our guilt, but to actually become a panel of movie critics. My wife and I face prison sentences of up to 5 years each and up to \$250,000 in fines.

I would have never knowingly violated the law then made my violations completely visible to the public over the Internet. If anything, I'm guilty of being naive and an idealist, rather than a "conspirator" who knowingly mailed "obscene matter", as I have been convicted. Sharon and I are now unemployed, have no money, have massive debt, and are prohibited from leaving the Southern District of West Virginia. Our inability to travel has been especially difficult because our families live over a thousand miles away. We've had to go through all of this alone without family support. We wish for nothing more than to move on with our lives and to see our families once again.