

the side bar

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMORELAND BAR ASSOCIATION VOLUME XV, NUMBER 4 JULY-AUGUST 2003

Attorneys Go Back to School

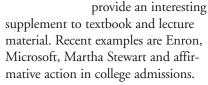
Editor's note: It's that time of year again. Time for backpacks and notebooks, school buses and great cafeteria food. It's also time for some WBA members to make the trek back to school—not as students, but as educators. We wanted to know what inspires them to teach, so we asked them to share their stories with us.

DAVID T. COFER

ur legal system is crucial to maintaining an orderly, prosperous and fair society. Therefore, teaching young people to understand and respect the law is a very worthwhile, constructive endeavor and is a "labor of love" for me.

I have been teaching business law to undergraduate students at Saint

Vincent College for five years as a "hobby." Topics covered include contracts, U.C.C., real estate, corporations, partnerships, employment/ labor, anti-trust, securities, and the court system and litigation procedure. Current events



In addition to providing a great opportunity to "give back" some of the many benefits of my legal career by sharing knowledge and experience with young people, teaching helps me to be a better lawyer by staying more current on a number of business law topics and to stay "young at heart."

CHRIS HAIDZE

Legal and Ethical Environment of Business at PSU New Ken. I taught Fall 2002, Summer 2003 and will teach Fall 2003 again.

Does teaching help you in the day to day practice of law? It provides a great refresher in a number of areas of the common law, but does not really help me specifically in my practice.

What rewarding experiences have you had while teaching? It's great when the students actually pay attention. Actually, a few students have taken issues we discussed in class and have applied them in their real-life legal situations.

What have you learned from being a teacher? It's not as easy as it looks and you have to stay at least one step ahead of the students. I've also learned how to be more proficient at using Microsoft PowerPoint. The book comes with a CD with PowerPoint presentations that serve as an outline for each class discussion.

How did you get into "teaching?" Teaching is something I have always wanted to do. A neighbor teaches engineering at PSU New Ken and they were looking for an attorney to teach the course I teach. He brought it to my attention and I applied right away.



Chris Haidze

JAMES E. KELLEY, JR.

Before my wife and I went to Italy last year, I enrolled in a noncredit Italian class offered by the Westmoreland County Community College.

Teaching was not the vocation of the gentleman who taught the class, but rather it was an avocation. I could see that he enjoyed the interaction with the students

and the fact that some of us somehow managed to learn to speak Italian. That is probably the reason why I have been teaching law-related classes

for the Westmoreland County Community College since the early 1980s. Over the past 23 years I looked at the faces of many students who were generally interested (or perhaps perplexed) by the real estate law. Many of these individuals went



ent Jim Kelley continued on page 6

David Cofer

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President's Message

Lamentations of the Parent, Part I

by Aaron M. Kress, Esq.

ver the years, there has been a movement in our society to seek guidance in our everyday lives from the Bible. This trend is evident in the legal profession, especially among the members of the Westmoreland Bar Association. More and more of our members have either taken on the roles of seminarians

and clerics or are clergypeople who subsequently became lawyers.

Having witnessed this, I became interested in whatever guidance I might find in the Good Book to shepherd me in my daily life. Accordingly,

while perusing "Google" for references to the Pentateuch, I came across a translation of what appears to have been an Aramaic scroll, dealing with the raising of children. Since most of us are either parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, I thought it would be helpful to share Part I of these ancient thoughts with you, to-wit. Part II will appear in the September-October 2003 issue of the sidebar.

LAWS CONCERNING **FOOD AND DRINK**

Of the beasts of the field, and of the fishes of the sea, and of all foods that are acceptable in my sight you may eat, but not in the living room. Of the hoofed animals, broiled or ground into burgers, you may eat, but not in the living room. Of the cloven-hoofed animal, plain or with cheese, you may eat, but not in the living room. Of the cereal grains, of the corn and of the wheat and of the oats, and of all the cereals that are of bright color and unknown provenance you may eat, but not in the living room. Of the quiescently frozen dessert and of all

frozen after-meal treats you may eat, but absolutely not in the living room. Of the juices and other beverages, yes, even of those in sippy-cups, you may drink, but not in the living room, neither may you carry such therein. Indeed, when you reach the place where the living room carpet begins, of any food or beverage there you may not eat, neither may you drink.

But if you are sick, and are lying down and watching something, then may you eat in the living room.

LAWS WHEN AT TABLE

And if you are seated in your high chair, or in a chair such as a greater person might use, keep your legs and feet below you as they were. Neither raise up your knees, nor place your feet upon the table, for that is an abomination to me. Yes, even when you have an interesting bandage to show, your feet upon the

table are an abomination, and worthy of rebuke. Drink your milk as it is given you, neither use on it any utensils, nor fork, nor knife, nor spoon, for that is not what they are for; if you will dip your blocks in the milk, and lick it off, you will be sent away. When you have drunk, let the empty cup then remain upon the table, and do not bite it upon its edge and by your teeth hold it to your face in order to make noises in it sounding like a duck; for you will be sent away.

When you chew your food, keep your mouth closed until you have swallowed, and do not open it to show your brother or your sister what is within; I say to you, do not so, even if your brother or your sister has done the same to you. Eat your food only; do not eat that which is not food; neither seize the table between your jaws, nor use the raiment of the table to wipe your lips. I say again to you, do not touch it, but leave it as it is. And though your stick of carrot does

indeed resemble a

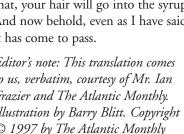
marker, draw not with it upon the table, even in pretend, for we do not do that, that is why. And though the pieces of broccoli are very like small trees, do not stand them upright to make a forest, because we do not do that, that is why. Sit just as I have told you, and do not lean to one side or the other, nor slide down until you are nearly

slid away. Heed me; for if you sit like that, your hair will go into the syrup. And now behold, even as I have said, it has come to pass.

Editor's note: This translation comes to us, verbatim, courtesy of Mr. Ian Frazier and The Atlantic Monthly. Illustration by Barry Blitt. Copyright © 1997 by The Atlantic Monthly Company. All rights reserved.

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Dicta: Lunch Buddy Diary

by Beth Orbison, Esq.

Judge Gary P. Caruso recently solicited members of the Westmoreland Bar Association to participate in the "Lunch Buddy Program," developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters in conjunction with the Emergency Youth Shelter in which the association member agrees to have lunch once a week with a child who is temporarily residing at the shelter. Currently, twelve members are actively participating in this program.

NOON, TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2003

First impression: cold, steely look from a 13-year-old girl, savvy from experience in city streets and already having an established reputation as a formidable street-fighter, succeeds in intimidating me, whose childhood was spent in a cornfield-speckled suburb in the east. I'm immediately self-conscious in the face of what seems to be an awkward, forced coupling.

Try to explain why I'm there. But I don't really know why. Give some vague official reason derived from the handout material that Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Emergency Youth Shelter developed. And she begins to tell me part of her story, about why she's there. "Can you talk to the judge?" I have to explain why I can't. "Do you think I'll be able to go home?" I have to explain that I'm unfamiliar with how the system works, so I don't know. I wonder what good I am for her and if she is wondering the same.

Siblings in foster care. "Mom wants me to come home." (Mom has a problem with illegal drug use.) "I want to go home, too." She cries, angrily pushing away her lunch tray. Our conversation struggles along. Halfway through the hour she smiles for the first time, a lovely white straight-toothed melting smile. Relief. Then some girl-talk. "Do you have pierced ears?" "My mom's bringing me my jewelry when she visits."

"I like to read the Bible and sing Christian songs, hymns. I go to school at the Christian Academy." I recognize the school as being affiliated with the church that has the uncharacteristically clever messages on its billboard, inspirational messages that change from week to week, and she says, proudly and somewhat fondly, that her pastor

is the one who makes them up.

"I have a summer job. I take care of my four cousins, one is a baby. They live in Pittsburgh in a big house." "Can you talk to the judge? Can you talk to my lawyer?" Within the confines of the Lunch Buddy Program, I



Beth Orbison

can't promise to talk to anyone who has any real influence over her future. But it occurs to me that I can offer to pray for this Christian-minded girl, and I do.

NOON, TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2003

econd impression: she recognizes me after a moment's hesitation, and we sit down together at the lunchroom table, now week-old friends. Her hair is down this time, in bronze tendrils around her lightly dark face. She is lovely. She has a hearing scheduled on Thursday at which time she'll find out whether she can go home or be sent to a longer-term facility.

"Do you think I'll be able to go home?" "I'm on the purple level now and I'll be on green by Thursday. Bob says I've been doing well. I got straight A's in school, but I missed 30 days in drug rehab and 24 more with some

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The Youth Advisory Committee of the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County recently presented a grant to Judge Caruso's Lunch Buddy Program. Shown from left to right are Bruce Hotchkiss, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Laurel Region; Tim Owen, President of the Youth Advisory Committee; The Hon. Gary P. Caruso; and M. Dennis Taylor, Vice President of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Laurel Region.

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Dicta: Lunch Buddy Diary continued from page 3

doctor and dental excuses but not all excused, and I haven't been in trouble here. When I go home I'm just spending time with my family and I'm going to stay away from my friends on the street. My grandma is worried about me being here and I don't want to add anymore to her worry." It is true that not only is she an excellent student, she's also a gifted athlete.

"Do you think I'll be able to go home?" "My probation officer says I may have to go into placement. My mom says that my probation may be extended. Maybe you can come to my hearing on Thursday and talk to the judge. Can you talk to my attorney? Do you know him well? Are you good friends?" "My grandparents have owned a candy store for 35 years, and my grandpa says that if I can get things in order I can work in the store. They sell candy and hotdogs and lottery tickets and cigarettes and nachos with cheese sauce. One time someone threw a brick through the window and it almost hit my grandpa."

I say that she may be the owner of that store someday, and that I'll come and buy things from her, and we'll remember that we used to visit each other here, in this small cafeteria with the fried, breaded food in this emergency shelter.

"Visiting hours are tomorrow, the times are posted on the door, and maybe you could come and meet my mom. My mom says that she will turn me in if I misbehave again." "Do you think I'll be able to go home?"

We are just supposed to have lunch together once a week—that's it. Even the title that we who participate are given, "lunch buddies," suggests that our relationship should remain "lite." I have been reminded and instructed that I'm not her attorney, I'm not her parent, I'm not her therapist, I'm not her preacher—I'm there just to be a friend and supportive. Being support-

ive is easy, but a problem arises because more happens. Although I acknowledge and accept that we have limited time together and that I serve a specific purpose, bound within carefully drawn parameters, more happens. What happens is that I quickly develop an aching tenderness for someone who, at least in some measure, has entrusted me with the knowledge of her fears, pleasures and vulnerabilities. And due to the

limitations of the relationship, I feel impotent in the face of such intimacy, a feeling that I—and I suspect most lawyers—do not handle easily.

Walking up the street back to the office at the end of the lunch hour likely marks the conclusion of my time with this girl whom I have genuinely become fond of and, realistically, will probably never see again.

Next Tuesday at noon, most likely with another, I'll do it all over again.

Runathon to Support Lunch Buddy Program

by The Hon. Gary P. Caruso

s many of you are aware, some Greensburg area members of the Bar Association are volunteering their time once a week as mentors in the Lunch Buddy program at the Emergency Youth Shelter here in Greensburg. In this issue of *the sidebar* is an article by Beth Orbison relating some of her experiences and feelings as one of the mentors. I can tell you that as one of the mentors, I also have had many of the same thoughts.

The Lunch Buddy program is administered by Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Laurel Region (BBBS), located here in Greensburg. The program is very worthwhile and I would encourage anyone in the Greensburg area not involved to consider becoming one of the mentors. It only takes one hour a week at lunch. Not only will you help a child in need, I guarantee that you will find the experience very rewarding.

It has come to my attention that every year at SCI Greensburg a Runathon is held to benefit the local BBBS agency. Anywhere from 80 to 125 prisoners have run to raise funds though pladges. The

funds though pledges. The average number of miles run each year on a single Saturday morning is 1,000. This year the plans are to designate the funds to support the Lunch Buddy program at the shelter. I would like to challenge all of you to support this effort by pledging to support a runner in



The Hon. Gary P. Caruso

this year's event which will be held in late September. The Runathon begins at 8:00 a.m. and lasts until noon. The farthest any runner has gone is 27 miles. Fill out the pledge form inserted in this issue and send it to Big Brothers Big Sisters. You can make a flat donation or they will bill you after the Runathon.

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Disciplinary Board Launches New Web Site

he Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania announced the launching of its new Web site at www.padisciplinaryboard.org. This Web site offers a wealth of information for consumers and attorneys.

Consumers can search Pennsylvania attorney registration records, verify that their lawyers are currently in good standing and whether their lawyers have ever been publicly disciplined. Consumers can also learn how to file a complaint against a lawyer and download the complaint form in English or Spanish.

Attorneys can use the site to check an attorney's status and verify address information, get answers to frequently asked questions concerning attorney registration and disciplinary procedures, as well as obtain copies of the current Disciplinary Rules and case law.

Chairman of the Board Charles J.
Cunningham, who practices law in
Philadelphia, joined the
Disciplinary Board in
1997 and found that
most of the law and
procedures of
the disciplinary
system were not
well known to the
public or among
lawyers. "There is no
reason for this process to be
shrouded in mystery," he said.

"The Pennsylvania attorney disciplinary system is an exemplary one that every Pennsylvanian can be proud of and the Board has a duty to communicate that to the legal community and to the general public."

The Disciplinary Board was created in 1972 to consider and investigate the conduct of any lawyer admitted

to practice in Pennsylvania.

It is composed of fourteen lawyers and two non-lawyers who serve for up to six years. The Board investigates complaints from the public and has the power to initiate its own investigations. It adjudicates complaints against lawyers and makes disciplinary findings that generally range

from private reprimand to disbarment for professional misconduct. The Board operates on a \$7.5 million budget, which is raised by an annual assessment that is collected from all active Pennsylvania lawyers.



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JENNIE BULLARD

I am assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Industrial and Labor Relations, an applied graduate-only program, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I teach Dispute Settlement (arbitration, mediation, conciliation and the like); Collective Bargaining (the study of the National Labor Relations Act) as it applies to the workplace; Discrimination in Employment; Concerted Activities and Employee Rights under the Law. I have taught graduate school at IUP for nine years.

LEE R. DEMOSKY

I am an adjunct professor at Saint Vincent College and the coach of the College's Mock Trial Team. The title of the course I teach is "Introduction to Legal Reasoning." I teach students from all class levels. I have been an instructor at Saint Vincent since 1999.

VERA K. DUCRUET

I currently teach a course called "German for Lawyers" at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and have been doing this since the fall of 1994. The course is designed to introduce law students to German legal terminology. The course is also open to attorneys for CLE credit.

SUZANNE J. MAHADY

I taught "Landlord Tenant and the Law," a consumer-oriented landlord tenant class, at Westmoreland County Community College's Continuing Education Department for approximately 20 years.

MICHAEL J. STEWART

Since 1982, I have made an annual presentation on divorce to the Family Living Courses at Hempfield Area High School. During my class, I take the newly married bride and groom, fast-forward their lives 20 years, provide them with children, careers, assets, and finally, a paramour for one of the parties. As the marriage crumbles, and the students become familiar with the economic reality of a divorce, the students experience some frustration in being unable to economically "punish" the unfaithful spouse.

Attorneys Go Back to School

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on to take their real estate license test. I have also taught, in the non-credit division, the mandatory education for existing realtors. Sprinkled here and there were classes taught in business law and in the paralegal program (estates and trusts, and administrative law).

Why do I do this? It is an outgrowth of my love for education since, before becoming an attorney, I was a guidance counselor for eight years. And, unlike the practice of law where your colleagues are always trying to convince the court that you are wrong, my students generally believe I know something. Since the Community College attracts older students, they bring with them a true desire of learning along with interesting backgrounds. My students are also very nice people.

Over the years, being with students has taught me several things. First, I had an individual who was a bartender and worked into the wee hours of the morning (he was in my Saturday morning class). He sat in the back row with his feet propped up on the desk in front of him, closed his eyes and, for all I know, went to sleep. I thanked him for not snoring. He aced both examinations. This experience taught me the importance of the learner in the class room experience. Apparently he could learn very well just by listening. Another experience concerned a student who, when first looking at him, reminded me of a character from "Smokey and the Bandit." His girth told me he enjoyed his time at the dinner table and his long unkempt beard led me to believe he had an aversion to razor blades. I must admit my first impression was not overwhelming. Nonetheless, I had this student for Business Law I and Business Law II. It turned out he was one of the brightest individuals I ever met.

He asked questions that sent me to the research books. You simply cannot judge a book by its cover.

I have found that teaching classes relates well to my day-to-day practice of law. When you prepare and teach a subject over a period of time, you really do get to know something about it. I also found that the need to explain the law to students has enabled me to do so in my practice with greater clarity.

When the Community College became more involved with interactive learning through the Internet and/or teleconference learning, I refused to teach these types of classes. First and foremost, my enjoyment of teaching comes from being with the students. Without them, it simply would not be the same. While it makes for long days (some classes would start at 6:00 p.m. and not end until 10:00 p.m.) I always felt refreshed each time I walked into class. If I could step back twenty years, I would do it all over again.



Kathleen Kemp

KATHLEEN KEMP

ast
Winter
I taught
the Divorce
sessions of the
Family Law
Clinic at
Duquesne
University
School of Law. I
was asked to do

so by the Pittsburgh Legal Services coordinator for the clinic program. The students were the twenty or so third-year students who were certified to practice in the courts in family law settings. I really enjoyed the experience because it gave me a chance to revisit material that I had not had to deal with for awhile. The students

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were interested to hear examples of real people, real families, and the kinds of trouble they get themselves into. Many had questions about fault divorce grounds and were amazed to hear that a court could refuse to grant a divorce if it decided that the parties were equally at fault.

KIM HOUSER

teach the Legal Aspects of Emergency Services to firefighters ▲ in specialized investigations both within the state and nationally at the National Fire Academy. I also teach Advanced Interrogation Techniques and perform special seminars and consultations for non-profit corporations and several medium-sized for-profit corporations. I have been teaching and doing seminars over the past 15 years. I learn from every classroom event and from each student. The whole experience is very humbling.

What I like about teaching is that I enjoy meeting new and interesting people. Many of these persons already have an intuitive understanding of the subjects. However, the enjoyment comes when we develop a simplistic conceptual structure for the many subjects and concepts that then become usable to the student. I enjoy students leaving the presentations with the ability to analyze and teach themselves on the topics presented.

What I don't like is that I fail to understand why some students actively resist and/or sabotage their learning opportunity.

I never really wanted to be in teaching. My purpose then was to find out how to motivate people to accept new ideas and concepts and to develop practical leadership skills for my Business and Economics major. The creative teaching curricula at Washington-Jefferson College has become a powerful skill as a trial lawyer. There were many good teachers throughout junior high, senior high, and college that were both creative and actually taught us to teach ourselves. They include Messrs. Furlong, Smith and Smeltzer at

Hempfield High School and Dr. Ream at Washington-Jefferson

From being a teacher, the many topics and seminars are merely structured platforms to present

concepts to the students. I have gained a better appreciation of each person's unique intellectual strengths (many of which are greater than my own) and that by teaching, I learned more about the materials and mvself.



Kim Houser

My biggest reward is seeing students leaving the classroom/seminar environment and actually seeing them teach themselves and applying the concepts presented.

Teaching has helped me to be a better trial lawyer as the pool of students to whom I present the

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specialized topics are persons who are very opinionated—quickly willing to give you their opinions and to tell you that you sound educated, but what you are saying means nothing them. That has prepared me to present my case effectively and simply to jurors of our community.



David Millstein

DAVID J. MILLSTEIN

have been teaching civil rights related subjects for many years now, first at Pitt at Greensburg, (Brian Aston was one of my first students but hey, I'm not a miracle worker) and then as an adjunct professor at Duquesne University School of

Law, my alma mater. At the present time, I teach a one-semester course in the fall at Duquesne on Civil Rights

Practice under Sec. 1983, and supervise a civil rights clinic in the spring term.

Why do I do it? Good question. First, I love the material. I don't think there is anything more majestic in the law than keeping the government out of its citizens' private lives. It's kind of like a David and Goliath thing with

That may be why I love civil rights, but it doesn't explain why I teach. No, I teach because I want there to be a lot more little lawyer-zealots like me running around, keeping government in its place, striking down those surfeit with the arrogance of power, kicking those in the ass who most need it, and sanctifying the rights of the individual by paying homage to the laws that protect them.

I want to get my fingers on the brains of my students before they are fully formed so I can shape them into lawyers who care about what

they do, who bleed with the little guy, who understand that the law's first and foremost purpose is to level the playing field between the strong and the weak, and to make damned certain they understand that what makes this country different and better than any that has come and gone before, what makes this country so glorious in its conception and its execution, is that the state exists primarily to serve the individual, not vice versa. My students need to understand that the Warren Court was a golden age of liberty unlike any other and that John Ashcroft is a minion of the devil and will undoubtedly rot in hell for his transgressions against the heart, the soul and the spirit of America.

And then there's this ... being a law school professor makes everyone else think I'm really, really smart.

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May/June 2003 Trial Term

Jury Trial Verdicts

by Rachel Yantos, Esq.

f 113 cases listed for the May/June 2003 Civil Trial Term, 28 settled, 31 were continued, two moved to arbitration, five were transferred to nonjury, bankruptcy was filed in one, two will be summary jury trials, summary judgment was entered in two, one was held nonjury, eight verdicts were entered and 33 were held to the next term. The juries deliberated upon actions for medical malpractice, premises liability and motor vehicle negligence.

RUTH K. HUBER,
ADMINISTRATRIX OF
THE ESTATE OF DOUGLAS
HUBER, DECEASED

V.

SANJEEV JETHMALANI, M.D. NO. 9362 OF 1995

Cause of Action: Negligence— Medical Malpractice— Wrongful Death Act—Survival Act

This medical malpractice action was brought against the defendantphysician, a specialist in pulmonary diseases, for the failure to test for pulmonary emboli. On November 29 and December 6, 1993, Douglas Huber was treated at the emergency department of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, was diagnosed with viral bronchitis and pneumonia, respectively, and was released. The defendant was consulted by Mr. Huber's attending physician when Mr. Huber presented to Latrobe Area Hospital, resulting in his admission on December 26, 1993. Mr. Huber had been treated for pneumonia for one month without any success. He exhibited signs and symptoms of shortness of breath, coughing up blood, pleural effusion on X-ray, pleuritic chest pain, increased white cell count, slight fever

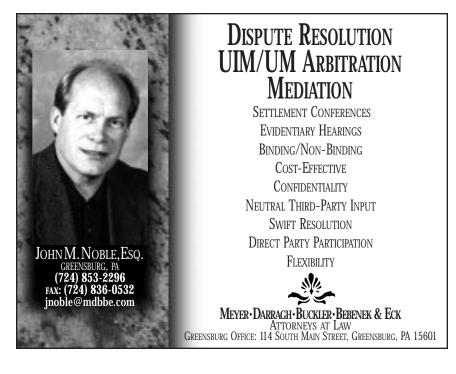
and chills. Mr. Huber was started on a course of antibiotics. On the eve of January 4 and into January 5, 1994, Mr. Huber suffered a sudden onset of pain and extreme shortness of breath. An angiogram was ordered by his attending physician, which revealed multiple pulmonary emboli. Mr. Huber was flown to Allegheny General Hospital, but died three days later on January 8, 1994. Plaintiff asserted that defendant was negligent in his early treatment of Mr. Huber because he ruled out pulmonary emboli as a possible diagnosis without testing for the same.

Defendant denied all allegations of negligence. While many signs and symptoms were consistent with pulmonary embolism, there was no evidence that such condition existed prior to January 4. Defendant noted that another pulmonary specialist had examined Mr. Huber the morning of January 4. Based upon the same record and information, that specialist had suggested a biopsy of the lung to

rule out cancer and did not suspect pulmonary embolism. Defendant asserted that it is rare for pulmonary embolism to cause death in a 22-year-old male. Mr. Huber contracted a mysterious illness that produced a pulmonary embolism. Finally, these events occurred ten years ago. The jury was asked to decide how other physicians practicing in the specialty of pulmonary medicine with the same information and technology available to them would have acted under the same or similar circumstances.

Plaintiff's Counsel: Ned J. Nakles,
Jr., Nakles & Nakles, Latrobe
Defendant's Counsel: Giles J. Gaca,
Gaca Matis Baum & Rizza, Pgh.
Trial Judge: The Hon. Daniel J.
Ackerman, President Judge
Result: Molded verdict for
Defendant. Jury found that
defendant was not negligent.

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RAMONA TROUT, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF JAMES LEWIS STRICKLAND

V

INDIANA COUNTY GUIDANCE CENTER NO. 829 OF 1997

Cause of Action: Negligence—Medical Malpractice— Wrongful Death Act—Survival Act

On February 2, 1995, James Lewis Strickland was involuntarily admitted to Westmoreland Regional Hospital pursuant to the Mental Health Procedures Act (MHPA). Mr. Strickland exhibited signs of depression, suicidal and homicidal ideation, anxiety, alcohol dependency, polysubstance abuse and flight into health. On February 7, 1995, a discharge hearing was held and an order was signed committing him to mandatory outpatient treatment at the defendant mental health treatment facility until February 27, 1995. The order provided that Mr. Strickland was to appear at the center on February 14, and, should he fail to appear, he would be taken to Westmoreland Regional Hospital for an additional thirty-day involuntary in-patient treatment. On February 14, Mr. Strickland failed to appear at his appointment. Plaintiff alleged that Mr. Strickland attempted to reschedule his appointment several times via telephone between February 15 and February 21. On February 21, he was able to reschedule the appointment for February 23. On February 22, Mr. Strickland died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Plaintiff argued that the grossly negligent acts of defendant in failing to comply with the mandatory discharge order, failing to diagnose Mr. Strickland as suffering from suicidal ideation with intent to commit and/or in failing to institute proper diagnostic measures to discover and treat his condition in a timely manner resulted in Mr. Strickland's commission of suicide on February 22. Plaintiff sought compensatory damages pursuant to the wrongful death and survival acts.

Defendant denied that there was a mandatory involuntary outpatient treatment order. In the alternative, if such order existed, defendant denied that it had any knowledge or notice of the mandatory order. After Mr. Strickland missed his February 14 appointment, defendant contended that its employee received one phone call from him on February 15 to reschedule. The employee advised Mr. Strickland to come to the center to complete paperwork and that no appointment was necessary. Defendant denied that there was any misdiagnosis or failure of defendant to institute appropriate diagnostic measures. Because Mr. Strickland failed to appear at his February 14 appointment and come to the center as requested, defendant had no opportunity to diagnose or treat Mr. Strickland. Defendant asserted the affirmative

defense of qualified immunity pursuant to the MHPA, 50 P.S. § 7114.

Plaintiff's Counsel: Victor H. Pribanic, Pribanic & Pribanic, P.C., White Oak

Defendant's Counsel: Kristen L. Pieseski, Davies, McFarland & Carroll, P.C., Pgh.

Trial Judge: The Hon. Daniel J. Ackerman, President Judge

Result: Molded verdict for Defendant. Jury found no gross negligence on the part of defendant.

ANNA MARIE TERPKO, AN INDIVIDUAL

JEANNETTE GARDENS ASSOCIATES, A PENNSYLVANIA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP NO. 5281 OF 1999

Cause of Action: Negligence—Premises Liability

Defendant was the owner, manager and leasing agent of Jeannette Garden Apartments. Plaintiff, who is confined to a wheelchair, was a tenant at the apartment complex. At approximately 10:00 p.m. on October 13, 1998, plaintiff's son was pushing plaintiff up the curving sloped ramp in front of the main entrance, which served as the only handicapped access available to plaintiff. As he made the

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bend at the top of the hill, the front wheels of the wheelchair came in contact with landscaping railroad timber that protruded into the ramp route. Plaintiff fell out of the wheelchair, hitting her head and side upon the concrete sidewalk. Plaintiff alleged that a dangerous condition existed because the area was poorly lit and the timber was hidden by overgrown plantings. Plaintiff suffered head contusions, left knee bruise and swelling and multiple fractures of the left distal femur requiring surgery and extended rehabilitation.

Defendant asserted the affirmative defenses of contributory/comparative negligence and voluntary assumption of the risk because she traversed the sidewalk with awareness of the presence of the retaining wall. Should a jury find a dangerous condition to have existed, defendant maintained that the existence and position of the retaining wall and the potential consequences of running into it were open, obvious and known to plaintiff and her son. Defendant also averred that plaintiff's injuries were caused by her son's negligence.

Plaintiff's Counsel: Barry J. Palkovitz, Palkovitz Law Office, White Oak

Defendant's Counsel: Thomas W. Smith, Mears, Smith, Houser & Boyle, P.C., Gbg.

Trial Judge: The Hon. Gary P. Caruso

Result: Molded verdict for Plaintiff in the amount of \$62,500.00. Jury assigned 50% contributory negligence to plaintiff.

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WILLIAM C. SCHLOSSER AND BESSIE M. SCHLOSSER, HIS WIFE

V.

ROBERT B. BOYLE, TRUSTEE UNDER THE EMMETT C. BOYLE, JR., REVOCABLE TRUST DATED 11/9/87 NO. 1695 OF 2000

Cause of Action: Negligence—Premises Liability— Loss of Consortium—Arbitration Appeal

On March 18, 1998, plaintiff-husband was involved in a slip and fall at the Midtown Plaza in Greensburg. The defendant owned the leasehold interest in and to the premises. Plaintiff was a business invitee. Public access to the businesses in the plaza was provided by a stairway and hallway. As plaintiff entered the premises, a piece of wax paper and an accumulation of water on the stairway caused him to slip and fall. Plaintiff's injuries included those to his ribs and hip, numbness in his hands and arms, blood clot in his left leg and other soft tissue injuries. Plaintiff-wife claimed loss of consortium.

In new matter, defendant asserted that plaintiff's injuries, losses and damages were caused and/or contributed to by the negligence or carelessness on the part of other individuals or entities for whom the defendant was neither liable nor responsible. Defendant also averred that plaintiff's injuries were sustained as the result of independent or intervening causes over which defendant had no control or in any way participated.

Plaintiffs' Counsel: Scott A. Fatur, David K. Lucas & Associates, Gbg.

Defendant's Counsel: John V. DeMarco, Pgh. Trial Judge: The Hon. Gary P. Caruso Result: Molded verdict for Defendant.

HELEN DAWN WOODLEY AND CLAUDE G. WOODLEY, HER HUSBAND

v.
JAYNE E. LIGHTHEART
NO. 7558 OF 2000

Cause of Action: Negligence— Motor Vehicle Accident—Arbitration Appeal

This motor vehicle accident occurred on a private road off Jacob Miller Road Extension in Ligonier Township on December 18, 1998, at approximately 8:15 a.m., Plaintiffwife was operating a vehicle owned by her husband in a southerly direction on the private road, while Defendant was traveling north on the same. Plaintiff alleged that defendant's vehicle crossed the center of the road and collided head-on with plaintiff's vehicle. The accident occurred near the crest of a small hill, and one tree flanked the road on each side. Plaintiff's injuries included laceration of the tongue in two places, a herniated disk, carpal tunnel syndrome in her left arm, aggravation of an existing neck and back condition, aggravation of a possible sleep disorder

continued on page 14

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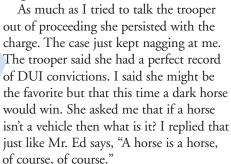
Adventures in Law-Law Land

Saddle Up

by Judge Irving L. Bloom

In December 1988 a client was charged with operating a motor vehicle while under the influence. The client's blood alcohol content was .11%. He was riding on Route 711 north of Ligonier when the vehicle was hit by a truck. Okay, so far it is a simple DUI—except that the

alleged vehicle was a horse.





Judge Irving L. Bloom

The case hit the national wires and stories about it appeared nationwide. I was inter-

viewed by ABC news radio, Lynn Cullen, and several other radio talk shows. I got my Andy Warhol 15 minutes of fame.

As I do with all my legal proceedings, I treated this case with the greatest of dignity—even when the story became a comic tag line at the end of a Peter Jennings newscast. While I was exuding the greatest of dignity, Assistant DA Wayne Gongaware was prosecuting the case as if it were funny. For shame, Wayne!

In researching the issue, I found a case on all four hooves with my case. The Utah case of *State v. Blowers* held that a vehicle had to have a device involved and a horse was not a device. Their vehicle statute was similarly worded to Pennsylvania's, so I had good authority on my side. I felt very confident. I had been having a losing streak lately and thought it was time I got to whinny one for a change.

I tried to reason with Wayne but he persisted in showing my arguments great horse-tility. And so with a hearty "Hi Ho, Silver," I prepared to charge at a gallop into the courtroom of District Magistrate Denise Thiel.

LawSpeak

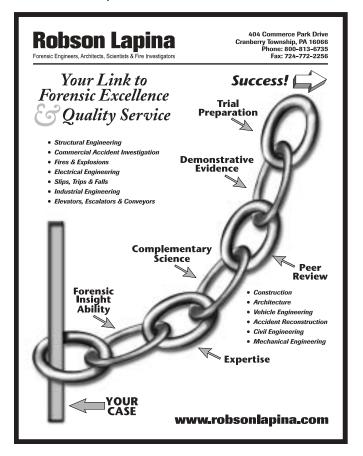
"An avidity to punish is always dangerous to liberty. It leads men to stretch, to misinterpret, and to misapply even the best of laws. He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself."

— Thomas Paine, "Dissertation on First Principles of Government," Sense and other Political Writings, (Adkins, Wilson, F., Ed.; New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc.(1953), P. 174. At the hearing, I cited the *Blowers* case and read seven definitions of "device"; none of them referred to a horse as being a device. Assistant D.A. Gongaware pointed out that the horse had no lights on. I conceded that the horse was de-lighted but it did not matter since the horse was not a vehicle. I accused Wayne of beating a dead horse since the animal had been killed in the accident. Judge Thiel did not horse around with the case, showed some horse sense and dismissed the charges because of the *Blowers* case.

Many print media people and camera crews from four TV stations had covered the hearing.

At the conclusion of the hearing, I was interviewed by Wayne Van Dine from Channel 2 News on Magistrate Thiel's front steps. He asked me my feelings at having won the case. My response was, "I am very pleased that after hearing all the law and the evidence, in deciding whether or not a horse is a vehicle, the Magistrate responded by saying 'Neeeeigh.'"

That night as I watched the news with some friends, they just sat there slowly shaking their heads. Undoubtedly, they were in shock and awe at my great restraint in victory.



July–August 2003 side bar • 13

To-Wit: Leonard

by S. Sponte, Esq.

t was an ordinary landlord tenant case. I represented a landlord whose tenant, a scheming young woman, had moved out early and contrived to make it appear that she had been evicted wrongfully. On my advice, the landlord retained her security deposit as partial payment of the remainder due under the lease, and the tenant had filed suit for its return. Her lawyer, together with her short skirt, persuaded the magistrate that the security deposit should be returned.

"Take the appeal," I instructed my new associate who had tried the case. I rarely appear before magistrates anymore unless it happens to be a magistrate I like. So, as I say, I rarely appear before magistrates anymore.

When she reduced her demand to \$500 the day before trial, my associate asked whether we should settle.

"Nope," I said, "it's still robbery."
"You're making a big mistake," he whined.

A few minutes after he left my office, it hit me that I had uttered those same words to my employer in a similar case, oh, how long ago, maybe 30 years.

His name was Leonard, he was my first law boss, and he was the most complex and difficult person to work for. He alternated between abrasive and kind so fast and so often that I thought I was working for partners.

As his young associate, I had worked with him on a similar matter. True, it was a bigger and more complex case, but it was no greater a ripoff. Our client had sold an apartment building and then had been sued by the buyer over an alleged fraudulent overstatement of the rental income. The claim was entirely bogus.

The day before trial, plaintiff lowered his demand to \$5,000, far less than the costs of defense, but Leonard instructed me to offer \$1,500 and not one penny more.

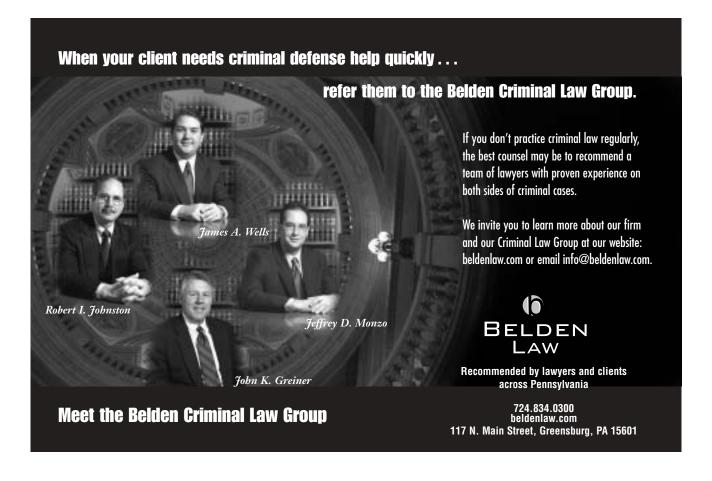
"You're making a big mistake," I told him. "The client will want to settle at this price."

"That's why we're not going to tell him," he said.

I didn't attend the trial, but at its conclusion, Leonard returned to the office. I asked him what had happened. He threw his briefcase against the wall, said something that implied an illicit relationship between my mother and me, and dashed into his office.

After a respectable period of time, I followed. "Okay, Leonard, tell me the bad news," I said.

continued on page 14



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To-Wit: Leonard continued from page 13

"How could I have been so wrong," he moaned. "The jury awarded the plaintiff \$1,505.00. I missed it by five bucks. I can't believe it." Then he smiled, one of the most son-of-abitching smiles I ever saw, and promptly went back to work.

I tried the landlord tenant case non-jury. It took one day and turned out as I had figured. The plaintiff got zippo, my client was elated, and when he asked me how much he owed me, I told him \$499.00.

"I don't know how you came up with such an odd figure," he said, "but I'm not complaining."

"I have my reasons," I replied.

Leonard's been gone now for several years, but I think of him often. You don't soon forget a man who would instruct me to call a client on a matter, then come into my office minutes later, grab the phone out of my hand and hang up on that very client because he wanted to talk to me about something else—or a man who would routinely make me follow him to the bathroom so we could talk about business while he took care of business —or a man who would frequently

work with me until 2 a.m., then take me out for Chinese food and a talk about the law—or a man who would never let a client be taken advantage of, no matter what the cost.

I don't pretend to understand the bizarre alchemy that made him both so difficult and so special, but he taught me what I love most about lawyering, and I miss him.

"You know," my associate said as we discussed our case the next day, "sometimes you can be one hard-assed son of a bitch."

"Yeah, I know," I replied, "I had a good teacher."

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Jury Trial Verdicts continued from page 11

(apnea), as well as various sprains, strains and contusions. Plaintiffhusband sought to recover for damage to his vehicle.

Defendant denied liability for the accident. In new matter, defendant asserted the contributory/ comparative negligence of plaintiff in being inattentive, operating her vehicle too fast for conditions and across the center line, and in failing to yield to defendant's vehicle and/or stop within the assured clear distance ahead to avoid the collision. Defendant also claimed that plaintiff's cause of action was subject to and limited by the provisions of the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility Law, as amended.

Plaintiffs' Counsel: Jon M. Lewis, Gbg.

Defendant's Counsel: Amy M. DeMatt, Mears, Smith, Houser & Boyle, PC, Gbg.

Trial Judge: The Hon. Gary P. Caruso

Result: Molded verdict for Defendant. Jury found that defendant was not negligent.

On The Move ...

As of September 1, 2003, the PRO BONO PROGRAM of the Westmoreland Bar Foundation has moved to 218 South Maple Avenue, Suite 103, Greensburg, PA 15601-3200. The phone and fax numbers remain the same.



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Tales from My First **Bench/Bar Conference**

by Megan A. Prezgar, Esq.

hen I was approached about writing an article for the sidebar about my first experience at the Bench/Bar Conference, I was more than happy to volunteer. I attended the conference with my co-worker, Heather Shultz, who, like me, had recently been admitted to practice. We had a wonderful time at the Bench/Bar. Although we were initially a little nervous about attending, by the time it was all over, we both promised that we would never miss another Bench/Bar.

Heather and I are the "new kids on the block," so to speak. We both graduated from Duquesne Law School in 2002 and started as staff attorneys at Laurel Legal Services last November.

Heather's the "shy, quiet one" and I'm the "outspoken one with the big mouth." Scott Avolio and Abby DeBlassio approached Heather while they were working on a case together about us attending. They both thought it was the best way for us to get to know other attorneys socially in the county. After a little convincing from Scott and Abby (and a lot of hard work getting a much appreciated scholarship from the Bar Association), Heather and I were off to our first Bench/Bar.

Heather and I arrived at the conference on Thursday evening, just in time for cocktails on the deck and dinner. After a few drinks, we started to fit right in with the friendly crowd. Heather met a lot of new people. I also got to see a lot of people that I knew from my days of being Judge

Ober's minute clerk (I must admit, I was flattered that so many people remembered me and were happy to

see that I finished law school and came back to Greensburg to begin my career). It did not take us long to hook-up with Richard Victoria and his crew. Let me clarify. Richard and Judge Caruso grew up and graduated high school with my father. Some people may take



Megan Prezgar

offense to Richard and his sarcasm. But I defend him and think he's wonderful. I always say that his sarcasm is "just part of his charm." Heather and I had dinner the first night with Scott,

continued on page 16



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Tales from My First Bench/Bar continued from page 15

Abby, Richard, Judge Caruso and Les Mlakar. Richard introduced me all night as his friend-from-Monessen's daughter. He also enjoyed telling everyone that he and Judge Caruso attended a party that my father hosted while in X-ray school that featured a dressed up cadaver in the corner (he swore my father inspired "Weekend at Bernie's"). I didn't believe him, but must admit my dad later confirmed the story.

Richard, Les and Judge Caruso "took us under their wings" and showed us a good time that evening. We drank, laughed and danced in the rain. I saw Les the other day, and he joked that he still had the Corona and Captain Morgan's that he bought for us that we never showed up to drink (because if we would have consumed another sip of alcohol Thursday night we would have been in our room the entire next day). We also enjoyed the Young Lawyer's Suite. Most memorable was the "butt contest" (just in case there are any spouses or significant others reading this, I must disclaim that the contest was a fully clothed, no touching game). It was no contest—the Belden Law Firm was victorious, although I have yet to see Jim Wells' new slogan on the firm's Web site ("The Belden Law Firm—Bad @&&es in Court, But Not a Bad Butt Anywhere Else").

Heather and I spent the next morning and afternoon "resting." The weather was pretty awful, so we didn't miss the outdoor activities anyway. We did make it for the vendors' exhibit and receive a lot of freebies. Dinner was very nice on Friday evening. We were asked to have dinner with the "boys from Belden." The casino night was also a lot of fun. We never moved from our blackjack table, undoubtedly because we had the best dealer in the house with the biggest "'Burgh accent" I've ever

heard. Abby was the big winner and had a pile of "money." Heather and I retired for the evening soon after the silent auction.

I guess we are rookies, because we had so much fun on Thursday evening, we were pretty much useless by Friday night at 10:00 p.m. But all in all, it was a great time. We laughed and we were social (unfortunately, I don't think we did anything to embarrass Kathleen Kemp, but there's always next year). It was just nice to see everyone in a relaxed setting. Without a doubt, it definitely is an event that makes a young attorney more comfortable. I like when judges and other attorneys recognize me at the Courthouse, I also know that the next time I'm in front of a new judge or have a case with an attorney that I met at the Conference, I'll feel confident because after my first Bench/Bar. I realized that I'm now part of a very wonderful group of people.

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July–August 2003 side bar • 17

Candid 2003 Bench/Bar Conference



"Yes, dahling, raves and kisses, let's do lunch soon, huh?"





"Well, yes, it is what I prayed for. I just spelled it differently."



"Yes, I know I lost, but this is illegal gambling and as a Judge, I'm impounding the evidence."

"Nah, don't wake him, just let him sleep it off."



"Anybody else need a favorable ruling?"

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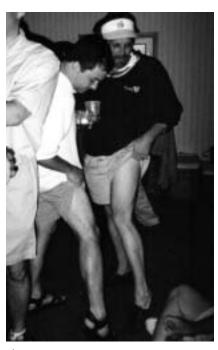
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"Yup, same rash. Is it the soap or the razor?"

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Do You Want to Serve?

Openings on Committees, Board

he Nominating Committee of the Westmoreland Bar Association is accepting applications for positions on the Membership Committee, Building Committee and Board of Directors. Any member interested in running for these positions should send a letter to the Chair of the Nominating Committee, c/o the WBA, by September 30, 2003. The positions will be filled at the Annual Meeting of the association to be held on April 5, 2004.

Applicants must be active, participating members of the WBA. The responsibilities for each position are as follows:

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee is the first point of contact that most applicants have with the WBA. One five-year term is available. The Membership Committee member will:

- Attend monthly committee meetings.
- Personally interview and educate applicants on the workings of the WBA, including committee assignments, staff responsibilities, and new lawyer opportunities such as the mentor program, the Young Lawyers, and Pro Bono.
- Make recommendations for membership eligibility with specific recommendation for membership class.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

The Building Committee is responsible for maintaining the management and upkeep of Bar Headquarters. One five-year term is available. The Building Committee member will:

- Attend quarterly committee meetings.
- Be knowledgeable about the utilization of Bar Headquarters for business and social functions.
- Help to develop annual budget for operation of building.
- Make recommendations to Board of Directors on matters of concern in building upkeep.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors ensures that the WBA's mission, services, policies and programs are carried out. Applicants should have experience in WBA activities such as chairing a committee, attending bar functions and being active in the bar community. In addition, they must be able to think clearly and creatively, and work well with people, individually and in a group. One four-year term is available. The Director will:

- Attend all board and appropriate committee meetings and special events.
- Serve on committees and offer to take on special assignments.
- Inform others about the organization and its activities and functions.
- Assist the board in carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities, such as reviewing the organization's annual financial statements.
- Take responsibility and follow through on given assignments.
- Contribute personal and financial resources in a generous way according to circumstances.
- Open doors in the community.



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And Baby Makes ...

Sarah and Justin Hough welcomed their daughter, Grace Meredith, into the world on July 11, 2003. Grace, who was 7 lb. 13 oz. and 21 inches long, joins big brother Charlie at home. Sarah is partner with Bash-Hough Law Offices in Delmont. JULY-AUGUST 2003 side*bar* • 19

Kemp Wins Five Medals

athleen Kemp won five medals for swimming at the Pennsylvania Senior Games July 17–18 in Shippensburg, Pa. She was first in the 200-yard breaststroke; second in 50-yard breaststroke, 50-yard backstroke, and 100-yard backstroke; and third in the 100-yard breaststroke. Congratulations!

Actions of the Board

JUNE 17, 2003

- Jack Bergstein and Diane Murphy have agreed to fill the unexpired terms of Jim Whelton and Gary Falatovich on the LLS board.
- Letter was mailed to Chief Justice Cappy asking that a WBA member be appointed to the IOLTA board.
- Considered request to name a committee to deal with tax issues.

- Learned that "notice to defend" language has been challenged by bar execs and brought to the attention of Supreme Court Justice Eakin. Matter referred to Civil Rules Committee.
- Learned that current LRS insurance is probably not necessary because other programs typically add a rider to their business owners policy. LRS Committee feels that requirements for experience panels need not be as stringent as board indicated.
- LRS Committee will also consider whether LRS program should be its own corporation so that malpractice risk is assumed separate and apart from WBA.
- President Kress and PAC Chair Mason asked to make contact with state legislators on tax assessment proposed legislation.
- Vice President Silvis will draft letter to local legislators regarding the bar's opposition to tax on professional services.
- President Kress will meet with Judge Ackerman to discuss arbitration panels and the number of attorney "no shows."

JULY 15, 2003

- New heating air conditioning unit was purchased for third floor; kitchen renovations proceeding.
- WBA investments ahead for quarter.
- President Kress reported that proposed legislation allowing nonlawyers to represent homeowners on tax assessment appeals has died.
- Local rule subscriptions are now fewer than 200, which requires first-class mailing of updates and correspondence. Rules are available on-line which accounts for loss of income. Board agreed to continue to handle subscriptions through mail.
- Building Committee recommended that revenue-generating rental should be explored for Lawyers Abstract space.
- Law Library Committee has goal to establish self-help information for pro se litigants.
- Vice President Silvis reported local legislators would not support the proposed tax on legal services.
- Civil Rules Committee may be asked to collaborate with medical society on standardizing HIPAA forms.



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CALENDAR of Events

SEPTEMBER

- 8 Bankruptcy, Noon
- 9 CLE Lunch 'n Learn:
 "How to Easily Collect
 Fees from Clients," Noon
- 10 Membership, Noon
- 16 Family Law, Noon Board Meeting, 4 p.m. HathaYoga, 4:30 p.m.
- 17 Northern Lawyers Luncheon, Noon, King's, New Kensington
- 22 Inns, 5 p.m.
- 26 Red Mass, Noon, St. Vincent

OCTOBER

- 8 Membership, Noon
- 13 Courthouse closed for Columbus Day
- 15 Northern Lawyers Luncheon, Noon, King's, New Kensington
- 18 Fall Gathering, 6 p.m., Fox Chapel Racquet Club
- Family Law, Noon Board Meeting, 4 p.m.



Top Ten Most Popular Lawyer Bumper Stickers, Part II

- 1. Where There's A Will, There's A Way To Break It.
- 2. Why Wait 'Til Death Do You Part?
- 3. Tailgaters—-Give 'Em A Brake.
- 4. My Lawyer Can Cheat The Hell Out Of Yours.
- 5. Wave If You Wanna See My Briefs.
- 6. Good Lawyers Are Never Appealing.
- 7. I Got Your Pro Bono Right Here.
- 8. I Brake For Train Wrecks.
- 9. Speed Thrills.
- 10. At Least Our Mistakes Don't Die.



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Saturday, October 18, 2003 Fox Chapel Racquet Club

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