

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: Vision Baptist Missions
FROM: A. Lee Parks, Jr.
DATE: October 12, 2021
RE: Investigation of Claims by Rebecca “Becky” Earnhart - Addendum

A. Testimony of Teresa Lentz

Within hours of our submission of the final Report on our Investigation, we were contacted by Mrs. Lentz¹. Her testimony was as follows: she began attending CCS in 1978. She attended CCS from the Ninth Grade through her Twelfth Grade and graduated in 1982, three years before Becky Earnhart graduated from CCS. Mrs. Lentz stayed at the Gardner residence for about two weeks in 1981. She said she asked to stay with the Gardners because of the chaos in her own home, with brothers physically fighting and getting no attention from her parents.

During her stay at the Gardner residence, Mrs. Lentz alleged that she received the same type of paddlings from Mr. Gardner and others at the school previously reported by Mrs. Earnhart. Mrs. Lentz also said there were times when students were required to sit on the floor during lessons, and Mr. Gardner would sometimes kick a student, including her, for misbehavior or disrespect.

On one occasion, Mrs. Lentz stated that Mr. Gardner asked her and Becky Earnhart to come into his bedroom to watch TV. She said he asked them to lay on his king-sized bed with him to watch television because the only television in the house was in Gardner’s bedroom. Mrs. Lentz says Mr. Gardner put his arms around them and pulled them in close. She said Mr. Gardner smiled at her suggestively and she felt like it was a sexual advance. Mrs. Lentz said when she pulled away, Mr. Gardner said “don’t worry, Betty is out of town.” When she said it didn’t feel right to her, she was kicked out of the room and told to sleep on the couch. Mrs. Lentz said she did not know what happened in the bedroom after she left. Not long thereafter, Lentz decided to return to her parents’ house.

Mrs. Lentz stated that she witnessed Mr. Gardner send Mrs. Earnhart to the basement on several occasions and saw him follow her down. She stated she could

¹ We left several messages for Mrs. Lentz. When we finally scheduled a time to speak with her, she did not keep the appointment, but then called after the release of the report.

hear Mrs. Earnhart screaming and crying as Mr. Gardner punished her, and saw bruises on Mrs. Earnhart that caused her to miss school. Mrs. Lentz said she asked Mr. Gardner why he punished Mrs. Earnhart the way he did. She said Mr. Gardner told her, “that’s what Becky wanted.” Lentz said she told Gardner, “I don’t think she wants those beatings.” Mrs. Lentz said he told her what happened in his home was his business and he paddled her for being disrespectful.

Mrs. Lentz shared information on two additional subjects she believed were significant. First, she claims that on school trips Mr. Gardner would treat Mrs. Earnhart in a way she considered inappropriate. She gave two examples. Mrs. Lentz stated that Mr. Gardner had Earnhart sit too close to him in the car or at events and he kept his arm around her. Mrs. Lentz said, in her opinion, the physical contact seemed more romantic than platonic or familial. Second, she said on more than one occasion on these school trips, Mr. Gardner would buy ice cream cones for the students. Gardner, however, would share a cone with Earnhart and both would take turns tasting or licking the same ice cream. Again, to Lentz it seemed more romantic than father and daughter.

B. Conclusion

With respect to the alleged incident in the bedroom with Mr. Gardner and Mrs. Earnhart, Mrs. Lentz had no personal knowledge of any inappropriate sexual contact between Gardner, Earnhart or herself. Importantly, this is not an event that Mrs. Earnhart recalls or can describe. If the event did in fact occur, there is no evidence that Mr. Gardner did anything other than watch television on his bed with his *de facto* daughter. Any other conclusion would be based solely on thirty year old speculation.

Mrs. Lentz is the second female student to corroborate what she believed to be extreme physical corporal punishment of male and female students at CCS in the 1980s. She also confirmed Mrs. Earnhart’s allegations that she was punished in the Gardner basement away from others during the two weeks Mrs. Lentz stayed with the Gardners. But she did not witness any of the actual punishments.

There were some inconsistencies in Mrs. Lentz’s testimony. Mrs. Lentz described the punishments she suffered as severe, yet she admittedly asked to live with the Gardners despite receiving those punishments at school and seeing the bruises on Mrs. Earnhart before she moved in. It is difficult to understand why she

would want to place herself in that situation if it was as bad as she alleges. Mrs. Lentz also remained a member and attendee of Liberty, where Gardner was Pastor, for more than three years after she graduated from CCS, which again is puzzling given her description of her treatment in the church while at CCS. Perhaps the most troubling fact in terms of her credibility, is all this occurred 35 plus years ago, and Mrs. Lentz is only now making these disclosures.

Ultimately, Mrs. Lentz's statements do not change our determination as to whether Gardner abused Mrs. Earnhart in a manner that was unacceptable at the time.