IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA

FILED
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CLERK SUPREME COURT

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IN RE THE MARRIAGE OF JEANNE LOUISE ASH AND WILLIAM MICHAEL ASH

Upon the Petition of **JEANNE LOUISE ASH,**	)	
Petitioner-Appellee,	)	
And Concerning **WILLIAM MICHAEL ASH,**	)	8-717 / 88-950
Respondent-Appellant.	)	

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Wapello County (CD 84-1087), James P. Rielly, Judge.

Respondent appeals certain provisions of the decree of dissolution entered for the parties in district court. **AFFIRMED.**

Timothy J. McKay, of McKay & Moreland, P.C., Ottumwa, for respondent-appellant.

Gregory G. Milani, of Keith & Orsborn, Ottumwa, for petitioner-appellee.

Heard by Oxberger, C.J., and Donielson and Sackett, JJ.

OXBERGER, C.J.

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William Ash appeals certain provisions of the dissolution decree entered by the district court. Specifically, he claims the court erred in: (1) granting physical care of Christopher Ash to the petitioner; (2) fixing child support in the amount of $45 per child per week; and (3) assigning responsibility for payment of all the parties' debts to him. Our review is de novo. We affirm.

Jeanne and William Ash were married on March 27, 1970. They have three children: Todd, born in 1971; Christopher, born in 1973; and Eric, born in 1975. Eric is moderately mentally retarded and autistic. He resides in a group home in Burlington, Iowa.

William was forty-two years old during trial. He has a tenth grade education. He is employed as a custodian for the Ottumwa Community School District and earns approximately $19,284. Jeanne was forty-one at the time of trial. She has a high school education. Jeanne works at the Fareway Store and earns about $15,000 per year.

I. Child Custody

The court awarded the parties joint legal custody of Todd and Chris and granted Jeanne primary physical care of the boys. Eric is under jurisdiction of the juvenile court and the district court did not make a custody determination concerning him. William challenges the district court's award of physical custody of Chris to Jeanne.

In child custody cases, the primary concern in making the determination as to which parent shall be awarded primary care is the long-term best interests of the child. In re Marriage of Weidner, 338 N.W.2d 351, 356 (Iowa 1983); Iowa R. App. P. 14(f)(15). We utilize the factors enumerated in Iowa Code section 598.41(3), and in In re Marriage of Winter, 223 N.W.2d 165, 166-67 (Iowa 1979). We give weight to the fact-findings of the trial court especially when considering the credibility of witnesses. Iowa R. App. P. 14(f)(7); In re Marriage of Vrban, 359 N.W.2d 420, 423 (Iowa 1984). Siblings ordinarily should not be separated. In re Marriage of Grandinetti, 342 N.W.2d 876 (Iowa App. 1983). Such separations require a compelling reason. Id.

The trial court found Jeanne to be the primary caretaker of the boys. The court noted Jeanne's attendance at the boys' athletic events. The court also noted William's strong temper. The record reveals that Chris does not get along very well with Jeanne or Todd. The trial court did not find these relationships to present any serious problems. We do not find the arguments between them to rise to the level of a compelling reason to separate custody of Todd and Chris. We find Jeanne, the primary caretaker, to be the more appropriate parent for physical care of both Todd and Chris.

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II. Child Support

William appeals the order of child support in the amount of $45 per child per week. When reviewing awards of child support we utilize the factors of Iowa Code section 598.21.

Jeanne earned a salary of $15,029 in 1987 from the Fareway Store. William earned $19,284 from Ottumwa Community School District. He also earns between $2,000 and $4,000 doing yard work during the summer. The trial court found Jeanne's expenses with two children to be $1,232 per month. William's net monthly pay is $1,234. Jeanne's net monthly pay is approximately $840.

Our de novo review of the record finds agreement with the trial court. We affirm the award of child support in the amount of $45 per child per week or $360 per month.

III. Property Settlement

Finally, William asserts the court erred in assigning responsibility for payment of all the parties' debts to him. While he received more assets, he contends that $10,300 of this was his IPERS retirement account which has little value to him until he retired. William asks that the cash payment to Jeanne and her sister be eliminated and the debts be reapportioned.

When reviewing division of assets in a dissolution matter we utilize the factors enunciated in Iowa Code

section 598.21 (1987). Given the parties' similar ages, health, educational background and that neither party brought much into the marriage in 1970, we find the trial court's division of assets to be appropriate.

We affirm the trial court in all respects.

AFFIRMED.