

Bangor Daily News (ME)

May 27, 2005 Friday

Flippant Headline Hurts

An article in your May 17 edition reported that a Burnham man, Jack Parker Jr., was arrested as the suspect in the theft of a motor vehicle, assaults on two law enforcement officers, assaultive behavior at the Waldo County Jail, the trashing of his estranged wife's home, refusal to submit to arrest and attempted escape from the injured officers.

In addition he is suspected of killing his wife's pet. The newspaper reported that the same suspect has a substantiated history of violence, one prior conviction for assault in Maine and two convictions for assault in Ohio. At the time of his arrest, he was on probation for another assault conviction in Maine.

To resort to a flippant headline ["Burnham man faces multiple charges in ruckus"] does a disservice to the officers who risk their lives daily to serve and protect, to the jail staff that daily contends with violent prisoners and, especially, to Parker's wife who, undoubtedly, must be terrorized by his latest wave of violence and wholesale destruction.

To trivialize the reality of violence for the sake of a snappy headline only succeeds in minimizing Parker's behavior and responsibility and cheapens the lives of those affected by his behavior. Such journalism serves to encourage domestic violence by implying that such behavior is no big deal.

The efforts of service programs around the state can attest to the reality that the cost of domestic violence is not trivial. The cost in family lives marred and lost, the cost to our children and communities and the cost to our pocketbooks is staggering.

In the future I would urge the *Bangor Daily News* to choose its words and headlines more carefully. It does make a difference.

So, when is a ruckus not a ruckus? In a case like this!

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