

## ?Celebrity? cheaters

By Brian Lockhart

?When you cheat, you're only cheating yourself.?

That phrase was said to myself and my classmates on at least two occasions when I was in grade school.

It would have made a lot more sense if the teacher actually explained what she was talking about. Instead she just glared at a class of nine-year-olds in that ?I'm the teacher, so you're wrong about everything? kind of way they learned in teacher's college class 101.

It's hard to ask for clarification when you know if you raise your hand and question a statement you're not going to get a real answer because if you can't read the teacher's mind ? you must be stupid.

The recent scandal hitting the front pages of such reputable news sources as the National Enquirer and Yahoo news regarding high profile people being arrested on federal charges for such crimes as ?conspiracy to commit mail fraud' and ?honest services mail fraud' pretty much defines the ?cheating yourself' part of the above quote.

These high profile celebrities, allegedly, used bribes, and outright fraud in some cases in an attempt to ensure their kids get a spot in a ?prestigious' school.

The allegations include everything from having a ringer pose as a kid to write entrance exams, to photoshopping a girl into a rowing scull to showcase her athletic prowess ? even though the kid had never rowed a boat in her life.

These are serious charges. In the U.S., if you are up on federal charges, the odds of you being found not guilty are pretty slim. Federal prosecutors don't like to lose, and federal judges have a tendency to find you guilty so they can arrive at the restaurant on time for their dinner reservations. Just ask Martha Stewart and Conrad Black.

There are probably a lot more people who are nervously chewing off what is left of their fingernails while waiting to see how this situation plays out.

Remember, if a bribe was paid, then someone received that money. If someone received that money then someone else was either influenced, paid back a favour, or was paid off to ensure the payee gets the service they shelled out the big bucks for.

What's remarkable about these allegations is the parents seem to have no idea of their children's skill or academic level.

If the kid can't qualify for admission on their own, the likelihood of success at a school is minimal. No employer was ever impressed that you lasted a full semester before flunking out ? even if it was a ?prestigious' school.

One daughter of an accused celebrity has been described as a ?social' or ?media influencer' because she has a Youtube channel. I'm not sure how much influence a 19-year-old has, unless it's to influence 10-year-olds who are easily impressed because they saw her mother on TV.

A recent question asked of her was her plans for college. The genius girl was not impressed with school, but said she would like to go to college for ?game days and the parties.?

Parties are fun, but if that's your main objective in post secondary education, you're probably going to fall short of making the Dean's list for exemplary work.

Even so, the parents figured if they put out thousands, and in some cases a LOT of thousands of dollars in bribes, their kids would be admitted to a school in which they had little, or no chance of succeeding.

All this does is take away a space in a program from another student who worked hard to achieve success and is more deserving of a place in the school and more likely to graduate.

The fact that 'celebrities' are involved in this supposed scandal of course makes it news ? especially in Tinsel Town, where of course no celebrity ever got caught doing anything shady before.

When it comes to U.S. 'colleges', this type of nonsense has been going on for years.

The U.S. is the only place where you can get a full scholarship to a university based on your ability to toss a ball through a hoop or throw a 40 yard pass on a gridiron with accuracy.

In a recent interview, a well known college basketball player was asked about his classroom work.

His classic reply was 'Classroom? I came here to play basketball, not play school.'

And yet, when his four years are done, he will graduate and be given a degree in something for not attending classes, but averaging 20 points per game on the court.

Maybe these celebrity parents could have avoided losing a lot of money and possibly spending time in a federal penitentiary if they just tried to steer their kids in the right direction in the first place.