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**JUDY MANN**

## When Coverage Is Denied, a Legal Cure

**J**acqueline Fox, a 1991 graduate of Georgetown University Law School, was working as a corporate litigator at Hogan & Hartson when her mother was diagnosed with cancer four years ago. Her insurance company denied her coverage, and Fox found a new career fighting insurance companies.

"It was random," Fox says of the denial. "Most denials are because they think they can get away with it. They are not based on medical reasons. And most, as soon as I come on the scene, totally change their tune." She estimates that companies deny out of hand 25 percent of the claims submitted. "What is so appalling is, 99 percent of the time these things end up getting paid if people pursue it. The insurance companies are counting on people not doing that. They count on them believing that it is not within the coverage, when of course it is."

Among the claims Fox has successfully pursued was the case of a 42-year-old woman who had fibroid cysts that caused severe pain and bleeding. The mother of a 16-year-old, she had said she would like to maintain her ability to have children, and her doctor had put that in his notes. She was denied coverage for cyst removal on the grounds that the procedure was a fertility treatment. Fox took the case, and the insurer ended up covering the \$11,000 surgery. "A woman [at the insurance company] told me, 'Your client is really lucky to have you.' She's basically acknowledging this wouldn't happen if I hadn't been involved. [The client] had been told her only option was to sue in federal court to get paid."

Another client was a 51-year-old woman diagnosed with colon cancer five months after she had switched insurers. The woman had had the condition at least six years; she had gone for regular checkups, but her doctor had failed to catch it. "The insurance company announced they had a 10-month preexisting condition period during which they would not cover anything they thought was preexisting," Fox says. "They weren't going to cover the surgery." But it was paid for after Fox intervened.

She also brought a successful claim for a 28-year-old man with severe sinus problems. The man was diagnosed as having had a broken nose sometime in the past, but his insurance company at first refused to cover an operation to remedy the problem, saying it was elective plastic surgery. "Then they offered to pay an incredibly small

amount" that would not have covered the costs, Fox says. After pressing the issue, and pointing out that plastic surgery involves a wide range of fees and skill levels, "we ended up getting it covered."

For the past three years, Fox has been in private practice, handling initial denials of coverage and appeals. Most of her work has involved denials for oncology treatment, obstetric and gynecological care and, lately, "a lot of cardiology. Rehab treatment for cardiology they don't want to cover."

Insurance companies get away with these denials, she says, because patients are often sick and debilitated and "figure insurance companies know what they are doing. . . . So many people don't know what kind of medical care they need."

She's had two cases in which women called their health maintenance organizations complaining of extremely severe headaches—the worst of their lives. "That's a red flag. They know something may be imploding in there. You've got to get them in the hospital immediately." In both cases, "the HMO person said sit in a dark room and take some aspirin. This happened with a neighbor. I ended up talking to the HMO and taking her to the emergency room.

"They know they can get away with this," Fox says.

When people get sick, their families will do anything to help—and that can mean throwing money at the problem after the insurance companies back out.

Fox isn't sure what the solution is—although the problem has brought her enough work to have her thinking of taking on an associate. As for repairing the system, she favors some form of policing claims by an independent party. "It is necessary, because they get away with murder. People get denied simple treatments like another Pap smear" if a doctor isn't satisfied with the results of the first.

"People buy insurance expecting it to pay for when they get sick, and insurance companies try not to pay when people get sick. Even the appeals process favors insurers. It gives the look of being very fair, and it's really a question of how much muscle the insured flexes at them. I think because I'm experienced and a lawyer, they back down.

"This is very clear-cut," Fox says of her specialty. "It's enjoyable to represent the good guy all the time. I enjoy making a difference in my job, but the necessity for it is appalling."

Indeed it is.

**The Washington Post**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1997

# The TV Column

By John Carmody  
Washington Post Staff Writer

**B**oth sides are bringing out the heavy artillery tonight in Winston-Salem, N.C., as ABC News's "Viewpoint" looks at the problems of "hidden cameras, hidden choices" right in the back yard of the Food Lion grocery chain, which recently won a \$5.5 million judgment against the network for fraud and trespassing...

On hand for the 90-minute live broadcast (Channel 7 at 11:35 p.m.) from the campus of Wake Forest University will be ABC News presenters: Peter Jennings, anchor; Peter Arledge; Don Hewitt, executive producer of CBS's "60 Minutes"; Alan Simpson, former Republican senator from Wyoming; Diane Sawyer, co-anchor of "PrimeTime Live"; Richard L. Wyatt Jr., outside counsel for Food Lion Inc.; Chris Ahearn, manager of corporate communications for the chain; and Robert Lissit, associate professor of broadcast news at Syracuse University...

In January, a Greensboro, N.C., jury ruled in favor of Food Lion, which sued ABC following a November 1992 "PrimeTime Live" broadcast that accused Food Lion of routinely selling rotted and infested food. Photos for the broadcast were obtained by ABC producers who had faked résumés to gain employment with the stores and used hidden cameras to obtain evidence...

Executives at CBS moved quickly yesterday to calm fears that the News division's Eye on People 24-hour cable project was in serious trouble, following parent Westinghouse Electric's purchase of two country cable networks...

Between 170 and 200 CBS News staffers have been hired in recent months as the division cranks up to produce 14 separate programs for the 24-hour personality-entertainment cable channel, scheduled to launch on March 31...

One source said "a state of panic" swept the new hires after Westinghouse Electric announced plans to use \$1.5 billion in stock to purchase the Nashville Network and Country Music Television from Gaylord Entertainment Co. of Nashville...

USA Today, in a story on the purchase that included an interview with Westinghouse CEO Michael Jordan, speculated that CBS's plans to launch Eye on People "look a bit uncertain after the TNN and CMT deals. Eye on People is struggling to persuade cable operators to carry it. Jordan says it's possible that Westinghouse will drop Eye on People now that it is acquiring two established cable networks..."

"If we get the right kind of distribution (on cable systems)," Jordan went on to say in the story, "we're still pretty much interested in making it happen. These things are very fluid in this very competitive world of new cable start-ups..."

Although reluctant to target a major publication, CBS Inc. spokeswoman Lisa Caputo said Jordan's remarks were, "unfortunately, taken out of context. Mr. Jordan is very enthusiastic about Eye on People and he said so yesterday..."

"We are moving forward with Eye on People and we are extremely enthusiastic about it and unfortunately that was not reported in USA Today..."

She pointed out that CBS had recently hired Geoffrey Darby to be president of the network...

CBS News president Andrew Heyward also said yesterday that Jordan "was answering a hypothetical question, like 'If you can't obtain distribution, what would happen,' something like that..."

"I was curious, too, when I read the remarks but, believe me, we're very much focused hard on producing those programs and getting ready for the launch"...

The CBS source insisted, however, that "word swept through the building this morning and it panicked a lot of people; the launch is uncertain"...

Neither Heyward nor Caputo could pin down how many subscribers have been lined up for Eye on People...

CBS is a latecomer to the cable game. ABC, which abandoned its own plans for a 24-hour cable news network last year, controls ESPN; NBC has both MSNBC and CNBC, and Fox last fall launched its Fox News Channel...

CBS did buy the Spanish-language news channel TeleNoticias last year...

Eye on People will rely heavily on CBS News archival product. Among the programs planned by the News division will be a daily program at 10 p.m. emphasizing updated news on people, plus programs "revisiting" and updating both "60 Minutes" and "48 Hours." Many CBS News correspondents and anchors are to be used in the schedule...

## In Other News

**CBS's regular series schedule was tied for first place by NBC Monday night when the**

latter's movie, "Love's Deadly Triangle: The Texas Cadet Murder," outscored all other network programming that night with a 10.7 national rating and a 17 percent audience share...

"Payback," a movie reuniting Mary Tyler Moore and Ed Asner, averaged an 8.0/13 for ABC, which finished fourth for the night...

In Washington "Deadly Triangle" did a 9.2/14 on Channel 4, "Payback" a 7.9/12 on Seven, while "Cosby," with a 14.5/22, led the CBS lineup on Nine. Each local ratings point represents 19,085 TV homes...

Ken Burns, who raised the television documentary to a new level with his epic "Civil War" series for public broadcasting in 1990, screened 50 minutes from his latest effort, "Thomas Jefferson," for President and Mrs. Clinton and some 180 invited guests last evening at the White House...

The new three-hour examination of the life of "the master of Monticello" will air next Tuesday and Wednesday evenings on PBS (Channel 26 at 9)...

Hillary Rodham Clinton was to introduce Burns, who, after brief remarks, was to show seven segments from the film, which is narrated by Ossie Davis...

A small reception was to follow...

Burns, who has been bankrolled by General Motors for his major projects over the past 10 years, will spend the next several years putting together the history of "Jazz," which should be ready in 2000...

Burns recently told TV writers meeting in California that he has been waiting most of his life to do the Jefferson film. "I'm struck by how much the life and mysteries of Thomas Jefferson have animated, have confounded and may ultimately reconcile our national life..."

"He is a kind of Rosetta Stone of the American experience—a massive tectonic intelligence that has formed and rattled the fault lines of our history, our present moment, and I hope, if we are lucky, our future"...

Earlier yesterday, Burns, whose oeuvre also includes the 18½-hour "Baseball," "The West" and the story of the Brooklyn Bridge, spoke before a packed house at the weekly Natic Press Club luncheon. Concluding the Q&A period following his speech, Burns was asked what position Jefferson might have played if baseball had been invented in his time...

"All of them," replied Burns...

## TV Ratingzzz

Following are the top 20 network prime-time shows last week, ranked according to the percentage of the nation's 97 million TV households that watched, as measured by Nielsen Media Research. A share represents the percentage of actual sets-in-use tuned to a particular program when it aired.

| Rating  | Share | Network |
|---------|-------|---------|
| 1 23.3  | 38    | NBC     |
| 2 22.2  | 34    | NBC     |
| 3 19.0  | 30    | NBC     |
| 4 17.1  | 27    | NBC     |
| 5 16.6  | 26    | NBC     |
| 6 15.1  | 25    | CBS     |
| 7 14.6  | 22    | CBS     |
| 8 14.2  | 22    |         |
| 9 13.5  | 24    | ABC     |
| 10 12.6 | 20    | ABC     |
| 11 12.1 | 19    | ABC     |
| 12 11.6 | 20    | NBC     |
| 13 11.5 | 17    | FOX     |
| 14 11.3 | 18    |         |
| 15 11.2 | 19    | ABC     |
| 16 11.2 | 19    | NBC     |
| 17 11.1 | 17    | CBS     |
| 18 11.0 | 20    | CBS     |
| 19 10.9 | 18    | CBS     |
| 20 10.7 | 17    | ABC     |

**NBC won the week but it was closer than usual...**

Only four-tenths of a ratings point, representing a spread of under 400,000 TV homes a night, separated the three big networks. NBC averaged a 10.5 rating and a 17 share, compared with a 10.3/17 for CBS and a 10.1/17 for ABC. Fox averaged a 7.4/12 over its shorter nightly schedule...

ABC won Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights; NBC won Tuesday (with its limited commercial schedule due to the State of the Union/O.J. Simpson trial coverage) and, of course, Thursday; while CBS won Sunday...

As you've probably already noticed, NBC's five Thursday programs occupied the top of this week's chart, followed by CBS's three Sunday night programs...

Through Monday and the first 12 nights of the February ratingzzz sweeps—28 consecutive evenings devoted to showing off a network's fare to please local affiliates so they can attract advertisers over the next quarter—NBC, thanks mostly to Thursday night, had a nice lead with an 11.0 rating average, compared with CBS's 10.4, ABC's 9.1 and Fox's 7.9...

All but CBS, which is showing a 3 percent gain over last February's numbers so far, are down from the sweeps a year ago...

# The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1997

# Why Jennifer Got Sick

The mother of a poster child for health-care reform is accused of causing her daughter's illnesses

**S**ITTING BESIDE HILLARY CLINTON AT A meeting on Capitol Hill two summers ago, Jennifer Bush cut a heart-breaking figure. The seven-year-old Coral Springs, Florida, girl with big eyes and a perky red bow atop her little Dutch-boy coif seemed a perfect poster child for the Administration's health-care-reform plan. Chronically ill almost from birth, Jennifer had already endured nearly 200 hospitalizations and 40 operations, and her \$2 million-plus medical bill had exhausted the family's health-insurance benefits. Not surprisingly, Jennifer became a media darling, appearing on the *Today* show and on the front page of many newspapers.

Now it appears that Jennifer's suffering may have been much worse than was ever reported. Last week Florida officials arrested Jennifer's seemingly devoted mother Kathleen Bush and charged her with aggravated child abuse and fraud. According to authorities, Bush, 38, deliberately caused her daughter's ailments by dosing her with unprescribed drugs, tampering with her medications and even contaminating her feeding tube with fecal bacteria. As a result, say officials, Jennifer was subjected to dozens of needless operations and invasive procedures. Bush has denied all charges.

What could lead a parent to such shocking behavior? Authorities believe Kathleen Bush suffers from a variant of Munchausen syndrome, a mental disorder that impels people to feign or induce illness in a twisted bid for attention. In Munchausen by proxy, parents may injure their children—smothering them with pillows, injecting them with poisons, mixing blood

in their urine—in order to draw praise for their dedicated nursing of their offspring.

Almost as shocking as the charges against Jennifer's mother, however, is the fact that it took more than four years of warnings before state authorities placed the child under protective custody. Nurses at Coral Springs Medical Center began noticing as early as 1991—when Jennifer was just four—that her condition seemed to worsen whenever her mother visited. A formal complaint was filed, and the hospital had her records reviewed by Dr. Eli Newberger, a Munchausen expert at Boston's Children's Hospital. His conclusion: this was a clear case of Munchausen.

The Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services investigated but took no action. "It is a difficult form of abuse to prove," says HRS spokeswoman Michelle Lagos. "It's not like you have broken bones or bruises." The authorities may have been dissuaded by Jennifer's celebrity, as well as by her mother's litigiousness: Bush had sued the Coral Springs Medical Center for conducting tests on her daughter's vomit without parental permission.

State officials reopened the investigation last April, after receiving an anonymous complaint. According to the arrest affidavit, once her mother was informed of the inquiry, Jennifer's condition improved dramatically. In the preceding nine months she had been hospitalized seven times for a total of 83 days. In the nine months afterward she was admitted just once for four days. —By Anastasia Toufexis.

Reported by Ann Blackman/Washington and Tammerlin Drummond/Miami



**GIRL IN DISTRESS:** She endured 200 hospitalizations and 40 operations

**MOM IN CUSTODY:** Authorities have charged her with child abuse and fraud



**HOT ZONE:** Feeding the monkeys in Texas

# Ebola Is Back In the U.S.

But experts say humans have nothing to fear—yet

**T**HE FOLKS IN ALICE, TEXAS, HAVE GOOD reason to be nervous around monkeys. Six years ago, several Philippine macaques imported by the Texas Primate Center in Alice came down with the strain of Ebola virus that had struck monkeys in Reston, Virginia, a year earlier, in a case that inspired the best-selling book *The Hot Zone* and the movie *Outbreak*. No humans got sick in either incident, but 100 animals had to be sacrificed.

Last week it happened again. The problem centered once more on a shipment of macaques sent by the same Philippine supplier. One monkey from the shipment was discovered last month with a raging fever and bloody diarrhea; three days later it was dead. The rest of the pack was quarantined, but the disease had already spread. After a second monkey turned up sick last week, authorities decided to destroy the monkeys housed in the same hut—49 animals in all.

Officials from the Centers for Disease Control were quick to reassure the public that Ebola Reston is a markedly different virus from the one that killed 244 people in Zaire last year. Ebola Zaire, as that strain is known, is one of the world's deadliest viruses; 80% of its victims bleed to death.

Ebola Reston, by contrast, has never been linked to illness in humans. Still, doctors are closely monitoring everybody who had any contact with the monkeys in Texas. Experts warn that they can't rule out the possibility that Ebola Reston could mutate into a strain that is fatal to humans. Says a spokesman for the CDC: "It would be folly to predict what the virus will do." —By Alice Park

JUSTICE

# Sick Kid, or Sick Mom?

Police say a mother caused her child's baffling illnesses

BY PETER KATEL  
AND MELINDA BECK

**I**N THE END, THE POLICE DID more to cure Jennifer Bush than all her doctors combined. The Florida 9-year-old had been hospitalized 200 times and undergone 40 operations. Physicians removed her gallbladder, her appendix and part of her intestines, and inserted tubes into her chest, stomach and intestines. She was befriended by the Florida Marlins and served as a poster child for health reform, posing with Hillary Rodham Clinton at a White House rally. Then, a year ago, police notified her mother, Kathy Bush, that she was under investigation for child abuse. Suddenly, Jennifer's condition improved dramatically. In the next nine months, she was hospitalized only once, for a viral infection.

Last week police arrested Kathy Bush on charges of aggravated child abuse, alleging that she caused Jennifer's mysterious maladies. Bush vehemently denied the charges, but prosecutors called it a classic case of Munchausen's syndrome by proxy, a rare disorder in which a parent deliberately makes a child ill to gain attention. Police charged her with fraudulently soliciting money, too. She repeatedly told interviewers the family was broke, and wrote to the



All in the family: Police say when Mom visited, Jennifer got worse

White House, saying: "Do you know what it's like having to choose between purchasing groceries ... or medications?" All the while, police said, the family was going to vacation resorts, buying a new Mustang and a motorcycle. (Jennifer's father was not charged.)

Child-welfare workers had suspected Bush as far back as 1991. They reopened the

investigation last year after an anonymous tip. Police interviewed 14 doctors and 23 nurses who had cared for Jennifer, and were appalled by what they heard. According to the police affidavits, hospital workers said her condition usually got worse after her mother visited. One nurse said she saw Bush close the curtains around Jennifer's bed and heard the girl cry, "No, no, no." Then she saw Bush squirt something into her daughter's mouth with a syringe. Experts said Jennifer's numerous baffling infections were "consistent with someone smearing fecal matter" into her feeding line and urinary catheter. The poignant letters Jennifer supposedly wrote the Clintons raised suspicions, too. Nurses told police the girl had missed so much school that she could barely read or write. One nurse said she saw Bush writing on a pad in "large, childlike handwriting." She quickly covered it when the nurse came in.

Parents with Munchausen syndrome are often medically savvy. Bush had worked as a pediatrician's office manager until she was fired for allegedly stealing office cash. She also championed a proposed state law that would make it tougher for child-welfare workers to

protect kids in suspected abuse cases.

Released on \$25,000 bond, Bush told NEWSWEEK, "There is a tremendous side to this that you have not seen." Her lawyer advised her not to discuss details, but, she said, "there is so much I would love to scream out to you." Jennifer was placed in a foster home. Given the chance, she might have much to scream about too. ■

LAW SUIT

## Hey, Who You Calling Slut?

**T**HE TWO SMALL-TOWN girls exchanged little but "hi" in their years at Shawneetown High School. Now Kimberly Bryson (class of '81) is complaining in Illinois Supreme Court that



Kim Bryson

Lucy Logsdon has called her a "slut" — in Seventeen magazine, no less. No one thinks the

S word is what you'd call a compliment, but in '90s America, is it downright defamatory?

The noun in question turned up five years ago in Logsdon's first published short

story, which described a high-school brawl with a "platinum-blond, black-polyester-

topped shriek" named, strangely enough, Bryson. "I remembered what a slut she was," Logsdon wrote, "and forgot the sorriness I'd been holding onto for her." The nonfictional Bryson is suing for defamation, claiming everybody in Shawneetown (population: 1,700) thought the character was her. Baby-sitting jobs, she claims, disap-

peared as a result. Her suit (claiming more than \$15,000 in damages) puts the definition of "slut" on the stand. Bryson's attorney says everyone knows "slut" means a promiscuous girl. And besides, why choose the name Bryson? Logsdon's attorney Michael Drone says, "It rhymes with Tyson," boxing's bully. He insists "slut" in this story means "a bold, brazen girl, a saucy girl." Now the judges will decide if using the S word is too low a blow.

# Mother love betrayed

*Children are tools for parents with a rare psychiatric disorder*

**H**as any mother ever been more devoted to her child than Kathleen Bush? Lots of them, according to Florida state authorities, who last week arrested the Fort Lauderdale woman for a bizarre form of child abuse. Bush came to national attention two years ago when her 8-year-old daughter, Jennifer, became a poster girl for Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign to reform health care. But in a 40-page affidavit, authorities charged that Bush herself induced Jennifer's string of inexplicable ailments, resulting in more than 200 hospitalizations, 40 surgeries and the removal of the child's gallbladder, appendix and part of her intestines. The mother's diagnosis, according to a panel of doctors: an uncommon psychiatric disorder known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

Bush, a home health care clerk, has denied the allegations, but her case highlights a disorder that perverts what should be the most protective of relationships. In its mildest form, Munchausen by proxy (MBP) may lead a parent, nearly always the mother, to invent symptoms for her child, forcing doctors to perform unnecessary tests or to prescribe unneeded drugs. At its worst, MBP compels a parent actually to induce illness, sometimes with appalling cruelty. Mothers have smothered and then revived their children, injected them with bacteria, or induced diarrhea, seizures and vomiting with a variety of over-the-counter drugs. One child was treated for five years for inexplicable sores before it was found his mother had been applying oven cleaner to his back.

**Well liked.** Heinous as such deeds are, they are often



**In extremis.** Jennifer Bush underwent 40 surgeries.

missed by doctors and nurses because women with MBP appear to be such solicitous parents. They hover over their children, often sleeping for nights on end in the hospital. The typical mother with MBP has considerable medical knowledge, sometimes gleaned from medical training or by working in a doctor's office. MBP mothers are often well liked by medical staff, who admire their calm and good cheer in the face of the child's illness. They are also accom-



**Broken bond.** Kathy Bush wept after her arrest.

plished liars, well aware of what they are doing, says University of Alabama at Birmingham psychiatrist Marc Feldman, co-author of *Patient or Pretender*, a book about MBP and similar disorders: "If they hear that voice in their heads that says this behavior is not OK, they can tell that voice to shut up."

The cause of MBP is unclear. There is some evidence that some women with MBP have a biological tendency to act compulsively. But what is certain is that people with the disorder have a powerful need for attention, and being the brave mother of a sick child provides that. Herbert Schreier, a psychiatrist at Children's Hospital Oakland in California, says most mothers with MBP were themselves neglected as youngsters, leaving them unable to love or to feel another person's pain—even their

own children's. "These mothers are impostors," he says. Their apparent affection is a sham, and the child is merely a tool for manipulating others.

Once the ruse is uncovered, doctors and nurses are devastated to learn they unwittingly have served as child abusers. But the most heartbreaking victims are the children. One study of 200 cases of MBP found that nearly 10 percent of the children died at their mothers' hands. The survivors often emerge deeply wounded emotionally. Psychiatrist Judith Libow, co-author with Schreier of *Hurting for Love*, found in a study of 10 adults victimized by a parent with MBP that many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms similar to those of other victims of traumatic events.

The prognosis for treating severe cases of MBP is poor. Even when caught in the act of harming their children, most mothers tearfully deny any wrongdoing. Most experts agree that the only way to protect children from parents who have a severe form of the disorder is to separate them. "I feel sorry for these women because they are empty inside," says Brenda Bursch, a specialist in MBP at the University of California at Los Angeles. "But that doesn't mean I want them to have their children back." ■

BY SHANNON BROWNLEE

# Rescuing young victims of rare abuse syndrome

By Tim Friend  
USA TODAY

Removing a child from a mother who suffers severe "Munchausen syndrome by proxy" is probably the only course of action left to families, courts and physicians, experts said Wednesday.

A Florida circuit court judge Tuesday ordered 8-year-old Jennifer Bush into protective custody after prosecutors charged her mother with child abuse and fraud in obtaining unnecessary medical services.

Jennifer has undergone almost 40 surgeries and 200 hospitalizations for illnesses prosecutors say were induced by her mother, Kathy Bush.

In Munchausen by proxy, a parent, usually the mother, persistently fabricates or induces illness in the child with the aim of keeping in contact with hospitals and physicians, says Dr. Herbert Schreier, author of *Hurting for Love, Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome* (Guilford Press, \$28).

"What's going on is the woman is impostoring being a good mother," Schreier says. "The condition might be thought of as having to do with a child, but the child serves as a manipulative object in a very perverse relationship with a physician."

The mother probably makes the child sick for the sympathy she receives, but she also does it to punish herself and to turn doctors into instruments of tor-

ture for deeply rooted reasons, Schreier says.

"We're talking about an extraordinarily disturbed personality. The relationship with the physician is an extremely sadomasochistic one," adds Dr. Michael Wise, Louisiana State University, New Orleans.

Wise says Munchausen by proxy is a bizarre variant of Munchausen syndrome, also called chronic factitious illness, in which an adult personally seeks unnecessary surgeries or medical procedures.

In Munchausen by proxy, for reasons not understood, a child is used as an extension of the adult, sometimes with fatal results. When a case is discovered, experts agree the child should be removed from the parent. "The real concern is these children could die," says Dr. Robert Hales, chairman of psychiatry, California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco.

A review of 200 cases by Hales and colleagues found 8.5% of affected children die. On average, children are 3 years old when they start getting sick. The mothers tend to be pathological liars and are extremely doting and involved with the child's medical care. There is no known treatment.

Jennifer was cited by the White House and Congress two years ago as an example of medical costs run amok. Her mother first drew attention by claiming Jennifer's medical bills exceeded \$3 million.

# HEALTH-REFORM KID'S MOM IN FRAUD BUST

By DEBORAH ORIN in Washington  
and MALCOLM BALFOUR in Miami

A mother whose daughter starred with Hillary Clinton as a "poster child" for families without health care has been arrested in Florida for fraud — and child abuse. Fort

Lauderdale prosecutors said Kathy Bush, 38, has a rare disorder known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy, in which parents crave attention from doctors — and get it by making their children sick.

They charge Kathy Bush used feces to contaminate the feeding tubes of her 9-year-old daughter, Jennifer, causing three life-threatening infections from bacteria in the blood.

"I've done nothing wrong," insisted Kathy Bush, who was released on bail after being jailed overnight. Jennifer was placed with a foster family, and a judge barred her parents from visiting her.

Jennifer has been hospitalized 200 times since birth with 40 surgeries, including the removal of her appendix, part of her intestines and gallbladder. Tubes in her chest, stomach and intestines deliver food and medicine.

A Harvard Medical School instructor this week questioned whether Jennifer originally had any real illnesses — despite her mother's claims of seizures, balance and digestive problems, vomiting and bladder trouble.

Kathy Bush — who appealed for help to pay medical bills — is also accused of scheming to defraud health-care providers and charities out of \$50,000.

Despite the family's plea of poverty because of medical bills, prosecutors say they had a \$19,000 backyard pool installed and bought a \$25,000 Harley-Davidson, a Ford Explorer and a Mustang.

Sporting a big red bow in her hair, Jennifer Bush sat next to Hillary Clinton at an Aug. 18, 1994, event in Washington to push the Clinton national health-care plan.

The Children's Defense Fund — headed by Mrs. Clinton's longtime pal, Marian Wright Edelman — set up the event and the Bushes were invited after Kathy Bush wrote to Mrs. Clinton.

Asked if the White House properly vetted the Bushes before starring them as health-care victims, Mrs. Clinton's spokesman, Neel Lattimore, said that was up to the Children's Defense Fund.

"Hindsight is always 20-20, but the bottom line is the child was sick then and is sick now," said Lattimore — adding there were no charges pending against Mrs. Bush at the time.

Children's Defense Fund spokesman Dennis Smith said: "We can't comment, because we really don't know the details. These people have not been found guilty of anything."

Florida health officials and police first investigated Mrs. Bush in 1991, but charges were not filed until this week.

Jennifer gave the first lady a pink "Friends of Jennifer" fund-raising T-shirt and asked her to tell the president it was "so when you are jogging, you can think about all



Associated Press photos

**TRAGIC GIRL:** Jennifer gets a kiss (above) from her mom in January. Jennifer was Hillary Clinton's "poster child" (below) for health-care reform in August 1994.



of the kids like me you are helping."

The little girl — who also was featured on NBC's "Today" show — described Mrs. Clinton as "neat" while Kathy Bush complained about "political gamesmanship" on health care.

A Harvard Medical School pediatric medical instructor, Dr. Eli Newberger, testified this week that Kathy Bush "duped" doctors and "there's no doubt in my mind that this is a form of child abuse."

After examining four cartons of notes from other doctors, Newberger concluded: "Other than the surgically implanted tubes, I know of no other illnesses."

He said Jennifer should be examined "to determine if the tubes are medically necessary" — and said doctors "appeared to accept the diagnosis proffered by the mother at face value."

Prosecutors say Florida doctors apparently relied on a 1990 diagnosis, by a Boston-area physician, Dr. Alex Flores, of gastrointestinal problems.

He denied making such a diagnosis.

# 10 ATF agents face discipline

By Gary Fields  
USA TODAY

A review board has recommended that 10 ATF agents receive punishments ranging from verbal cautions to four-day suspensions for attending Good O' Boy Roundups where racist acts occurred.

That's three more agents than the seven Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin ordered to be reviewed two weeks ago.

The review board also recommended that three other ATF agents receive diversity counseling for going to the an-

nual recreational gatherings of law enforcement officials after 1988. Racist activities, including skits and a sign with a racial epithet, began in 1989.

The 10 agents recommended for discipline will also receive special training in diversity and sensitivity.

The review board, made up of five senior-level ATF managers, began the disciplinary inquiries April 3, one day after a Treasury Department report said that 13 ATF officers were among 31 federal officers from five Treasury agencies who attended Roundups after 1988.

Rubin ordered that 12 of those officers, including seven from the ATF, face reviews in their agencies because they witnessed racist activities and took no action and returned to subsequent Roundups.

The ATF increased Rubin's action, reviewing 10 agents.

The agents' supervisors will make the final decisions on the recommended punishments, which include verbal warnings, written reprimands put in personnel files and four-day suspensions without pay.

ATF officials said it was not proper to comment on the on-

going proceedings. They would not say if two agents who were taken off the investigation of 23 arson fires at black churches are among those facing punishment. The two were removed after their Roundup link was revealed.

The Rev. Walter Thomas, whose Johnson Grove Baptist Church burned in 1995 in Madison County, Tenn., said the ministers who have lost churches have been waiting to see if action would be taken. "It's just a matter of trust," he said. "Can we trust our fellow officials to do what is right?"

# Mother charged in 'Munchausen' case

## Syndrome causes a parent to intentionally hurt child

By Deborah Sharp  
USA TODAY

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — With 200 hospitalizations and 40 surgeries in her 8 years, Jennifer Bush became a symbol of out-of-control health care costs, even earning a visit with Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Now, authorities who received a tip say Kathy Bush made her daughter sick by putting feces in her feeding tubes. She also is accused of persuading doctors to perform unneeded surgeries on Jennifer.

"The allegations are that this is a case of 'Munchausen by proxy,' in which a parent intentionally induces or inflicts injury upon their child to gain attention," says Broward County Assistant State Attorney Dennis Nicewander.

The girl was placed in state custody on Monday. On Tuesday, a circuit judge ruled that she should remain there. Bush, 38, who had sought publicity and donations for Jennifer, will answer charges April 29 of aggravated child abuse and fraud for allegedly obtaining unnecessary medical services. Bush has said Jennifer's medical bills cost \$3 million.

Prosecutors say that during the solicitations, the Bushes bought a \$19,000 pool, two cars and a \$25,000 motorcycle.

Bush and her lawyer vehemently deny that she made the girl sick, categorizing the state's case as a "witch hunt." Her husband, Craig, 44, is not charged.

Jennifer has had her gall bladder, appendix and part of an intestine removed, and prosecutors say doctors took her mother's diagnoses at face value. Once a secretary to Jennifer's former pediatri-



Abuse case: Kathy Bush, with husband Craig at a Fort Lauderdale court Monday, denies intentionally making her daughter ill.



In January: Jennifer Bush, 8, relaxes with her mother at home in Coral Springs, Fla.

cian, Kathy Bush was fired in 1993 for stealing money, the arrest warrant says.

The Florida case spotlights a once obscure psychological disorder that has spawned a TV movie, a mystery novel and more than 200 reports in medical journals.

"We know it's not rare," says Oakland, Calif., psychiatrist Herbert Schreier, who wrote *Hurting for Love* about the condition. "This woman fooled the media, she fooled the president's wife, she fooled the Congress, and ... many, many doctors."

Bush's case has a precedent. Yvonne Eldridge of Walnut Creek, Calif., was honored by first lady Nancy Reagan for caring for 40 foster children. She was later charged in the deaths of three youngsters in a Munchausen's case. Her child abuse trial begins next month.

The cases pose a dilemma for lawyers. "Debate today centers around whether the

prosecution should even bring up the syndrome," says Ryan Rainey, an assistant U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C. "It gives the jurors sympathy, and an excuse to say, 'Well, this woman is sick.'"

Experts say more than 90% of offenders are mothers with medical knowledge. Techniques can be monstrous. Some have blocked their children's air passages with food. Children's food has been laced with laxatives to induce chronic diarrhea.

"These are pretty cagey women," says Robin Wilkinson, an Orlando prosecutor of a woman who poisoned her two children. One died. "The nurses usually love them. They're there all the time, they're sleeping in the child's room."

Joy Byers of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, says "The fact is, some parents, ... are unwilling or unable to be loving parents."

AM-Munchausen Mom, 2nd Ld-Writethru, a0400,0669

Woman Charged With Making Her Daughter Ill On Purpose

Eds: LEADS with 9 grafs to MOVE UP references to child meeting with Mrs. Clinton, involvement in health lobbying; EDITS to conform. Pick up 10th pvs, "With the ..."

By TOM WELLS= Associated Press Writer=

MIAMI (AP) A woman faces charges that she intentionally made her 8-year-old daughter ill, even injecting her with fecal bacteria, and duped doctors into ordering 200 hospitalizations and 40 operations.

Kathy Bush of Coral Springs was arrested Monday on charges of aggravated child abuse and released on \$3,500 bond. The state removed the girl, Jennifer, from her second-grade class Monday and placed her under state care. The father, a car salesman, was not charged.

The arrest comes after lengthy public attention and sympathy for Jennifer's plight. Newspapers in Florida ran articles on her case, and she was featured in reports in USA Today and on NBC's Today show. She also met with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton two years ago.

Authorities say Mrs. Bush suffers from Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, a rare form of child abuse in which an adult makes a child ill on purpose in order to get attention.

Mrs. Bush is also charged with fraud for allegedly obtaining unnecessary medical goods and services for the girl. The mother has claimed that medical bills, the vast majority of which were paid by Medicaid and the state, reached \$3 million.

Both Jennifer and her mother have testified at Congressional hearings on health care costs, and Mrs. Bush lobbied in Florida for a bill that would curtail the powers of the state child welfare agency.

Jennifer sat beside Mrs. Clinton at a White House gathering two years ago to call attention to the Clinton administration's health care reform efforts.

Mrs. Bush's attorney, Charles Jamieson, did not return telephone calls Tuesday seeking comment.

Meanwhile, Circuit Judge Arthur Birken ruled Tuesday that the state Health and Rehabilitative Services should continue to keep Jennifer in protective custody.

Her mother was the office manager for pediatrician James DeLeo of Coral Springs, who was the child's physician since birth, police said.

With the medical knowledge she gained through her job and because of her friendship with the pediatrician, Mrs. Bush was able to persuade him of Jennifer's illnesses, prosecutors said.

The girl has surgically implanted tubes in her stomach and intestines to help feed her because of a digestive problem, and another tube near her heart for introducing medications. Some of the 40 surgeries the girl underwent involved the removal of the tubes.

In detailing the alleged abuse, prosecutors say Mrs. Bush injected bacteria, apparently from feces, into the girl's tubes.

In another example, authorities said, the mother convinced the child's pediatrician that her daughter should have her gall bladder removed even though another doctor believed the surgery wasn't necessary. Surgeons have also removed Jennifer's appendix and part of her intestine.

The pediatrician fired Mrs. Bush in 1993 when she was caught stealing money, police said.

Dr. Eli Newberger, a Harvard Medical School pediatric medicine professor, testified in court Monday that the people who suffer from Munchausen Syndrome "very often deceive highly trained doctors and specialists."

"This child is in danger in her home," Newberger said in court. "Other than the surgically implanted tubes, I know of no other illnesses."

Newberger has never examined Jennifer, but has reviewed hundreds of pages of medical reports.

"In my opinion, she should be examined to determine if the tubes are medically necessary," he said. "The doctors who did the procedures appeared

to me to accept at face value the word of the mother.

"My belief is that the physicians have been duped by this child's mother."

# Mother Is Accused Of Making Child Ill

## Florida Girl's Plight Gained National Attention

By William Booth  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A1

MIAMI, April 16—Two years ago at a rally hosted by the White House, little Jennifer Bush sat beside first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, quite literally a poster child for the administration's attempt to reform health care.

For Jennifer—suffering from a mysterious stomach ailment—has been hospitalized more than 200 times and survived more than 40 surgeries in her eight years upon the Earth. Her insurance lapsed, her family's finances said to be wiped out, Jennifer's plight was heart-aching and politically pointed news.

On Monday, police arrested her mother, Kathleen Bush, on charges of a bizarre form of child abuse, of "willful torture," accusing her of making her daughter sick by somehow poisoning her with medications and allegedly contaminating her feeding tubes, perhaps with feces, according to a 40-page police affidavit.

In an arrest warrant based on interviews with 14 physicians and 20 nurses, Hollywood, Fla., Police Department child abuse investigators describe years of painful exams and surgeries that police say were unnecessary, including the removal of Jennifer's gall bladder, appendix and a portion of her intestines.

Many of the nurses interviewed by police de-  
See ABUSE, A10, Col. 1

### ABUSE, From A1

scribed how Jennifer seemed to get sick after visits by her attentive mother. Coral Springs Medical Center nurse Donna Santacrose "recalled one particular incident," according to the affidavit, "when Mrs. Bush came into [Jennifer's] room and closed the curtain around the bed. [Jennifer] began to cry and say, 'no, no, no.' She [nurse Santacrose] looked through the crack in the curtain and saw Mrs. Bush injecting a substance into [Jennifer's] mouth with an oral syringe."

Other nurses in the arrest affidavit describe how the dosages for Jennifer's feeding bags seemed to increase dangerously when the child was left alone with her mother. In other cases, high levels of anti-seizure medication for seizures only Kathy Bush ever saw were found in Jennifer's blood days after the drug had been stopped.

The police charge that Bush is guilty of a severe strain of child abuse called Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy—in which a caregiver, usually a mother, makes her child sick or gives false medical information in order to get attention for herself. The person is often calm in the face of the child's illness, experts said, is knowledgeable about medical terms and gets along well with medical staff, but will "doctor shop" to secure a diagnosis.

Four leading experts on the syndrome reviewed Jennifer's medical records and concluded that Kathy Bush, a 38-year-old clerk at a home health care business, displayed all the signs of the strange syndrome.

Bush herself has vehemently denied the allegations, saying she has

struggled to care for her sick daughter. "I have a high school education. I don't have super genius medical education," she told the Washington Post last week. "A week before she was charged, Bush said, 'I am afraid of retribution. What are they going to do to my family?'"

She said there was no evidence of wrongdoing and that physicians, not she, diagnosed the illnesses. Bush said that her daughter has suffered, and been diagnosed by physicians, of having immune deficiency, a seizure and bladder disorder, chronic urinary and ear infections, and most seriously, chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction syndrome.

"This has been a nightmare," she said.

In addition to her meeting with Hillary Clinton, Jennifer and her mother testified at hearings before Congress about health care costs and met with U.S. senators. She also was befriended by Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles (D) and Florida Marlins All Star hitter Jeff Conine. Articles on Jennifer and the family's heroic struggles ran in the state's newspapers, USA Today and were reported on NBC's Today Show.

In the arrest affidavit, no doctor or nurse is quoted as saying they personally witnessed Kathy Bush giving her daughter dangerous drugs or smearing fecal matter onto into feeding tubes or catheters. Doctors instead said that her infections and illnesses were "consistent" with such acts. Bush accused the state of being "on a witch hunt."

And there is more to this story.

Not only was Kathy Bush a relentless advocate for health care reform, she also was a constant critic of Florida's Department of Health and Reha-

bitative Services (HRS), which is tasked with protecting children.

Acting on a tip in 1995 from an anonymous source at a hospital, HRS began investigating Bush. Since then, she has been an active member of a growing national grassroots campaign that seeks to curtail the powers of state child care agencies such as HRS.

Earlier this year, Bush testified before a Florida Senate committee holding hearings on sweeping legislative reform known here as the Family Bill of Rights. Similar efforts are underway in at least five other states and in Congress. In Florida, the new statute would drastically change the way the state agency handles abuse cases. It would require a court order for a child to be taken into protective custody, as well as a hearing before a judge that would require "clear and convincing" evidence of abuse, a legally high hurdle, and not the current standard of "a preponderance of evidence." It would also require videotaped sessions with allegedly abused children and provide parents with that names of those who reported the child abuse so that, upon a finding of innocence, the parents could then sue for slander.

State Senator John Ostalkiewicz, a Republican from Orlando, who won election based on his support of the family rights bill, said that HRS was "a dangerous organization," guilty of railroading parents and conducting "a reign of terror."

Ostalkiewicz said he had no idea whether Bush was telling the truth when she testified before his committee. But he pointed to other cases of alleged child abuse that were proven wrong and said the system needed "checks and balances."

But State Representative Eric

Frankel, a Democrat from West Palm Beach who chairs the HRS committee in the state house, called the Family Bill of Rights "the most anti-child legislation" she has seen in her political career.

On Monday, Jennifer Bush was taken from her second-grade classroom and placed under foster care at a shelter with an attending nurse. Her father was not arrested.

Kathy Bush is now facing charges at a hearing before Circuit Judge Arthur Birken in Fort Lauderdale.

In addition to second-degree felony charge of aggravated child abuse, Bush faces a first-degree felony of organized fraud for her solicitation of \$50,000 worth of medical care, public assistance and charitable donations.

According to police, when Kathy Bush in 1994 was telling reporters that her family was financially ruined by Jennifer's medical care, the family's American Express card receipts show a vacation to the Bahamas, a new car and motorcycle, a \$19,000 pool installation and kitchen renovations.

Special correspondent Catharine Skipp contributed to this report.

THE WASHINGTON POST  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 1996

## American scene

### Police say mother caused child's illness

MIAMI — A woman faces charges that she intentionally made her 8-year-old daughter ill, even injecting her with fecal bacteria, and duped doctors into ordering 200 hospitalizations and 40 operations.

Kathy Bush of Coral Springs was arrested Monday on charges of aggravated child abuse and fraud. The state removed the girl from her second-grade class and placed her under state care.

Authorities say Mrs. Bush suffers from Munchausen syndrome by proxy, in which an adult makes a child ill to get attention.

### Wife of slain scientist denied bail

MINEOLA, N.Y. — A Long Island judge denied bail yesterday for the wife of a slain Russian-born scientist whose body was hacked to pieces and dumped in a New Jersey river.

Rita Gluzman, 47, who is charged with burglary, was ordered back to prison despite vehement protests from her defense attorney. Prosecutors argued Mrs. Gluzman should be incarcerated while prosecutors investigate whether she played a role in the slaying.

### Woman fighting Citadel will attend prep school

CHARLESTON, S.C. — A young woman who hoped to march at The Citadel this fall will instead go to military prep school while she continues her court challenge of the college's all-male admissions policy.

Nancy Mellette, 18, will begin a one-year program at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School in Fort Monmouth, N.J., this fall, her father said.

She had a Monday deadline to accept an offer of admission to the New Jersey school, Citadel graduate J. Bland Mellette said.

Miss Mellette, a senior at the Oak Ridge Military Academy in North Carolina, still "believes that qualified women should be allowed the opportunity of attending The Citadel," Mr. Mellette said.

She hopes to attend the school in a year, said her attorney, Val Jordis.

### House delays vote on abortion veto

House Republicans have put off a vote on overriding President Clinton's veto of a ban on certain late-term abortions.

Officials early this week had said the vote was expected tomorrow. Instead, the vetoed measure was sent to the Judiciary Committee with no indication of when the vote would be taken.

The measure originally passed the House last month on a vote of 286-129, more than the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto. The Senate's original vote, 54-44, was well shy of two-thirds, and Mr. Clinton's veto is likely to be sustained there.

### Court gets stock, Bailey stays in prison

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Attorney F. Lee Bailey handed over 400,000 shares of disputed stock to a federal court, but the judge who imprisoned him six weeks ago for contempt did not immediately answer his request to be freed.

U.S. District Judge Maurice Paul was at a conference in Memphis, Tenn., and had not responded to a motion by Mr. Bailey's attorneys for an immediate hearing, Judge Paul's clerk said yesterday.

Mr. Bailey's attorney, Roger Zuckerman, said in the motion he had been advised that Judge Paul would not be available until Monday, but he asked the judge to arrange a hearing before then.

### Vermont's Snelling up after surgery

BOSTON — Vermont Lt. Gov. Barbara Snelling remained in serious condition yesterday but was up and walking in a New Hampshire hospital less than 24 hours after brain surgery, a hospital spokeswoman said.

"Rehabilitation starts right away; it is not unusual to have them up the first day," said Susan Reeves, spokeswoman for Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H. "But she is still in that critical window of the first 48 hours after surgery."

Mrs. Snelling, 68, a declared Republican candidate for Vermont governor, suffered a cerebral hemorrhage Saturday while attending a state Republican Committee meeting.

From wire dispatches and staff reports

# Poor English eyed in air crash

## Colombian cites U.S. cockpit talk

By David Field  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Language problems may have led to a misunderstanding between air traffic controllers and pilots of an American Airlines jet that crashed in Colombia, documents released yesterday indicate.

American's Flight 965, a Boeing 757 from Miami, was approaching Cali, Colombia, Dec. 20 when it turned to the left of the proper course and slammed into a mountainside, killing 160 persons.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) interviews and preliminary investigations show the plane's pilot was uncertain about the plane's position — but that the ground controller did not understand this fact from conversations with the crew.

The confusion between the pilots and the controller — who said his English should be better — made it impossible to resolve their misunderstanding about the plane's location.

Colombian authorities, who are investigating with NTSB assistance, have not determined a final cause of the crash, which four passengers survived.

American's Flight 965 hit a mountain near the town of Buga after starting to make a left turn to return to a point it had passed.

The plane had been approaching the Cali airport when it flew over the point, a navigation beacon or checkpoint at Tulua, 55 miles northeast of Cali.

The Cali landing-approach air traffic controller, Nelson Rivera Ramirez, had asked the crew to report when they passed Tulua.

A few minutes later, the American crew reported their position as 38 miles north of Cali and asked if they should proceed to Tulua.

This made no sense, Mr. Rivera told NTSB investigators in a Jan. 26 interview. The plane should already have passed Tulua, he said.

Informed that the flight was 37 miles from the airport, Mr. Rivera "had no doubt that the pilot had passed Tulua but maybe had just forgotten to communicate his report over Tulua."

He then allowed the plane to turn back to the checkpoint, which it was doing when it in effect reversed its course and slammed into the mountain.

Back in Flight 965's cockpit, the pilot and co-pilot were also uncertain about their location, according to the safety board transcripts of conversations between pilot Nicholas Tafuri, 57, and first officer Don Williams, 39, an experienced pilot who was at the controls for his first approach to Cali.

At one point, Mr. Williams asked, "Uh, where are we ... we goin' out to ...?" Mr. Tafuri, who had flown the Cali route often, responded, "Lets go right to, uh, Tulua first of all. OK?" Mr. Williams responded, "Yeah, where we headed?"

After that, Mr. Rivera decided the pilot had failed to report passing the Tulua beacon and "had no doubt that the flight was proceeding toward runway 19" at Cali and so "never thought to verify the aircraft's position with respect to the center line" of the runway.

When investigators asked Mr. Rivera what he would have said to a Spanish-speaking pilot asking the same question, Mr. Rivera said he "would have told them that their request made no sense ... but he did not know how to convey these thoughts to the flight crew of AAL 965 in English."

He told interviewers that he "wished he knew more general English."

The Washington Times

★ WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 1996