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Bryan, not his real name, introduced him to a former girlfriend. "Judy" claimed to be 17 and since Bryan had dated and slept with her, Ray automatically assumed that she was as old as she said she was. "Not only did Judy claim to be 17, she could have passed for older," said Ray's mother. "At Judy's instigation, they had consensual sex. She then had sex again with Bryan. It wasn't until Ray was arrested in college a year later and charged with sexual assault of a child, that Ray found out that Judy was really only 14, has a long history of running away and appears to have serious problems at home."

What was supposed to be a night out suddenly became a nightmare for Ray and his family.

Ray was an honor student in high school, a mentor for small children, did volunteer work and held a part-time job. In 2002, he enrolled in a prestigious Texas university and was on the dean's list. He continued to do volunteer work in college. He met a girl in his class during first semester and has been in a committed relationship ever since.

Ray's family was among the blessed. They were able to hire a well-known defense attorney in his hometown and paid him in excess of \$20,000. They were shocked when they were advised that if the case went to trial based on Section 22.011 and 21.11 of the Texas Penal Code, and if the jury followed the law, Ray would be found guilty before the first word was spoken. Ray could be sentenced to 20 years in prison

for an encounter that Judy suggested. "Remember," said the mother, "Judy paid for the hotel, had sex with her former boyfriend and lied about her age. Judy stated on the record that the two had consensual sex. No one denied these statements."

Ray was offered and accepted deferred adjudication, or a plea bargain arrangement, with the prosecutor's office. He was forced to transfer to a college in his hometown and break an apartment lease. He cannot come home to enjoy family gatherings because of his siblings and the fact that the family home is across the street from a playground and a pool. He can have no contact with children or teens. He will be on probation and watched very carefully for five years, but his mother says the most heartbreaking aspect is that he will be listed as a sexual predator for the rest of his life. "Ray was 19 at the time of the conviction and because he was not in a long-term relationship of two years or more, preferably cohabiting, he is considered by the court a high risk or level three offender." He must remain in the county where he was convicted for five years and cannot even visit extended family members because he has nieces and nephews under 17.

Ray must also submit to DNA testing, pay fines and court costs totaling over \$1,000, report to a probation officer twice each month and pay monthly fees of \$50. He is also subject to random alcohol and drug testing as well as polygraphs. He must attend weekly group therapy

sessions for sex offenders, a group of primarily middle-aged and older men who tend to like young children and share nothing in common with Ray. He cannot use the Internet for his college studies, has to register as a sex offender at school and cannot attend any of his school's extracurricular activities for fear that someone 17 or younger may also be in attendance. Ray is no longer involved with volunteer work because he is busy picking up trash along roadsides and in parks to fulfill his 300-hour community service requirement.

What happened to Judy, the girl who allegedly instigated the sex? Nothing. Not so much as a slap on the wrist. In fact, according to Ray's mother, less than one month after Ray's arrest, Judy propositioned another of Ray's friends, also over 18, for a "threesome" with herself and a girlfriend, who was also under the age of 17. "These meetings are being arranged in a teen chat room on the Internet to which Judy still has access. Now at the ripe old age of 15, Judy still has two more years before she reaches the legal age of consent. How many more young men's lives will she ruin?" asked Ray's mom.

Had Ray been a month younger, none of these facts would matter. Judy's actions and testimony had no bearing whatsoever on the case. Ray's guilt was based entirely on their respective ages at the time. "We must educate the public, both the parents and the young men," said Ray's mom with tears running down her face.

Save Our TexSONS can be reached at Webmaster@saveourson.com or by mail addressed to Save Our TexSONS, Post Office Box 800802, Houston, Texas 77280.

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