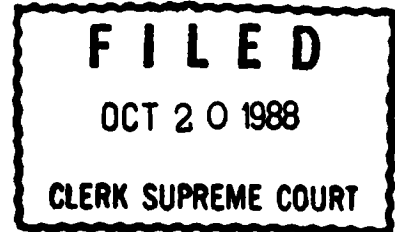


IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA
IN RE MARRIAGE OF GREGORY DEAN PATTON
AND CHRISTINE ANN PATTON



Upon the Petition of)
GREGORY DEAN PATTON,)
Petitioner-Appellee,)
And Concerning)
CHRISTINE ANN PATTON,)
Respondent-Appellant.)

101

8-400
88-140

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Mahaska County
(CD1-1959), James P. Reilly, Judge.

Respondent wife appeals the provision of the parties'
dissolution decree awarding petitioner husband physical
custody of the parties' minor child. **AFFIRMED.**

David D. Dixon of Heslinga, Heslinga, Dixon &
Grotewold, Oskaloosa, for respondent-appellant.

Randy S. DeGeest of DeGeest Law Office, Oskaloosa, for
petitioner-appellee.

Considered by Schlegel, P.J., and Hayden and Sackett,
JJ.

SCHLEGEL, J.

192

Respondent wife appeals the provision of the parties' dissolution decree awarding petitioner husband physical custody of the parties' minor child. Respondent contends that the child's best interests require placement with her.

Our review is de novo. Iowa R. App. P. 4. We give weight to the trial court's findings of facts, especially where the credibility of the witnesses is involved, but are not bound by them. Iowa R. App. P. 14(f)(7). We affirm.

Greg and Christie Patton were married on December 5, 1985. They are the parents of a minor child, Jennifer Lynn, born December 12, 1985. Greg is 21 years old and works as the night manager of a grocery store. Christie is 22 and a checker at a different grocery store. A dissolution decree filed in January 1988 awarded physical custody of Jennifer to Greg.

Custody of the child is the sole issue on appeal. Christie argues that the trial court erred in awarding custody of Jennifer to Greg. She contends that she has always been Jennifer's primary caretaker, that Greg is not well suited to that role, and that placement with Greg is not in Jennifer's best interests.

As we have stated many times, the most paramount consideration in these cases is the best interests of the child. Iowa R. App. P. 14(f)(15). We are called upon to determine which parent can administer more effectively to

the long-term interests of the child. In re Marriage of Welbes, 327 N.W.2d 756, 758 (Iowa 1982). The factors we consider are enumerated in Iowa Code section 598.41(3), and In re Marriage of Winter, 223 N.W.2d 165, 166-67 (Iowa 1974).

Our de novo review of the record convinces us that the trial court did not err in granting physical custody of Jennifer to Greg. The evidence shows that Christie's ability to place Jennifer's interests ahead of hers is seriously in doubt. On more than one occasion, Christie took Jennifer with her when she went "midnight" bowling on Sunday nights and admitted that she had kept Jennifer out as late as 1:30 a.m. The evidence also shows that Christie's relationships with men during her separation from her husband involved her and Jennifer sleeping over at the mens' homes on numerous occasions. Moreover, one of Christie's former neighbors testified that she observed Christie outside of her trailer home with a man, and that at that time, she heard Jennifer crying for a prolonged period of time which lasted in excess of one hour.

Greg, on the other hand, has demonstrated more maturity in caring for his daughter and has done nothing to affect Jennifer or his care of her. The trial court found, and we agree, that Greg is a devoted and caring father who has exhibited good parenting skills. Based upon the record before us, we believe that Greg is better able to minister to Jennifer's long-range best interests.

AFFIRMED.