

Chronology of an offender: Chad Layne Pieper

Introduction

WATCH publishes defendant chronologies in an effort to showcase how the courts deal with violent crimes including domestic assault. These crimes have a history of being ignored (until 40 years ago, they were considered private, family matters of no concern to the state) or minimized (as when police would routinely suggest a man who had assaulted his wife “take a walk around the block to cool down” rather than arrest him). While laws and attitudes have greatly improved, we can still see evidence of the tendency to treat these crimes less seriously than others.

This tendency is revealed in the following summary, where in less than four months the defendant, Chad Layne Pieper, committed violent assaults against three people. While on probation for these crimes he repeatedly violated court orders, including not paying restitution, not complying with court-ordered treatment, and committing more assaults. In spite of his disregard for the law, three assault charges, including two against his girlfriend, were dropped in exchange for pleading guilty to disorderly conduct. Since disorderly conduct convictions are not “enhanceable” offenses, future domestic assaults cannot be charged at a higher level. In addition, a defendant’s criminal record does not show the true extent of his history of domestic violence.

In two cases he pleaded guilty to both charges—disorderly conduct and assault—but both times judges stayed adjudication of the sentence for the assault charge, meaning Pieper has no conviction on his record for those crimes. With a stay of adjudication, a judge can reinstate a sentence at a later date if a defendant violates court orders. But Pieper escaped this consequence, even though he violated court orders multiple times, including contacting the victim and committing additional assaults.

The public record shows that between June 2009 and July 2010 Chad Layne Pieper, 33, faced a total of nine misdemeanor charges in four separate cases involving assaults against his girlfriend, an acquaintance, and his girlfriend’s former boyfriend.

Case 1: Disorderly conduct (misdemeanor) and fifth degree assault (misdemeanor)

6/4/09 Plymouth police report: Officers responded to a call about a domestic assault and attempted suicide. Two witnesses reported seeing Pieper slap his girlfriend, Victim A, across the face and threaten her and one of the witnesses, saying that if he made it through [the night] he was going to come back and kill them. Pieper was arrested at the scene.

6/26/09 Outcome Case 1: **Pieper pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct (misdemeanor), and the fifth degree assault charge was dismissed.** Judge Thomas Sipkins sentenced him to 90 days in the workhouse with 88 days stayed for one year and credit for two days served. Probation conditions included: attend anger management, follow all instructions of probation, attend a treatment program and keep the court and his attorney informed of his current address. The criminal no contact order was lifted. The prosecutor was Elliott Knetsch, and the defense attorney was Ryan Garry.

Case 2: Fifth degree assault (misdemeanor) and disorderly conduct (misdemeanor)

7/7/09 Plymouth police report: Victim B told officers that during a conversation about Pieper's girlfriend, Pieper yelled, "choked," and punched him. Police photos showed the victim's injuries included red marks on his neck, throat and chest and a swollen eye and nose.

7/8/09 Warrant order Case 1: This assault put Pieper in violation of his probation, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Case 3: Disorderly conduct (misdemeanor), fifth degree assault (misdemeanor) and fifth degree domestic assault (misdemeanor)

9/3/09 New Hope police report: Victim C (who formerly dated Victim A) fled to the police department after he was assaulted by Pieper. He told police he was at Victim A's home visiting their son. Pieper punched him in the face, and when he fell to the ground, Pieper continued to hit and kick him in the head. Police photographed Victim C's injuries, and he was taken by ambulance to a hospital. Officers later spoke with Victim A, who reported that when she asked Pieper about Victim C he pushed her into the wall, scraping her back and right arm. She also told officers she had an order for protection against Pieper.

9/4/09 A&D order Case 1: Pieper violated his probation for Case 1 by committing these assaults. Judge Jeannice Reding signed an order for Judge Sipkins that Pieper be arrested and held without bail.

9/10/09 First appearance Case 3: Judge Jack Nordby set bail at \$12,000 with the following conditions: no contact with the victim and make all future court appearances. Pieper posted bail and was released.

10/15/09 Outcome Case 3: Pieper pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct (misdemeanor) and one count of fifth degree assault (misdemeanor). Judge Bruce Peterson sentenced him to 90 days in the workhouse on the disorderly conduct charge, with 60 days stayed for one year and credit for 30 days served. Judge Peterson stayed adjudication of the sentence on the charge of fifth degree assault. Pieper was placed on probation to the court (meaning there is no probation officer supervising him) with the following conditions: remain law abiding and pay restitution. Amanda Furth was the prosecutor and Ryan Garry with the defense attorney.

10/30/09 Probation violation hearing Case 1: Pieper admitted to violating his probation and Judge Reding revoked 30 days of his probation and granted him a furlough to attend treatment.

11/18/09 Update Case 1: Pieper failed to comply with treatment recommendations.

12/11/09 Probation violation hearing Case 1: Pieper admitted to violating his probation and Judge Daniel Moreno amended his sentence to 58 days in the workhouse with credit for one day served.

2/11/10 Outcome Case 2: Pieper pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct (misdemeanor), and the fifth degree assault charge was dismissed. Judge Ann Alton sentenced him to 90 days in

the workhouse with credit for 90 days served. The prosecutor was Elliott Knetsch and Pieper appeared *pro se*.

Case 4: Domestic assault (misdemeanor) and disorderly conduct (misdemeanor)

7/4/10 Plymouth police report: Officers were called to a domestic assault. Victim A reported to officers that her fiancée, Pieper, yelled at her and pushed her to the ground, scraping her nose, lip and under her eye. Three witnesses were interviewed at the scene and confirmed seeing Pieper throw the victim to the ground and threaten her. Pieper was arrested.

9/17/10 Pretrial Case 4: Judge Charles Porter released Pieper with the condition he remain law abiding and have no contact with the victim.

11/12/10 Outcome Case 4: Pieper pleaded guilty to the domestic assault (misdemeanor) and disorderly conduct (misdemeanor). Judge Porter sentenced him to 90 days in the workhouse on the disorderly conduct charge, with 88 days stayed for one year and credit for two days served. He stayed adjudication of the sentence on the domestic assault. Pieper was placed on supervised probation with extensive conditions, including: chemical dependency evaluation/treatment, anger management, remain law abiding, comply with geographic restrictions to the victim's residence, no alcohol/controlled substance use, random drug testing, domestic abuse counseling/treatment. The no contact order was modified to allow contact with the victim but not the victim's son. Elliot Knetsch was the prosecutor, and Ryan Garry was the defense attorney.

12/13/10 First A&D order Case 4: Pieper was charged with felony fleeing a peace officer and felony DWI (**Case 5**). Because he was in violation of his probation for Case 4, Judge Robiner signed an order for Judge Porter that Pieper be arrested and held without bail.

12/17/10 Update Case 4: Judge Ronald Abrams released Pieper and ordered him to complete a chemical dependency assessment.

2/11/11 Second A&D order Case 4: Pieper was again out of compliance with court orders. Judge Gina Brandt signed an order for Judge Porter that Pieper be arrested and held without bail.

2/17/11 Probation violation hearing Case 4: Judge Robert Small released Pieper with the conditions that he have no contact with the victims of his crimes and remain law abiding.

9/7/11 Outcome Case 5 and probation violation hearing Case 4: Pieper pleaded guilty to fleeing a peace officer (felony) and DWI (felony). Judge Small sentenced him to 365 days in the workhouse for fleeing a peace officer and 46 months in prison for the DWI, to be served concurrently. He was given credit for 12 days served and ordered to supply a DNA sample. Pieper also admitted to violating his probation in Case 4 and his sentence for domestic assault (misdemeanor) was reinstated. For that case he was sentenced to 13 days in the workhouse with credit for 13 days served, the domestic abuse no contact was cancelled and he was discharged from probation. Daniel Allard was the prosecutor, and Ryan Garry was the defense attorney.

Conclusion

Pieper was eventually convicted of two felonies, fleeing a peace officer and DWI, and ordered to serve time in prison. But for his violent assaults—four reported incidents involving three victims within a 13-month period—Pieper received few consequences. He received stayed sentences (meaning he did not have to serve the full sentence) from six judges, and was repeatedly released from custody and placed on probation, even as he continued to violate court orders.

The pattern of violence demonstrated by Pieper represents just one of many cases witnessed by WATCH monitors. A public eye on the courtroom provides the opportunity to shine a light on these cases and remind us that more needs to be done to hold violence abusers accountable.