

## **BRIGGS' AFFAIR WAS WITH A STUDENT, COURT RECORDS SAY \* COUNCIL CANDIDATE CALLS CHARGES THOSE OF A VINDICTIVE PERSON.**

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Court records show that the 17-year-old girl that Fresno City Council candidate Mike Briggs had illegal sex with in 1985 had been taking private guitar lessons from Briggs at the time of the encounters.

Briggs has denied repeatedly that the girl was a student of his. Briggs said the charge stemmed from his days as a single college student when he had consensual sex with a fellow student who was just under 18.

Briggs said he broke off the relationship with the girl and she became a "spurned, angry and vindictive individual" who told police "lies" to get back at him.

In April 1986, according to court documents, Briggs pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of having unlawful sex with a minor. The judge said that if Briggs had no further arrests and submitted to counseling, he could withdraw his no contest plea and the case would be dismissed. The case was dismissed in October 1986.

Briggs said he would have fought the charge, but his lawyer told him that it would cost \$10,000 in legal fees. The lawyer said it would be simpler and cheaper to plead no contest and have the charge dismissed six months later, Briggs said.

Briggs is seeking the District 1 seat being vacated by Council Member Brian Setencich. He is facing Joy Vincent-Killian in the Nov. 8 election.

The Bee first asked Briggs about the issue two months ago, and he denied that any such incident had ever occurred. During a television debate last Friday, the charge was raised by a reporter from KFSN, Channel 30.

An angry Briggs said he was being smeared by having the issue raised on television, adding "whatever you have is wrong."

The Bee obtained the records from the Clovis branch of the Fresno Municipal Court on Tuesday and asked Briggs to respond. Briggs said the court records were wrong, and the girl was not his guitar student.

Briggs said he was a student at California State University, Fresno, at the time and a Clovis police report on the incident lists the 17-year-old as a Fresno State student.

"Most of the comments are so absurd, untrue and unverified as to not be worthy of public replies," Briggs said Tuesday. "The fact is that I was engaged in a mutual consenting relationship with this person while I was in college."

Raising these "back alley comments" nearly 10 years after the relationship, is the "worst form of character assassination this city has ever witnessed."

The court records show that Briggs and his lawyer signed a statement in April 1986 that said his plea was based on the facts in the police report. The report by Clovis police said Briggs was giving the girl guitar lessons in August 1985 when the sexual relationship began.

She told police that she and Briggs had several sexual encounters and that she broke off the relationship in September 1985, about a month before her 18th birthday.

Briggs, now 35, was 26 at the time of the relationship. He still teaches guitar and plays classical guitar at restaurants, weddings and other social events in the Valley.

Just prior to the first sexual encounter, Briggs jokingly told the girl, "I could go to jail for this," according to the court documents.

On Tuesday, Briggs said he did not make that statement.

In the court records, the girl also said, "I told him how old I was. He knew I was 17."

The relationship lasted about two months. Aunt confronts Briggs

The court records said the girl's aunt discovered the relationship and confronted Briggs on what his "intentions" were. When the aunt asked if she knew how old the girl was, he said, "Yeah, she's 17," the records said.

The aunt then asked if the relationship was "physical." Briggs replied, "yeah," adding that the girl was going to be 18 soon, according to the court documents.

According to records, the aunt also asked Briggs if he knew about the law regarding having sex with a minor. Briggs replied, "Yeah, I know, but she swept me off my feet and I was having problems with my girlfriend. She helped me."

An October 1985 police report said the girl and her family asked that charges be filed.

Although rumors of Briggs' court case surfaced several months ago, an anonymous fax sent to news organizations late last week contained dates and the court case file number.

Briggs has accused his opponent, Vincent-Killian, and her supporters of making the case public to harm his campaign.

Vincent-Killian said Tuesday that she and her campaign were not responsible for sending the information to the media.

She said she first learned of the incident when Briggs was asked about it during the Friday taping of a debate that was televised Sunday.

Caption: **Mike Briggs** is seeking the District 1 seat now held by Council Member Brian Setencich.

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