

ATTACHMENT A
Samples of Plaintiff's
Counsel Discussing the Case
in the Media

Sean Summers media quotes

Date	Media	Quote
6/2/2006	Baltimore Sun	Summers said it never occurred to the elder Snyder that protesters would be at his son's funeral. "He was hoping for closure, and Mr. Snyder didn't get it," the lawyer said.
		Barley Snyder LLC, a York, Pa.-based law firm, is taking Snyder's case pro-bono, said Sean Summers, an attorney at the firm. Snyder has set up a Web site, www.matthewsnyder.org, soliciting donations to help pay for other costs associated with the lawsuit.
		Summers said this case doesn't aim to block free speech rights protected by the First Amendment.
		"It is a private party filing for damages in a case," he said Monday. "It's not the government trying to come in and stop someone from their speech."
		But, he said, he expects the church would likely bring a First Amendment defense.
6/6/2006	Carroll County Times	"We believe that they will fail," Summers said. "The Phelps' First Amendment rights don't trump anyone else's."
		"We think it's a case we can win because anyone's funeral is private," Summers said Monday after filing the lawsuit. "You don't have a right to interrupt someone's private funeral."
		Summers said he has gotten calls from relatives of three other servicemen after news of the Snyder lawsuit was published. He said more lawsuits are likely for the "outrageous" protests.
6/6/2006	Topeka Capital Journal	"We believe the jury will do the right thing at the end of the day and give him a large jury award," Summers said
		"Their so-called First Amendment rights certainly do not trump someone's right to have a private funeral," Summers said Monday. "They tarnished that memory for the Snyder family."
		"He may claim a First Amendment right, but Mr. Snyder also had a First Amendment right to peaceably assemble at his son's private funeral," said attorney Sean Summers.
6/6/2006	49 ABC	Snyder lawyer Sean Summers said the Phelps countersuit is groundless, but not surprising. "You can file a lawsuit for almost anything," he said, "and with 10 or 11 lawyers in that family, they'll find something, even if it doesn't have any merit."
6/7/2006	Wichita Eagle	"They know about the lawsuit. They just haven't allowed themselves to be served."
8/3/2006	York Daily Record	"Ultimately what anyone wants in a lawsuit is what was taken away from them. What was taken away from Mr. Snyder was his one and only chance of a memory of burying his son Matt."
8/29/2006	WJZ (CBS 13-Baltimore)	Sean Summers, one of the York attorneys representing Albert Snyder, said the motion attempts to use a number of legal technicalities to convince the judge to dismiss the case - something they don't believe will happen.
		"At the end of the day, their best hope is to have us amend the complaint," Summer said Wednesday. "We don't think there's much merit to what they have to offer. We believe it's more a stalling tactic than something substantive."
9/25/2006	York Daily Record	"Well obviously we're happy with it, that uhm, anytime there's money going out of their pocket we see that as less funds for them to use to go protest another funeral and and one, umm, small step on our, uh, journey to the trial which will be the ultimate resolution which we're looking for."
12/12/2006	WBAL AM 1090	"No, not at all, umm recently the judge entered a scheduling order, umm, which means the parties have a little bit of time to conduct some preliminary matters and those matters should be wrapped up in spring and then after that the judge will set a trial date. And that's the ultimate resolution that Al Snyder's looking for is to have, put his story in front of a jury and let a jury decide the fate of Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church and give them essentially what they deserve."
12/12/2006	WBAL AM 1090	

Sean Summers media quotes

12/12/2006	WBAL AM 1090	<p>"Correct. You have a right, they have a right, to go to their local park protest. Protest on a sidewalk at outside a park, umm, something like that. You don't have a right to invite yourself to someone else's funeral, protest at their funeral, when they're essentially a captive audience. It's essentially going and disturbing Al Snyder's right to bury his son in his chosen religion in peace and privacy. And they took that they took that one opportunity to have closure, that one memory away forever."</p>
12/12/2006	WBAL AM 1090	<p>"Correct that's one of our counts is intentional infliction of emotional distress umm and if anything fits the bill, these people do when they go out and protest these funerals. They essentially terrorize these families at their weakest moment at the weakest point in their life when they're burying typically a child and they come out and these families can't reschedule, if you're taking your children to the park, you can, if you see something at the park you don't like you can avoid, you can go somewhere else. At a funeral, it's preplanned, you're there, you have family members, you're at one of the lowest points in your life, and you can't change your plans at the last minute like you could at a public park."</p>
2/27/2007	York Dispatch	<p>Sean Summers, an attorney for Snyder, said this morning there's almost no chance the case will be settled out of court. "I'd say in cases like this, there's about a 90 to 95 percent chance it will settle before going to trial," he said. "But in this particular case, I'd say there's a 99.9 percent chance this won't."</p>
6/7/2007	Baltimore Examiner	<p>This litigation has national implications because it could drain the church's financial resources so it could no longer protest, said Snyder's lawyer, Sean Summers. "It will also set precedent as well," he said. "Other people will be able to use this case as a sword." Although the two daughters were added as defendants, the judge maintained the same trial date of Oct. 22 - to the relief of Albert Snyder said Summers, who recently held a deposition with Tim Phelps, one of Fred's sons appointed to speak on behalf of the church. "One thing that was crystal clear is that they, Phelps and his crew, have no remorse for anything they did, even though they acknowledge that the family could be hurt by the protests," Summers said. "They freely admit that the only reason they protest at funerals is to command an audience. It has nothing to do with the individual and really they only care that it brings lots of local media," he said. "When Phelps and his crew show up, it turns into a three-ring circus."</p>

Craig Trebilcock media quotes

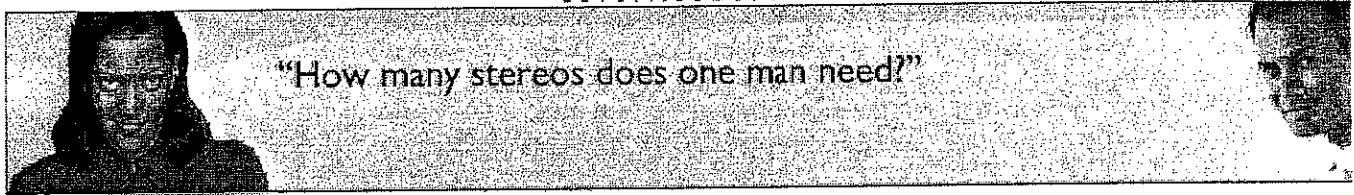
Date	Media	Quote
6/3/2006	Lancaster Sunday News	<p>"They were trying to create a human wall" to shield the Snyders from the Phelps, said Trebilcock, an attorney for Barley Snyder in York. "It didn't work."</p> <p>Demonstrators invaded the family's privacy and intentionally caused Al Snyder significant emotional stress, Trebilcock said. "It made his diabetic condition much worse."</p> <p>Attorneys said the Phelps also issued defamatory media statements and posted Web site messages alleging that Matthew Snyder's parents taught him evil values and did not love him.</p> <p>Witnesses can easily refute such statements, Trebilcock said. "At its root, it's a very simple case."</p> <p>The case is personal for Trebilcock, who served in Iraq and Kuwait, and Summers, who served in Afghanistan. Both men still have many friends in the military, Summers said. Trebilcock was a Army lieutenant colonel in the 358th Civil Affairs Brigade, and was in charge of helping to restore the legal system in southern Iraq.</p> <p>Trebilcock noted that, "We will be seeking punitive damages." A jury will determine the amount of any monetary award.</p>
6/3/2006	Lancaster Sunday News	<p>We're doing the case pro bono just because we're so outraged, Trebilcock said. The goal is to shut down Phelps and his clan, according to Trebilcock; Barley Snyder also plans to launch a Web site, Matthew Snyder.org, and make educational materials available.</p> <p>We would like other families who are victimized to stand up and fight back against the demonstrators, Trebilcock said. "They just need to be given a message that people aren't going to tolerate this."</p> <p>The courts will have to decide whether their message has constitutional protection, Trebilcock said.</p> <p>Because it involves a personal attack against an individual, Trebilcock said, First Amendment rights should not be an issue in the Maryland case. "We don't believe there's any constitutional issue at all," just a gross travesty of decency.</p> <p>They're preying on people at their lowest point, Trebilcock said of the Phelps. Their motive is "to further stick the knife in and twist it against the family."</p>

Rees Griffiths media quotes

Date	Media	Quote
6/6/2006	York Daily Record	One of his attorneys, Rees Griffiths, said a goal of the lawsuit is to get the Topeka, Kan., church to stop protesting at soldiers' funerals. "This isn't about restraining them from saying what they want to say," Griffiths said. "We don't believe this is a free speech issue."
6/14/2006	Carroll County Times	Rees Griffiths, counsel in the case against the church group, said the suit would not be dropped. "The [church's] charges are baseless and groundless," he said in a phone interview, "and any litigation in Kansas predicated on it will be the same."



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Md. Marine's father to sue over picketed funeral

Kansas church claims war casualties are retribution for tolerance of gays

The Associated Press

June 2, 2006, 7:15 PM EDT

The father of a Maryland Marine who died in Iraq plans to sue an extremist group that picketed his son's funeral, his lawyer said today.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., the father of Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder of Westminster, will sue the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., for unspecified actual and punitive damages, according to attorney Sean Summers of York. The civil suit will claim defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Summers said he would file the suit Monday in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt. The plans to sue were first reported by the *Carroll County Times*.

Matthew Snyder, 20, died March 3 after an accident in the Al Anbar province of Iraq. The accident did not involve combat, the Defense Department said.

He was assigned to Combat Service Support Group-1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force, in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Summers said it never occurred to the elder Snyder that protesters would be at his son's funeral. "He was hoping for closure, and Mr. Snyder didn't get it," the lawyer said.

About seven members of the group picketed outside St. John Catholic Church during the Marine's funeral, carrying signs that read "Thank God for dead soldiers," "You're going to hell," and anti-gay epithets. Group members believe that American soldiers are dying because of the nation's tolerance of gay people.

There are pictures of the group's protest at Snyder's funeral on its Web site.

Last month, Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. signed into law a bill that bans funeral protests that use speech likely to incite a fight.

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Protestors at funeral of Marine to be sued

Local law firm takes side of York County father against anti-gay group.

By Jon Rutter, Sunday News Staff Writer
Sunday News

Published: Jun 03, 2006 11:35 PM EST

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA - A York County man whose son died in Iraq is suing a Kansas church group for defaming the family during the young man's funeral.

Albert Snyder of Springettsbury Township will pursue what is believed to be the first civil action against demonstrators from the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, said Snyder's attorney, Craig Trebilcock, York.

The suit will be filed in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, Md.

Snyder's 20-year-old son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, died March 3 in Al Anbar province in Iraq. He served with Combat Logistics Battalion 7, based in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Westboro church leader Fred Phelps Sr. and his cohorts, many of whom are members of his own large brood, appeared at Snyder's funeral service at St. John's Catholic Church in Finksburg, Md.

The 76-year-old Phelps has staged protests at military funerals across the nation.

The dead soldiers were not gay, but Phelps, claims that God is punishing them, and their country, for tolerating homosexual values.

The Patriot Guard Riders, a motorcycle group formed to protect families at military funerals, also showed up at the Snyder funeral.

"They were trying to create a human wall" to shield the Snyders from the Phelpses, said Trebilcock, an attorney for Barley Snyder in York. "It didn't work."

According to Barley Snyder, the Phelps faction included young children who carried such signs as: "Thank God for dead soldiers" and "Semper Fi Fags" and "Thank God for IEDs," (referring to the improvised explosive devices that have killed many servicemen and women in Iraq).

Demonstrators invaded the family's privacy and intentionally caused Al Snyder significant emotional stress, Trebilcock said. "It made his diabetic condition much worse."



Attorneys said the Phelps also issued defamatory media statements and posted Web site messages alleging that Matthew Snyder's parents taught him evil values and did not love him.

Witnesses can easily refute such statements, Trebilcock said. "At it's root, it's a very simple case."

The lawsuit is being filed in federal court to expedite proceedings, Trebilcock said. A trial is expected sometime next year.

Trebilcock will represent Snyder along with Sean Summers and two other attorneys.

The case is personal for Trebilcock, who served in Iraq and Kuwait, and Summers, who served in Afghanistan. Both men still have many friends in the military, Summers said. Trebilcock was an Army lieutenant colonel in the 358th Civil Affairs Brigade, and was in charge of helping to restore the legal system in southern Iraq.

Trebilcock noted that, "We will be seeking punitive damages." A jury will determine the amount of any monetary award.

"We're doing the case pro bono just because we're so outraged," Trebilcock said.

After filing the lawsuit Monday, counsel will hold an 11:30 a.m. press conference for the Snyder family in the front plaza of the courthouse.

The plaintiff, Al Snyder, will appear at a second press conference on the steps of the old York County courthouse, 28 E. Market St., at 4 p.m. Monday.

The goal is to shut down Phelps and his clan, according to Trebilcock; Barley Snyder also plans to launch a Web site, [Matthew Snyder.org](http://MatthewSnyder.org), and make educational materials available.

"We would like other families who are victimized to stand up" and fight back against the demonstrators, Trebilcock said. "They just need to be given a message that people aren't going to tolerate this."

Phelps is a former attorney and failed Democratic primary candidate for Kansas governor.

His flock rose to national prominence in 1998 when they picketed the funeral of gay murder victim Matthew Shepard.

Subsequent disruptions at military funerals resulted last month in the adoption of a congressional measure that would ban protests within 300 feet of a national cemetery entrance.

Several states have passed similar initiatives.

Trebilcock said the American Civil Liberties Union intervened on behalf of the demonstrators in Kentucky, arguing that the statute was overly broad and disrupted free speech.

"The courts will have to decide whether their message has constitutional protection," Trebilcock said.

Because it involves a personal attack against an individual, Trebilcock said, First Amendment rights should not be an issue in the Maryland case.

"We don't believe there's any constitutional issue at all," just a gross travesty of decency.

"They're preying on people at their lowest point," Trebilcock said of the Phelps. Their motive is "to further stick the knife in and twist it against the family."

Contact Jon Rutter at jrutter@lnpnews.com



Carroll County Times

Print Page

Father of Marine sues Kansas group

BY ISAAC BAKER, TIMES STAFF WRITER

The father of a Westminster Marine who died in Iraq has sued an anti-gay religious group that picketed at his son's funeral, alleging the protestors caused him severe physical and emotional damage.

The five-count civil suit - filed in the U.S. District Court of Maryland in Greenbelt Monday morning - alleges the Rev. Fred Phelps and various unnamed members of his Topeka, Kan.-based Westboro Baptist Church committed defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Albert Snyder, father of the late Matthew Snyder, is seeking unspecified actual and punitive damages, according to the complaint.

"[The] defendants' conduct was so intentional and outrageous that the imposition of punitive damages is appropriate to punish the defendants for their actions and to deter the defendants from further reprehensible conduct," the suit reads.

Phelps and six other church members protested outside of St. John Roman Catholic Church in Westminster March 10, during funeral services for Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder. The Marine died March 3 while escorting a convoy in Iraq's Al Anbar province. During the service, protestors chanted anti-gay songs and displayed signs adorned with slogans including "Thank God for dead soldiers" and "Semper fi fags." The church claims the death of Snyder - and other U.S. troops - is a manifestation of God's wrath because of what they call America's tolerance of homosexual activity.

By picketing uninvited, the suit claims, the group invaded the family's privacy.

The suit also accuses the group of defaming the Snyder family. Statements on one of the church's many Web sites accuse Snyder's parents of raising him "for the devil" and blast them for "supporting satanic Catholicism."

Barley Snyder LLC, a York, Pa.-based law firm, is taking Snyder's case pro-bono, said Sean Summers, an attorney at the firm. Snyder has set up a Web site, www.matthewsnyder.org, soliciting donations to help pay for other costs associated with the lawsuit.

Summers said this case doesn't aim to block free speech rights protected by the First Amendment.

"It is a private party filing for damages in a case," he said Monday. "It's not the government trying to come in and stop someone from their speech."

But, he said, he expects the church would likely bring a First Amendment defense.

"We believe that they will fail," Summers said. "The Phelps' First Amendment rights don't trump anyone else's."

Shirley Phelps-Roper, one of Fred Phelps' daughters, dismissed the suit as an attempt to silence the church group.

"They are going to defy the servants of God?" Phelps-Roper, who attended the protest in question, said in a phone interview Monday. "They are going to shut us down? They're messing with the wrong God."

She also said claims the protestors invaded the Snyders' privacy are baseless. The group protested near the street outside St. John and was blocked from view by more than 75 motorcyclists from a counter-protest group, Phelps-Roper said.

"How did we invade?" she said.

The group is planning to file a counter-suit against Snyder for violation of civil rights, she added.

There is no specific timeline for a hearing, Summers said, but a scheduling conference between the parties could be held as soon as a few weeks.

Reach staff writer Isaac Baker at 410-857-7865 or bakeri@lcniofmd.com.

On the net: www.matthewsnyder.org

Published Tuesday, June 6, 2006

Slain Marine's dad sues funeral protesters

The Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. -- The father of a Marine whose funeral was picketed by anti-gay protesters from a fundamentalist Kansas church has filed an invasion-of-privacy suit against the demonstrators.

It is believed to be the first lawsuit brought by relatives of a member of the military against Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., whose congregants demonstrate at military funerals around the country.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., father of Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder of Westminster, seeks unspecified damages for the virulent messages held by protesters outside his son's funeral. The younger Snyder, 20, died March 3 after an accident in the Al Anbar province of Iraq. He was buried in Westminster.

The church has inspired 31 state laws banning funeral protests, including a new law in Maryland that took effect after Snyder's funeral.

After filing the suit, Albert Snyder told reporters at a news conference in Pennsylvania that he hoped a hefty judgment would make the church's members unable to afford travel for more protests.

"I want it to stop," he said of the Westboro protests. "I didn't know there were people in the world who did that. I couldn't believe it."

At the funeral, Snyder said, "I went to find closure for the loss of my son. I was confronted with hatred."

Snyder's lawyer, Sean Summers, said the defamation lawsuit is a first against the church stemming from a military funeral protest.

"We think it's a case we can win because anyone's funeral is private," Summers said Monday after filing the lawsuit. "You don't have a right to interrupt someone's private funeral."

The lawsuit seeks damages for invasion of privacy at the funeral. It also accuses the church of defamation for derogatory comments about Snyder placed on the church's Web site.

Summers said he has gotten calls from relatives of three other servicemen after news of the Snyder lawsuit was published. He said more lawsuits are likely for the "outrageous" protests.

"We believe the jury will do the right thing at the end of the day and give him a large jury award," Summers said.

Members of Westboro say the military deaths in Iraq are God's punishment for America's tolerance of gays. They typically carry signs with slogans such as "God Hates Fags" and "Thank God for IEDs," a

6/8/2006

reference to the roadside bombs used by insurgents.

Shirley Phelps-Roper, a church member who frequently acts as spokeswoman for the small congregation, also said it was the first time Westboro has been sued by the relatives of a dead service member. A counter-lawsuit was planned for abrogation of speech rights, she said.

"What was it we did? Seven people standing in the back of the building?" she said. She said only seven people picketed the funeral, fewer than the number of counter-protesters who showed up to support the family after learning Westboro members would attend.

"We were exercising our First Amendment rights," she said.

Albert Snyder said most people disagree that the protest was protected speech.

"I'm amazed at the number of people who have called and said, 'We're behind you 100 percent.' People want these people off the street," he said.

Dad sues Kansas church

York County's Albert Snyder said Westboro Baptist defamed him and his deceased son.

By MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News

Jun 6, 2006 — The father of a U.S. Marine killed in Iraq is suing the Kansas group that protested his son's funeral carrying signs that read "Semper Fi, Semper Fags" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers."

A defamation suit was filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Maryland on behalf of Albert Snyder, father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who died March 3. The suit names Fred W. Phelps; Westboro Baptist Church; and others as defendants, and it seeks actual and punitive damages.

The lawsuit alleges church members violated the family's right to privacy by appearing at Snyder's March 10 funeral, defamed the Marine and his family during the protest and on their Web site and conspired to protest at the funeral.

"Rather than closure, I was confronted with hatred from Mr. Phelps and his gang who used children to celebrate the death

of my son," Albert Snyder said.

Phelps and members of his church, including a handful of children, carried signs and hurled the group's hate-filled message at those attending Matthew Snyder's March 10 funeral in Westminster, Md.

Shirley Phelps-Roper, a Westboro Baptist Church member who was part of the protest, makes no apologies for the demonstration and called the lawsuit "an outrage."

"What did we do exactly that would give rise to this? What this is, is an effort to make us stop telling this country that God is punishing this nation by sending their children home

from battle dead," said Phelps-Roper, who is Phelps' daughter.

Church members have protested nationwide at the funerals of troops who died in the Iraq war.

Phelps-Roper said the church is well versed in civil litigation and not moved by Albert Snyder's lawsuit.

"We're not going to take this sitting down," Phelps-Roper said. "(Those who filed the suit) have put themselves in the crosshairs of a raging, angry God. Do they think he's going to overlook this bit of mischief?"

At a news conference Monday afternoon in front of York County Colonial Courthouse, Albert Snyder told reporters he was ready for the church's wrath, telling them to "bring it on."

He called the church's views "absurd" and said the group was "the sickest bunch of people that I've ever encountered."

The Spring Garden Township resident doesn't want Phelps and his camp to interfere with the grieving process of other families, he said.

"By bringing this lawsuit, it is my hope that I can help bring an end to the abuse and terrorizing of innocent families," Snyder said.

Matthew Snyder's mother, Julie Snyder, said her side of the family doesn't support the lawsuit. She and Albert Snyder are divorced.

"While their behavior was despicable, nothing that the group from Kansas said or did has any power to diminish Matt's character or his contribution to the world," Julie Snyder's

family said in a statement. "There is no point to a lawsuit that will only bring them what they most desire - attention."

Albert Snyder said he's doing what he thinks is right. "(The lawsuit) is not something my whole family agrees with. My ex-wife doesn't want to be involved."

One of his attorneys, Rees Griffiths, said a goal of the lawsuit is to get the Topeka, Kan., church to stop protesting at soldiers' funerals.

"This case isn't about restraining them from saying what they want to say," Griffiths said. "We don't believe this is a free speech issue."

Phelps-Roper disagrees.

"The filing of a frivolous lawsuit seeking to stop the picketing of Westboro Baptist Church changes nothing," Phelps-Roper said in news release. "We will boldly stay on message: God hates the U.S.A. and America is doomed."

MOTHER OPPOSES SUIT

The following excerpts are from a statement from the family of Julie Snyder, the mother of U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, about Monday's filing of the federal defamation suit:

"We are fully aware that Albert Snyder is planning to file a lawsuit against the people from Kansas who demonstrated outside of Matthew Snyder's funeral.

Each member of the family must respond to death in his or her own way. The members of his mother's family choose to grieve privately and to celebrate the gift of Matthew Snyder's life and the lives of his remaining family. ...

This side of the family, including Matthew Snyder's mother, Julie; his sisters; and Julie Snyder's family, are adamant about expressing their deep dismay that Albert Snyder is soliciting funds to support this lawsuit. Again, Julie Snyder, her daughters, and her family have nothing to do with this effort and would not wish to see anyone contribute to the 'Albert Snyder Legal Fund' on their behalf."

Finally, Julie Snyder and her daughters thanked those who reached out to them since Matthew Snyder was killed.

"Maybe some real good has come from a very bad thing," Julie Snyder said. "We are so touched by the kindness and comfort that have been extended to us."

TO DONATE

Albert Snyder is collecting donations to help pay for the litigation of his federal defamation lawsuit against Pastor Fred Phelps and Westboro Baptist Church. Snyder's attorneys said that they are not being paid for handling the lawsuit and that contributions will pay for filings and other costs associated with the suit.

To make a donation, or for more information, go to <http://www.matthewsnyder.org>.



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Anti-gay funeral protesters plan countersuit

PDF | Email
Kelsey Volkmann, The Examiner
Jun 6, 2006 7:00 AM (3 days ago)

Westminster - Anti-gay protesters are countersuing the father of a Marine who died in Iraq, claiming the litigation hampers their free-speech rights.

Shirley Phelps-Roper said she was exercising her First Amendment rights when she and others picketed outside a Westminster funeral with signs that read "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" and "God Hates Fags."

Albert Snyder, of York, Pa., father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, filed a lawsuit in U.S. Court in Greenbelt on Monday, seeking damages for inflammatory signs held by members of the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., outside his son's funeral in March, said his lawyer Sean Summers.

"[Al Snyder and his lawyers] are trying to shut us down, but they are putting themselves in the crosshairs of a raging God," Phelps-Roper said in a telephone interview with The Examiner on Monday from Topeka.

Fred Phelps, one of the protesters and the father of Phelps-Roper, is the founder of Westboro Baptist Church.

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The Westboro Baptist Church members said they believe God is killing military in Iraq and Afghanistan as punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuals, according to the church's Web site.

Opinion

Analysis News

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TheCarrollStandard.com

"Their so-called First Amendment rights certainly do not trump someone's right to have a private funeral," Summers said Monday. "They tarnished that memory for the Snyder family."

Summers said more lawsuits from relatives of other military members are expected, and he had received calls from three other military families after the announcement of Snyder's lawsuit.

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Phelps-Roper said the congregation will respond to the lawsuit, which marks the first time Westboro has been sued by a soldier's family, during a news conference today at Arlington National Cemetery.

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http://www.49abcnews.com/news/2006/jun/06/fallen_soldiers_dad_aims_prevent_topeka_group_prot/

Fallen soldier's dad aims to prevent Topeka group from protesting at funerals

Story by ABC News

11:22 a.m. Tuesday, June 6, 2006

"It does hit you, and it hits you like a brick," said Al Snyder, father of a Marine who was killed in Iraq.

It's been almost three months since Al Snyder buried his son Matt, but the anger is still fresh. Not over the accident in Iraq that took the young man's life, but the treatment, he received afterward.

"Why would they be saying this stuff about my son? My son was a good man," Snyder said. "These people didn't even know him."

Members of the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church showed up at his Maryland funeral with signs celebrating his death, saying it was the work of God, who is angry because of this country's and military's overall acceptance of gays.

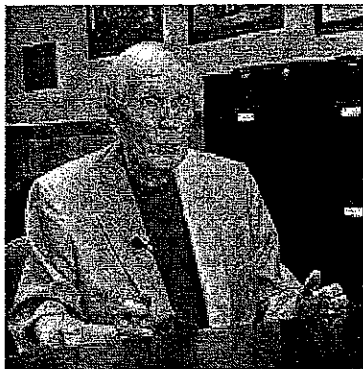


Photo by Lisa Coble-Krings

Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church

"God Almighty is cursing the nation and one way of showing it is destroying children with IEDs," said Westboro Baptist Church leader Fred Phelps.

"He may claim a First Amendment right, but Mr. Snyder also had a First Amendment to peaceably assemble at his son's private funeral," said attorney Sean Summers.

Snyder wants the group to face stiff financial penalties for its action, perhaps setting precedent so that each appearance would result in another suit, enough so that it prevents more picketing and allows families to focus, on they say, what matters most.

"I wanna stop them from doing this to other people to other Marines," Snyder said.

The Topeka church plans on filing a countersuit against the father of the Marine.

Kansas.com

Posted on Wed, Jun. 07, 2006

Phelps' protest precedes funeral

BY ALAN BJERGA
Eagle Washington bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. - The funeral of Lance Cpl. Kevin Lucas went smoothly at Arlington National Cemetery Tuesday, with protesters from Topeka's Westboro Baptist Church nowhere to be seen or heard by the time it started.

That's what's intended under a new federal law aimed at restricting the church's pickets at military funerals across the country.

But the picketers from Fred Phelps' church said they got the attention they sought despite the restrictions. They also announced that they plan a counter-lawsuit against the father of a deceased Marine who sued them Monday.

The new law limits protests at national cemeteries to within 300 feet of a cemetery's entrance and within 150 feet of a road into the cemetery, from 60 minutes before to 60 minutes after a funeral.

The four Phelps family members who demonstrated at Arlington stayed outside the restricted areas. They ended their picket 20 minutes before the 3 p.m. funeral began.

But they drew plenty of attention from their cordoned-off spot on a public sidewalk on the way to the cemetery's main entrance.

Most of the funeral-goers drove past the Phelps on their way to the service. "Put them in Iraq and watch them do that!" one shouted as he drove by.

The hearse carrying Lucas' coffin drove past the protest. The family had no comment at the private ceremony.

Lucas, a Marine, died May 26 in Iraq.

About 15 D.C.-area residents held a counter-protest. While Phelps family members sang anti-gay songs to the tune of "The Marine Corps Hymn" and "Take Me Home, Country Roads," the counter-demonstrators sang hymns and carried their own signs. One read, "WBC Gateway to Hell," referring to Westboro Baptist Church.

Tricia Yarrow of Silver Spring, Md., organized the counter-demonstration. She said she felt it was her duty as a Christian.

"I wanted to show support for the soldiers being buried," she said. "Christianity is about love and Jesus dying for all. It's sickening what they do," said Yarrow, 24.

Accompanying the protesters were about a dozen journalists and a dozen K9 squad cars of the Washington Park Police.

No incidents, other than dueling songs, took place between the groups. Visitors to Arlington were puzzled or shocked by the display. Many took pictures.

Gina Hatfield, visiting from Cincinnati with her teenage daughter, Katie, called the Phelps protest disrespectful, but said it's an unfortunate reality of free speech.

"I suppose it's part of America being a free country," she said.

Fred Phelps' daughter, Shirley Phelps-Roper, called the new law "a feel-good measure that changes nothing."

"That's going to sink in with people, and they're going to be angry," she said.

Phelps-Roper said the negative attention will only increase the family's efforts. The church is planning protests at all 122 national

cemeteries.

The family also is planning a countersuit to a federal lawsuit filed Monday seeking more than \$75,000 in damages for alleged privacy intrusion and defamation related to Westboro's picketing of the funeral of a Marine killed in Iraq in March.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., contends that Phelps and his followers intruded on the funeral of his son, Matthew Snyder.

Phelps-Roper said the church's countersuit will state that Snyder filed his lawsuit simply to harass and shut down the church. The lawsuit itself gives the church one more excuse to preach, she added.

"We've been litigated against in the past," she said. "We will litigate long, and we will litigate hard."

Snyder lawyer Sean Summers said the Phelps countersuit is groundless, but not surprising.

"You can file a lawsuit for almost anything," he said, "and with 10 or 11 lawyers in that family, they'll find something, even if it doesn't have any merit."

Reach Alan Bjerga at 202-383-6055 or abjerga@krwashington.com.

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Carroll County Times

[Print Page](#)

Church group threatens legal action

BY ISAAC BAKER, TIMES STAFF WRITER

A Topeka, Kan.-based church group that picketed the funeral of a Westminster Marine is threatening legal action unless a civil suit against the church is dropped.

The Westboro Baptist Church sent a letter dated Monday to the York, Pa.-based lawyers representing Albert Snyder, father of the late Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, accusing them of trying to silence the group and infringing upon the church members' civil rights.

"Your actions are so unlawful and egregious, unless you immediately cease and desist it will be necessary for WBC and her members to seek relief," the letter reads.

Albert Snyder, represented by the Barley Snyder LLC law firm, filed a civil lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of Maryland in Greenbelt last week that claims the church group committed defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress by picketing at the Marine's funeral in Westminster and posting derogatory statements about the Snyder family on the Internet.

Rees Griffiths, counsel in the case against the church group, said the suit would not be dropped.

"The [church's] charges are baseless and groundless," he said in a phone interview, "and any litigation in Kansas predicated on it will be the same."

The church group, led by the Rev. Fred Phelps, chanted anti-gay songs and held signs bearing slogans like "Thank God for dead soldiers" and "Semper fi fags" during funeral services for Snyder on March 10. Snyder died on March 3 while escorting a convoy in Iraq's Al Anbar province. He was 20.

Phelps' church claims Snyder's death - and the deaths of other U.S. troops - are demonstrations of God's hatred of America for what the group calls the country's tolerance of homosexual activity.

Reach staff writer Isaac Baker at 410-857-7865 or bakeri@lcniofmd.com.

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Article Launched: 8/03/2006 07:15 AM

Motion: Church avoiding suit

Attorneys for Albert Snyder allege a Kansas-based church is dodging a process server.

Daily Record/Sunday News
York Daily Record/Sunday News

At bottom: - [THE LAWSUIT](#)
Aug 3, 2006 --

A private detective tried more than 20 times to tell Fred W. Phelps Sr. and members of the Westboro Baptist Church they're being sued, according to court documents filed in federal court this week.

On Tuesday, attorneys representing Albert Snyder filed a motion asking the court to allow them to post the complaint at the Kansas-based church and mail it to the defendants.

"They know about the lawsuit. They just haven't allowed themselves to be served," said Sean Summers, an attorney working with Snyder, who lives in Spring Garden Township.

A federal defamation lawsuit was filed June 5 against Phelps and his followers for crashing the March 10 funeral of Snyder's son, Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who died March 3 in Iraq.

The defamation suit accuses church members of violating the family's privacy and seeks actual and punitive damages.

In a statement filed with the motion, the detective, who delivers court documents, lists 27 dates and times he attempted to give Fred W. Phelps, Westboro Baptist Church and others defendants a copy of the federal complaint.

Shirley Phelps-Roper, a Westboro Baptist Church member, finds it hard to believe the detective couldn't find her father and church members, especially with how visible they are.

"If there is a person who is trying to serve us in this community, unless they're lazy, there is no reason why they shouldn't have been able to serve us," Phelps-Roper said Wednesday. "Hello! Do you need a road map?"

The family protests in Kansas and around the country at funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq. They also frequent Maryland and Pennsylvania, Phelps-Roper said.

According to court documents, the detective, Delbert R. White, tried to serve the defendants at different times and locations, including the church, the Phelps law office and even at Phelps-Roper's home.

Phelps-Roper said at least one address that the process server attempted to serve them at wasn't associated with the church.

"There are rules for service. They have to follow them. We're not going to do their job for them," Phelps-Roper said. "If they present themselves to serve papers when people are present, then they would serve them."

It takes time to serve people, but Fred Phelps and his family are ducking the detective, Summers said. Service usually takes a few weeks, but they've been trying since June 12, the attorney said.

"The defendants can run, but they cannot continue to hide. Their blatant refusal to waive service and continuous evasion of service is nothing more than a consciousness of guilt," the motion states.

The attorneys asked the court for permission to serve the church by alternative means and require the church to pay fees connected to the motion. A ruling on the motion could take a month, Summers said.

THE LAWSUIT

A defamation suit was filed June 5 in U.S. District Court in Maryland on behalf of Albert Snyder, father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who died March 3 in Iraq. The suit names Fred W. Phelps, Westboro Baptist Church and others as defendants. It seeks actual and punitive damages.

The lawsuit alleges church members violated the family's right to privacy by appearing at Matthew Snyder's March 10 funeral, defamed the Marine and his family during the protest and on their Web site, and conspired to protest at the funeral.

Several members from Phelps' church protested at the service held at a Westminster, Md., church.

Church members protest around the country at the funerals of soldiers who died during the Iraq war.

[top](#)

⊙Aug 29, 2006 10:59 pm US/Eastern

Controversial Church Group To Stand Trial In Md.



Kathryn Brown

Reporting

(WJZ) BALTIMORE The family of a fallen Maryland soldier is headed to court against a church group known for their controversial protests at soldier funerals.

Members from Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. travel across the country preaching their beliefs and protesting by holding signs which say such things like "God Hates You," while they sing the song "God Hates America" to the tune of "God Bless America."

"God is punishing the nation and his weapon of choice is sending these children home dead from battle," Shirley Phelps-Roper told **WJZ Eyewitness News** earlier this year.

The group came to Maryland earlier this year to protest at the funeral of 20-year-old Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder. Despite attempts by friends to shield Snyder's family from the group's message, their family still heard it loud and clear. Now Snyder's father is suing the church.

"Ultimately what anyone wants in a lawsuit is what was taken away from them. What was taken away from Mr. Snyder was his one and only chance of a memory of burying his son Matt," Sean Summers, Albert Snyder's attorney told **WJZ's Kathryn Brown**.

Summers said the group wrongfully intruded on a private funeral and defamed the fallen marine on their website. The website shows pictures of dozens of protests at funerals for soldiers, but this lawsuit marks the first time that one of their families has fought back.

Attorney Jonathan Katz is representing the church group in the case, but only on principle. Katz openly admits he disagrees strongly with their message, but can't deny them their rights.

"The first amendment is here not for popular speech -- we don't need to have popular speech protected -- but to have protection of speech that some of us don't like," Katz said.

"Mr. Phelps' first amendment rights don't trump Mr. Snyder's first amendment rights," Summers said.

Both parties are scheduled to meet in court in mid-September. The leader of the church, Reverend Fred Phelps, has denied any wrongdoing.

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WJZ (CBS 13 – Baltimore)

http://wjz.com/topstories/local_story_241231934.html

August 29, 2006

Anchor Denise Koch: Group whose members protest at the funerals of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq is getting some support from a Maryland attorney tonight. The group is being sued by the father of a slain Maryland Marine. Eyewitness news is live and new at 11 and Kathryn Brown has reactions from both sides of this heated issue, Kathryn.

Reporter Kathryn Brown: Hi Denise and this is the first lawsuit filed against the Westboro Baptist Church, the first of its' kind, by the family of a Marine killed overseas.

Protesters: (singing) God hates America the feces eating, the perverts

Reporter Kathryn Brown: (talking over the singing) Members from Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas travel across the country preaching and protesting to prove a point, their own brand of religion.

Shirley Phelps Roper: God is punishing this nation, and his weapon of choice is is sending these children home dead from the battle.

Reporter Kathryn Brown: They came to Maryland earlier this year to protest at the funeral of 20 year old Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder. Despite attempts by friends to shield Snyder's family from a hurtful message (Protesters singing in the background: and showed his) they heard it and now Matthew Snyder's father is suing the church.

Protesters: (singing) every pervert calls it home

Attorney Sean Summers: Ultimately what anyone wants in a lawsuit is what was taken away from them. What was taken away from Mr. Snyder was his one and only chance of a memory of burying his son Matt.

Reporter Kathryn Brown: Snyder's attorney Sean Summers tells Eyewitness News the group wrongfully intruded on a private funeral and defames the fallen Marine on their website. The church's website shows pictures from dozens of protests at military funerals, but this lawsuit marks the first time one of their families has fought back. Jonathan Katz is representing the church on principle though he disagrees strongly with their message.

Attorney Jonathan Katz: The First Amendment is here not for popular speech, we don't need to have popular speech protected, but to have protection of speech that some of us don't like.

Reporter Kathryn Brown: And both parties are scheduled to meet to hash this suit out in mid-September. Denise back to you.

Anchor Denise Koch: Alright thank you very much Kathryn. The leader of the church Reverend Fred Phelps has denied any wrong doing.

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(F) Summers v.
WBC

Article Launched: 9/25/2006 10:44 AM

Church seeks dismissal of Spring Garden Township resident Albert Snyder's lawsuit

Attorneys for Fred W. Phelps Sr. and his church filed to dismiss in federal court.

Daily Record/Sunday News
York Daily Record/Sunday News

Sep 25, 2006 — A Kansas-based church being sued in a defamation suit is asking a federal court to dismiss the lawsuit, claiming it doesn't make a sufficient claim against them or meet legal requirements needed for it to proceed.

Attorneys representing Fred W. Phelps Sr. and the Westboro Baptist Church filed a motion to dismiss Sept. 18 in the U.S. District Court in Baltimore. The church, whose members protest around the country at funerals for troops killed in Iraq, said the lawsuit should be dismissed because the group was expressing its opinions through the protests.

A federal defamation lawsuit was filed June 5 against Phelps and his followers on behalf of Spring Garden Township resident Albert Snyder for demonstrating at the March 10 funeral of Snyder's son, U.S. Marines Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder.

Unlike in other countries, the U.S. Supreme Court put a limit on defamation suits so as to give substantial force and effect to the First Amendment, said Jon Katz, a Silver Springs, Md., attorney representing Phelps and the church.

"I do not believe that courts in the United States are a hospitable place for Mr. Snyder's lawsuit," Katz wrote in an e-mail.

In his motion, Katz brings up several legal issues, alleging attorneys for the plaintiffs didn't establish a sufficient claim against Phelps or his church and failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

According to court documents, the defamation suit accuses church members of violating the family's privacy and defaming the Marine and his family on its Web site. The suit seeks actual and punitive damages.

In previous interviews, members of Phelps' family who attended the protest at the Westminster, Md., church where Matthew Snyder's service was held denied any wrongdoing.

Sean Summers, one of the York attorneys representing Albert Snyder, said the motion attempts to use a number of legal technicalities to convince the judge to dismiss the case - something they don't believe will happen.

"At the end of the day, their best hope is to have us amend the complaint," Summer said Wednesday. "We don't think there's much merit to what they have to offer. We believe it's more of a stalling tactic than something substantive."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

Family Not Finished With Westboro Baptist Protestors

Tuesday, December 12, 2006 - WBAL Radio and The Associated Press

A federal judge has ordered the Westboro Baptist Church to pay \$3150 for costs and fees associated with a summons and complaint filed by the father of a Marine whose funeral was picketed by the extremist group.

Albert Snyder of York, Pennsylvania, is suing the Reverend Fred Phelps and his Topeka, Kansas-based church, after church members demonstrated at the funeral of Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder, of Westminster.

Attorney Sean Summers told WBAL News they are filing for punitive damages as well and hope to schedule a federal court date in spring in Baltimore.

Summers said the potests "terrorize" families in mourning who have no choice but to be confronted by the placard-weilding church members.

Corporal Snyder was killed in Iraq in March.

The lawsuit, filed June fifth, alleges church members violated the family's right to privacy and defamed the Marine and his family at the funeral and on the church's Web site.

Court documents say the church has 30 days to make the payment to Snyder.

The family of Cpl. Snyder also has a website.

WBAL Radio
<http://wbal.com/>



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

WBAL Am 1090
Maryland's NEWS-TALK-SPORTS Station
<http://wbal.com/./news/story.asp?articleid=51859>
Interview by WBAL's Steve Fermier of Attorney Sean Summers
December 12, 2006

Steve Fermier: Uh a federal judge has ordered that uh the Westboro Baptist group to pay for costs and fees, uhm, uh, give us some idea, of uh, give us some idea, uh, of your reaction to, uh, to that ruling.

Sean Summers: Well obviously we're happy with it, that uhm, anytime there's money going out of their pocket we see that as less funds for them to use to go protest another funeral and and one, umm, small step on our, uh, journey to the trial which will be the ultimate resolution which we're looking for.

Steve Fermier: Uh, tell us uh about that uh obviously this isn't the end of it as far as you're concerned.

Sean Summers: No, not at all, umm recently the judge entered a scheduling order, umm, which means the parties have a little bit of time to conduct some preliminary matters and those matters should be wrapped up in spring and then after that the judge will set a trial date. And that's the ultimate resolution that Al Snyder's looking for is to have, put his story in front of a jury and let a jury decide the fate of Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church and give them essentially what they deserve.

Steve Fermier: Well uh obviously they, they're claiming first amendment rights, uh, I and I assume that that your argument is that uh that simply doesn't extend to this degree. Correct?

Sean Summers: Correct. You have a right, they have a right, to go to their local park protest. Protest on a sidewalk at outside a park, umm, something like that. You don't have a right to invite yourself to someone else's funeral, protest at their funeral, when they're essentially a captive audience. It's essentially going and disturbing Al Snyder's right to bury his son in his chosen religion in peace and privacy. And they took that they took that one opportunity to have closure, that one memory away forever.

Steve Fermier: Well, and, and many are uh saying pointing to that that the protest itself is as being as going way over the line in a in a lack of of dignity and and I would assume that's part of your argument too correct?

Sean Summers: Correct that's one of our counts is intentional infliction of emotional distress umm and if anything fits the bill, these people do when they go out and protest these funerals. They essentially terrorize these families at their weakest moment at the weakest point in their life when they're burying typically a child and they come out and these families can't reschedule, if you're taking your children to the park, you can, if you see something at the park you don't like you can avoid, you can go somewhere else. At a funeral, it's preplanned, you're there, you have family members, you're at one of the lowest points in your life, and you can't change your plans at the last minute like you could at a public park

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Date set for trial

The father of a fallen Marine is suing a Kansas-based church.

By MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News
York Daily Record/Sunday News

Article Launched:02/27/2007 06:01:57 AM EST

At bottom: · [THE CASE](#)

Feb 27, 2007 — A federal defamation lawsuit against Westboro Baptist Church is to go to trial this fall, according to court documents filed this week.

In a Feb. 23 order, U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett scheduled the jury trial to begin 9 a.m. Oct. 22. in Baltimore's federal court. It is scheduled to last two weeks, the order states.

Depositions in the case, including one for church founder Fred W. Phelps, who is named as a defendant, are expected to begin next month, according to court documents.

Attorneys for Spring Garden Township resident Albert Snyder filed the lawsuit against the Kansas-based church on Snyder's behalf in June.

It alleges church members defamed the Snyder family, violated their privacy by protesting at the funeral of Snyder's son, Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder, and intentionally caused the family emotional distress.

According to court documents, the lawsuit seeks general damages, special damages and punitive damages for the defendant's alleged wrongful acts, as well as for Phelps and his church to pay the costs of the lawsuit.

In previous interviews, members of Phelps' family who protested at the Westminster, Md., funeral said they were exercising their First Amendment rights and did nothing wrong. The church has become infamous nationally for protesting at the funerals of service members killed in Iraq.

The group protests at the funerals to spread its anti-gay message, saying those killed in the Iraq war died because God doesn't support a country such as the United States that condones homosexuality, according to the church's Web site.

Westboro Baptist Church has held dozens of protests at funerals since attending Snyder's. Church members also came to York County earlier this month to protest at several local churches and a high school because of a play production that discussed gay issues.

Snyder and his attorneys have said the goal of the lawsuit is to deter or even to stop church members from protesting at the funerals of service members.

THE CASE

A defamation lawsuit was filed June 5 in U.S. District Court in Maryland on behalf of Albert Snyder, father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, 20, who died in a Humvee crash March 3, 2006, in Iraq. The lawsuit names Fred W. Phelps, Westboro Baptist Church and others as defendants.

The lawsuit alleges church members violated the family's right to privacy by appearing at Matthew Snyder's March 10 funeral, defamed the Marine and his family during the protest and on their Web site, and conspired to protest at the funeral.

Several members from Phelps' church protested at the service held at a Westminster, Md., church, carrying signs that read, "Semper Fi, Semper Fags" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers."

Church members have denied any wrongdoing in previous interviews.

and his crew show up, it turns into a three-ring circus."

kvolkmann@baltimoreexaminer.com

What's your opinion of the Rev. Fred Phelps and his protests? Post your comment below.

Examiner