

# Inside Berks

You may remember this publication profiled the new Berks Election Director Kurt Bellman a couple of weeks ago. The main point of that piece was Bellman's commitment to the political process, to the letter of the law, as opposed to any partisan agenda.

Well, it didn't take long to put that commitment to the test.

Recently a Democratic primary election for township supervisor in Maxatawny Township was decided by one vote. The vote, according to Bellman's reading of the law (and most others I have talked to back up Bellman's position), should not have counted because it was a write in vote for a candidate already on the ballot. The guy that lost because of that vote sued, believing he got robbed of an election victory.

One of the lesser lights on the Berks bench disagreed, of course, citing no case law and no appellate decisions in his favor. One high-ranking county elected official has even called this judge, T.J. Eshelman, "the lazy and stupid judge".

And no wonder. Eshelman didn't even bother to



By David Kamioner

wrote an opinion on this case. This is the same judicial genius who several years ago actually tried to suppress city election results. He, and colleagues in electoral shenanigans then Commissioners Reber and Pyle, would have gotten away with it too if Mark Scott hadn't defied him and released the results anyway. This fool's attitude seems basically to be that he gets to wear a dress to work, ergo: he gets to thumb his nose at the law and play God.

## "It just plain stinks"

Also, a lawyer for one of the candidates, the one that won in court, is also the solicitor of Maxatawny Township and a political fixer of interesting local reputation.

So, the whole deal does not pass the smell test.

As such, Bellman opened up a letter to the County Commissioners this way, "... This is an outcome which causes me great personal and professional distress. It happened on my watch, in my first election. It makes me physically ill."

Berks Commissioners Scott and Reiver were not amused at his missive. Schwank had not weighed in by press time.

Reiver said Bellman's letter upset him more than the combined travesties of Judy Kraines, which is saying an awful lot. Scott, who may have been relatively sympathetic to Bellman's position at first, no doubt thinks Bellman's reaction was way over the top.

It is an interesting impasse because both sides sport good and honorable men. Scott and Reiver are men of strong principles, but men who also value discretion and

team spirit.

And all the more strange because some felt if Bellman were to falter it would be because of a former loyalty to partisan principle. But as this publication told you, it is not that engine that propels Bellman. What makes him tick is a hard and cold inability to tolerate what he feels to be wrong even in the slightest case, "... This outcome deeply offends me. It makes me question all I've come to believe about electoral integrity. It will help explain a continued loss of the sense of civic duty in Berks County. It will increase cynicism."

Though he has since apologized to the Commissioners for his tone, Bellman still may be eventually fired over this. If that happens Berks will lose a kind of person that is rare in government at any level, one that always plays by the rules. And no matter what, it seems the winner of an election in Maxatawny will get shafted because of a bad judicial decision. As Bellman put it, "... this case was procedurally mishandled, then incorrectly decided. It has shaken my belief in our courts. It

leaves me on the verge of resignation from my position. It just plain stinks."

That says it.

Before we go, one correction and one prediction: Last week, in my column on the war, I mentioned an outcome of the conflict would be the end of the concept of "women in the military". I meant, "women in combat". Many brave and noble women have served, and still do, in the support branches and we would be much less strong as a nation without their vital presence.

The prediction? ... Our current state of national bliss won't last much longer. Watch for the cultural and media Left to trot out the old "U.S. imperialism, racism, blah, blah, blah" charges very soon. You see, it's the best chance they've had to trash their own country and give aid and comfort to our enemies since the 60's. And the Left has never been able to resist that temptation. But then, neither would you, if you despised America.

You can reach David Kamioner at [davkam007@hotmail.com](mailto:davkam007@hotmail.com)

## Foundation is taking donations

Berks County residents are rallying to help the victims of last Tuesday's attacks on the nation. One day after the Berks County Community Foundation announced the creation of the September 11th Fund, the first check arrived.

The first check, from Paul and Jean Smith of Blandon, was a donation of \$100.

"We don't usually do this," said Jean Smith. "But there is so much needed up there. We don't know anyone in particular, but the firemen, policemen and others are giving up so much."

The foundation established the fund to support the victims of the terrorist attacks against the United States.

Several local businesses and organizations are also collecting donations including the Women's Veterans of Berks County, The Birdsboro Elementary Center, Service Electric Cablevision, The Salvation Army, Red Cross and many, many others.

Donations to the fund can be made in person, or sent to the foundation at: 501 Washington Street, 8th Floor, P.O. Box 212, Reading, PA 19603.

Proceeds will be distributed to local needs resulting from the attack and then to the New York version of the foundation.

## Hams to meet Oct. 4 at PECO

The Pottstown Area Amateur Radio Club will meet Oct. 4 at 7:15 p.m. at the PECO Energy Limerick Atomic Information Center, 298 Longview Road, Linfield.

Nominations for new officers will be the main agenda.

All "Hams" and interested parties are invited to attend. The November meeting has been changed to Nov. 8.

For more information, call 610-948-5891.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I have recently read of Senator Mike O'Pake's opinions and proposed changes in the child support laws, calling for child support to continue from a deceased parent's estate. Fundamentally, I am outraged by his stance on this issue and need others to clearly see the tremendous risks in his current proposal, Senate Bill 182.

Currently, back support obligations are accounted for out of one's estate. As they should be, these are financial responsibilities to the deceased's minor children and should be satisfied. But to even consider a continued child support order on the payor's estate means that you are elevating the children of divorced parents into preferred status. Does O'Pake truly believe that he has the authority to propose what any

given parent should leave to their child in their personal will? Or just divorced parents?

His proposed bill leaves many unanswered questions: what about children other than the ones who are under a court order to be supported? Which court has jurisdiction? Probate court? Are any provisions provided by the deceased parent, such as life insurance, trust benefits counted as credit to the support? Do benefits already secured by the child, such as social security, a credit against support payments? Most importantly, to whom does the accountability belong to for the support expenditures? Who may request modification of an order?

Perhaps he will reconsider his position. Child support is a financial responsibility and an obligation of both parents — not just the

one sending the check. I urge you to contact O'Pake and voice your opinion. Introduce legislation demanding accountability of the parent receiving the monies on behalf of the child. This is what should be inescapable. You would find little need to continue down the path of discriminatory mandates and instead, find a wealth of support-paying fathers would more than willingly provide because they would ultimately know that there last bequests would benefit those it was intended for — their children. You would also preserve equality between families and not violate any constitutional rights of an individual.

Denise Chroscinski  
Boyertown

To the Editor:

I turned on my e-mail this morning and received a message from one of the interpreters that I met when in Ukraine in 1998.

This just shows that the Sister Cities program is one of many that are making an impact in international relations and understanding. It certainly felt good that people who are in desperate straits themselves have deep feelings for us in this time of trouble.

Dear Friends,

We are all indignant at the terror attacks implemented not only against the USA, but also against all the peaceful people all over the world. These unprecedented acts shocked and can't dissemble the anger towards the executors of someone's evil will.

We are very sorry and want to share the burden laid on your shoulders. We want you to know that in this hard minute we are with you.

Sveta  
Bogodukhiv Sister City  
Committee

James Tribbett  
Boyertown

More letters on  
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Looking for Volunteers...

Volunteer positions available include:  
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It's a great way to meet people, make new friends and become involved in an excellent program.

For more information, call (610) 367-2313

FROM THE  
**BOYERTOWN ALUMNI MARCHING UNIT**

**THANK YOU!**

To Everyone That Participated In Our "PATRIOTIC MUSIC CONCERT" That Was Held On Sunday Evening, September 16.

With A Near Capacity Audience And Over 75 Musicians On Hand, The Boyertown Alumni Band Raised \$3,709 For The American Red Cross.

We Are Thankful To Our Great Community For Their Support Of America In These Trying Times.

Tom McHugh  
President

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**DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2001**