

Eldorado principal speaks about 'Undercover student'

Eldorado High School Principal Robert Daugherty appeared Wednesday on "Stopwatch," KGGM-TV, Channel 13's noon magazine program to respond to the "Undercover Student" series. This is a transcript of the program.

John Andrews: First of all in response to the article itself, what do you think about it?

Robert Daugherty: I guess maybe we should feel fortunate that Eldorado was chosen in a sense. Also Eldorado just did win the state basketball championship. I think that has to be addressed also.

Andrews: You've got good athletes. What about students?

Daugherty: Students are outstanding at Eldorado High School. I think that the only thing I would really have any serious quarrel with is the way in which it was done. That had "Miss Taylor," as we knew her as, come to the administration, we would have not only welcomed her but she could have gone above board without going underground to make it happen.

Andrews: I can understand, of course, why a reporter would not necessarily want the teachers in those classes to know that she was a reporter. Obviously it's human nature to perhaps put on a different kind of a performance. Yet you do feel that she should have been above board on it.

Daugherty: I think that just in fairness to other human beings. I think that you owe that to a person who is not really in the public eye to give them the opportunity to know that you are a reporter. And I think fair is fair. The one upsetting thing about all this, it's the pain that it has caused teachers in school. And this is unfortunate. I don't think teachers need to have that kind of pain.

Andrews: Let's talk about what Leslie Linthicum was not in a position to do as an undercover student because she was not above board about it. We mentioned earlier before the program that she saw problems. She didn't see how those problems were dealt with. Tell me happens behind the scenes.

Daugherty: Well, I think one of things that Leslie did — she accurately reported what she saw, and I cannot detract from that. But I think that there is the other side and then what happens afterward as you have pointed out. She had mentioned a couple of cases of obnoxious student behavior. In a couple of those I think it's important to know that the poorest way to attempt to modify a kid's behavior is to confront. Confronta-



Robert Daugherty

tion generally leads to something nasty happening to the kid that eventually leads to him being suspended or excluded from school depending on the seriousness of the confrontations. My hat's off to teachers that do that. In one instance in particular, the kid had undergone some rather severe personal trauma and rather than confront him at that time the teacher quite correctly after the class said, "It's coming down on you hard." And the kid cried. So those are the kinds of things that somebody who goes underground is not privy to.

Andrews: Obviously, Leslie saw the class, she did not see the solution.

Daugherty: That's true.

Andrews: Would it perhaps have been a better way to do it to, say, go ahead and go underground for 11 days and then come out of the closet for two or three days and do it that way?

Daugherty: It certainly would have been better. However, I still maintain that the teachers in the school had a right to know. And one of things that is most upsetting to the students is, you know, the statement is made that they don't trust anyone under (sic) 30 anyway. And one of the students says, "I guess we have to drop to 24."

Andrews: One other question. You said, or you alluded to the fact, that you really had no quarrel with what she did have to write. You say that the article in fact was accurate.

Daugherty: The article was accurate, but I think the interpretation through what was left out and some specifically loaded words that were chosen points out some bias Leslie has.

Andrews: In other words you're saying half a truth is like half a brick — you can throw it further.

Daugherty: That's a good statement. I didn't however say that. Congratulations. The thing that comes across very much is that she obviously had some kind of traditional, classical education where lecturing is considered the way of teaching and anyone who really knows much about the instruction of kids knows that it's the least effective way. She also is concerned that you control kids through the blatant use of authority. With teenage kids you do not. So I think that there are some biases that probably lots of people have that in her reporting came out. I think that's unfortunate.

Andrews: Let's be specific. Last week here she specifically mentioned being assigned to read *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Instead of reading it at home and coming to class and discussing what was meant by the author, the book was actually read in the classroom. Do you have a problem with that kind of teaching?

Daugherty: None whatsoever and then the movie being shown especially when you understand that she also talked about the poorness of the substitute — and by the way those folks do mostly good work — in that same class. The teacher in that class was suffering for about a month from a severe case of laryngitis which sort of changes what it was that she was able to see. The teacher that she is speaking of is an exceedingly fine, systemwide-known English teacher of the highest caliber and unfortunately taking that small slice it's like you can almost anytime catch someone picking their nose if you look at them long enough.

Andrews: We have about 30 seconds left and I'll let you just make a comment.

Daugherty: I'd really sort of like to challenge Leslie to come back, let us give you a broader look at the school, perhaps talk to you about some kinds of things that you really should see, see the great variety of students that there are on this campus as any campus, all the way from some very severely emotionally disturbed kids through all kinds of kids and then see, in fact, how they react and respond to the program of studies at the school.