

Can we believe anything we read? – staying out of court

We had this disastrous fire at Notre Dame, the 800 year old Cathedral in Paris. I am now suspicious of such events. My suspicions were well founded. For all such disasters there is a method that I follow. I listen to descriptions of commentators on all media immediately after the event and then I notice which part of the commentary is taken down. A classic case of this was 911 but to even think of this is boring. I also look at the data from the first 24-hours and see if it is consistent – including premature claims.

You have to wait a few days for the first videos to appear on Youtube. The first one was made in the USA from a lady who had studied the remarkable fires in California that had the ability to turn cars upside down and melt their engines. She commented that the smoke from the so-called wood fires in Paris was partly white as opposed to the normal black smoke you would get in the case of incomplete combustion from the burning of wood.

When she was first told about the Paris fire, her first question was “what colour was the smoke?” Lo and behold it was white. This is a sign of a chemical accelerant.



I then watched another video from Australia. The commentator said that it was amazing that within a few hours the authorities had definitely

ruled out arson. How did they know unless they had done an examination? There was also a remarkable video of a man on top of the building running around shortly before the fire started holding something in his hand that flashed from time to time. This was taken by a webcam which sits above and adjacent to the Cathedral. The video of this is below.

He also played an interview with a previous chief of security and renovation at the Cathedral who said that the electrical system had recently been replaced and that was no chance of a fire. We were also reminded that the reason for fuses is to detect surges in current and cut off the set current to avoid damage. He also mentioned that there were at least three fire wardens on duty 24 hours a day.

The previous custodian also pointed out that 800 old oak trees become almost fossilised and in the absence of large amounts of kindling would catch fire only with the greatest difficulty.

One rule that I would make is that at all times, keep out of court. Court is a slow motion torture system. You may be right, you may be wrong, but the thought of appearing in court in a few months time hangs over you. I'm reminded of that because my friend, Marina, who works in South Africa selling art from South Africa to the world, was troubled because the girlfriend of her son became pregnant and they both ended up staying in the home. The girl took full advantage of this and was quite happy to eat their food and have them as a free taxi service but eventually things got so bad that the girl was thrown out.

Instead of accepting this, she took out a court case against my friend Marina for cruelty and abuse. Over a period of seven months her story was eventually recognised in court to consist of a pack of lies. My friend had to pay the equivalent of

seven months wages to a lawyer. An application for costs was not made to the girl because she was unemployed. The emotional toll upon the family cannot be overestimated.

My point is this, don't be tempted to go to court over minor things where mediation may be the answer. The only people to win from court cases are the lawyers. The wisest thing is do not do anything which might lead to a court case. People who owe you money will often string things out as much as possible hoping you will lose interest and that is also a strain. Human nature is a wonderful thing and there's plenty of it about. If you detect instability or insanity in any person, have as little to do with them as possible. If you are not completely satisfied with the contract then leave it or ask a qualified friend. If it means walking away, then you walk away and lick your wounds. The wounds will probably be of pride not of money. People are capable of lying convincingly, lying to a solicitor, lying to practically everyone, and to get the firepower to deal with these people costs a lot of money.