FILED
SEP 2 8 1988
CLERK SUPREME COURT

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA

IN RE THE MARRIAGE OF RONNI MICHELE CARLSON
AND THOMAS ALBERT CARLSON

Upon the Petition of)
RONNI MICHELE CARLSON,) 81
Petitioner-Appellee,)
And Concerning)
THOMAS ALBERT CARLSON,) 8-396
88-80
Respondent-Appellant.)

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Polk County (No. CD 054-31832), Jack Levin, Judge.

Respondent-appellant appeals from the provision of a dissolution decree awarding the wife physical custody of three of the parties' four minor children. **AFFIRMED.**

Ray Sullins, Des Moines, for respondent-appellant.

Lorna A. Gilbert of Davis, Hockenberg, Wine, Brown & Koehn, Des Moines, for petitioner-appellee.

Considered by Oxberger, C.J., and Donielson and Habhab, JJ.

PER CURIAM

82

Tom and Ronni were married in 1969 and are the parents of four minor sons. Tom owns a TV and appliance store in West Des Moines. In July 1986, after the couple separated, Ronni moved with the three younger boys to St. Louis for her internship year for a doctorate in psychology from Iowa State University. She is now permanently employed at Jewish Hospital in that city. A dissolution decree filed eighteen months later made these living arrangements permanent by awarding Tom physical custody of the oldest boy, Louis, and awarding Ronni physical custody of the three younger boys, Marc, David, and Nathaniel. The parents were awarded the joint legal custody of the children.

The sole issue on appeal centers around Tom's contention that the children's long-term interests would best be served by uniting them all under his physical care. Our review of the custody provision in this case is de novo. We are not bound by the findings of the trial court, however, when considering the credibility of witnesses, it is appropriate to afford substantial weight to the findings of the trial court. The issue that is before us is ultimately decided by determining under the whole record which parent can minister more effectively to the long-range best interests of the children. In re Marriage of Winter, 223 N.W.2d 165, 166 (Iowa 1974).

In addition to the above-cited law, we must take into consideration a number of factors which are set out in In re Marriage of Winter. These factors include:

1. The characteristics of each child, including age, maturity, mental and physical health.

2. The emotional, social, moral, material, and educational needs of the child.

3. The characteristics of each parent, including age, character, stability, mental, and physical health.

4. The capacity and interest of each parent to provide for the emotional, social, moral, material, and educational needs of the child.

5. The interpersonal relationship between the child and each parent.

6. The interpersonal relationship between the child and its siblings.

7. The effect on the child of continuing or disrupting an existing custodial status.

8. The nature of each proposed environment, including its stability and wholesomeness.

9. The preference of the child, if the child is of sufficient age and maturity.

10. The report and recommendation of the attorney for the child or other independent investigator.

11. Available alternatives.

12. Any other relevant matter the evidence in a particular case may disclose.

Id.

In making the determination concerning physical care, we note the trial court relied heavily upon the recommendation of Janet S. McDonough, Ph.D., the custody investigator. The court also relied on the fact that

appellant husband has had physical care of Louis since July 1986, and that appellee wife has had physical care of Marc, David, and Nathaniel for the same amount of time. We find no reason to disturb the trial court's physical custody provision.

Our supreme court has expressed a strong interest in keeping children of broken homes together. In re Marriage of Orte, 389 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1986). If there is a separation of the children, "it must appear that separation may better promote the long-range interest of the children." Id.

On our de novo review, when we apply the factors of In re Marriage of Winter to the facts contained in this record, we find, as the trial court did, that the appellee is the parent who can minister more effectively to the long-range best interests of Marc, David, and Nathaniel and that appellant is the parent who can minister more effectively to the long-range best interest of Louis. The physical care arrangement decreed by the court has existed by agreement of the parties since July 1986. Each party has generous visitation rights which will afford the children the opportunity to be together. We trust the parents will cast aside their petty animosities and display a united front in the raising of their children. They ought not to suffer because of this bankrupt marriage. Accordingly, we affirm the trial court.

AFFIRMED.