GUEST OPINION

The other side of David Weale

By Stuart Hickox

Guest opinion



Stuart Hickox Submitted photo

Back in the '80s, I was being groomed to be the next David Weale. It's not something I brag about. But it gives me some perspective on his current notoriety as "the pied piper of division," as he has been called in this newspaper. The irony is, there but for the grace of God…

Back in April, I attended a free meditation led by the Grand Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society (GEBIS). It was held at the North Shore Community Centre on a Saturday morning. There were about 30 people there, of all backgrounds, young and old. It was a sunny, crisp day. And I remember a warm feeling of community and a strong sense of nostalgia. Strangers were chatting, greeting each other.

As we set up our mats and pillows on the gymnasium floor, a half-dozen men in floor-length saffron robes assembled at the front of the room. They called our attention, gave a little intro talk about meditation, and welcomed us. They even joked about themselves. "The Buddhist mantra is: 'Do no harm'. We're not here to take over."

I first started exploring mindfulness meditation in 2001, at a particularly difficult time in my life. I'd lost an infant son, my maternal grandfather, and my father over the previous 18 months. These shocks marked the beginning of a long period of reconciliation with an upbringing in a fundamentalist PEI church family. Exploring mindfulness changed my direction and was the start of my salvation from a lifetime of shame. It gave me a consistent tool to tackle problems I had been avoiding. I sought counseling for childhood trauma, which helped me deal with addictions I was using to avoid those memories. I was able to work gracefully with my best friend and wife to end our marriage and come out as a gay man. Exploring mindfulness helped me to seek forgiveness for lying about myself my whole life. That was hard work, but worth it. There is nothing more liberating than being forgiven!

Back at the community centre, we started with some walking meditation, and then sat with eyes closed for some simple breathing exercises and periods of stillness. At one point, I became aware of a light shuffling sound at the front of the room. So I peeked. A young monk was on his knees, gently shooing a big bumbling fly toward the emergency exit. As quietly as he could, he opened the door and let the fly escape. And then the monk tip-toed back to the front of the room to his little meditation bench.

The mantra in action: Do no harm.

In that moment, I remembered other times I'd peeked while in prayer, as a kid – at Cornwall Christian Church, in the early 1980s. Uncle David (Weale) was leading the service, as he did most Sundays as Minister of the Church of Christ. We all adored Uncle David, and were taught to revere him – the charismatic scholar-musician-story-teller preacher, Man of God. As the second eldest grandkid of David's parents Bill and Harriet Weale (themselves, "preacher and wife"), it was clear to me from an early age that both sides of my family saw a future for me as the next generation church Minister.

One particular Sunday, David was doing the final prayer at the end of the service. It was often the quiet denouement to a firebrand sermon. And it sometimes followed a spontaneous baptism, the ultimate reward for David's consistently powerful call to action: Submit. Confess. Follow.

He was a great speaker, and a poet in prayer. And whenever I peeked, I noticed that his eyes were rarely closed. He wasn't consulting notes. Uncle David just enjoyed looking around the room at a gathering of people sitting before him, hanging on his every word, heads bowed. I'd always felt that Uncle David never really believed what he preached. He was very different at home, away from the spotlight. And the church was not a safe place for us kids. But this is not about that.



Stuart Hickox and his uncle David Weale. Submitted photo

The simple fact is that David Weale has always just loved having a captive audience. His current obsession with the GEBIS Monks and Nuns is just the latest in his long career as a man who builds a following for himself by dividing people. And now Monks and Nuns don't feel safe walking down the street. It's no longer OK for moderate and reasonable people to sit by and watch this kind of abuse. His dangerous rhetoric has to stop before someone gets hurt.

David has done none of the hard work. He's angry because he senses that his world is under threat. And it is: In the future, we need more mindfulness and less racism.

People in the church used to say that David Weale was a powerful speaker and preacher, but a terrible minister. It's because he only wants to preach, never serve, never really engage.

It's time we all open our eyes, see things as they are, and notice the harm that David Weale is doing.



GEORGETOWN PROVINCIAL COURT

December 5, 2024

By Josh Lewis

josh@peicanada.com

Blair Robert Johnstone, 47, of Mount Vernon was sentenced to 12 days in jail along with fines for alcohol-impaired driving in Georgetown Provincial Court on December 5.

Mr Johnstone was driving a dump truck, which was an aggravating factor, said Judge Nancy Orr.

On October 11, a caller to 911 reported the dump truck swerving all over the road on Route 4, almost forcing at least one oncoming vehicle into the ditch.

The caller followed the truck from Bridgetown to Montague, and police were dispatched at 8:55 pm.

Officers caught up to the dump truck in a driveway in Mount Vernon, more than half an hour's drive south from Bridgetown, and found a liquor bottle in the vehicle.

Mr Johnstone initially refused a breathalyzer but changed his mind when informed he would be charged with refusal. He gave two readings of 120 mg each, another aggravating factor.

The defendant, who has a previous DUI from 2011, apologized to the court, police and his family.

Along with the jail time, he was fined $1,500 with a $450 Victims of Crime surcharge and banned from driving for one year.

Carson Thomas Glover, 30, of Lower Montague was convicted at trial of damage to property in connection with an intoxicated early morning incident in Sturgeon.

During a previous appearance he pled guilty, but changed his mind, disputing the Crown's evidence that he had damaged someone's vehicle.

At trial, the victim testified they were getting ready for work around 7:30 am on September 14 when they saw the garage door was open and heard yelling and screaming from inside their vehicle. The person inside was repeatedly kicking the door and other parts of the interior. The vehicle owner called 911.

The inside of the car was "trashed," they said, putting the windows down on the way to work "because it was rank." There were footprints on the inside of the roof.

The victim later vacuumed the entire interior, including the windows. When taking it through a car wash, water came in through the top of the damaged door. It wouldn't seal properly because the metal at the top was smashed, the victim said.

An auto body shop quoted the repair at $1,144.45, with the door likely needing to be replaced.

Mr Glover said he had been drinking at a nearby friend's place the night before and was walking down the road when the incident happened.

"I was intoxicated. I don't remember much," he said.

The damage has not been fixed yet due to lack of funds, and Judge Orr said the top priority was for Mr Glover to pay the costs in restitution.

She sentenced him to 12 months' probation instead of jail time so he can continue to work and pay it off. He cannot have any contact with the victim and is banned from being within 100 metres of their home.

Christina Elizabeth Crane, 33, of Milltown Cross was sentenced to three days in jail and $1,300 in fines for driving while impaired by THC.

Court heard she approached an RCMP checkstop in Victoria Cross around 12:30 pm on September 5. An officer smelled freshly burned cannabis and noted her eyes were red and watery. A roadside Sotoxa test came back positive.

Her blood samples came back in late October and revealed she had 7.7 ng/ml in her system, above the Criminal Code limit of 5 ng.

Ms Crane, who has no priors, apologized to the court and was banned from driving for one year.

Matthew Shane Laybolt, 35, of Souris was convicted at trial and sentenced to 12 months' probation on two charges.

He was convicted of possessing and using a stolen debit card on June 5 in Souris, making four purchases at local gas stations.

He had previously disputed the assertion that he used the card.