



THE WET HEN

Personal attacks on grief-stricken parents are baffling

If you ever lose a loved one through reckless homicide, manslaughter, or homicide by vehicle, beware. The world will more than likely hate you, especially if you are nobody and you actively seek justice for the one who died.

Has this newspaper sought justice for Hope Maley who died through no fault of her own? Absolutely, but we have been joined by the trooper who charged the other driver (Britnee Moore, then 18); the District Attorney who chose to prosecute this case; the jury who found her guilty; and the judge who sentenced her. We hold no malice toward this young woman. We feel the evidence was weighed and considered according to the law, and we sincerely hope she goes on to a productive life.

However, *GreeneSpeak* has been roundly criticized for “throwing stones” from the moment we editorialized that people who die in head-on crashes though no fault of their own deserve justice. These same people who question our integrity, objectivity, and Christianity have been the very first to roll out boulders on our head. But the most heartbreaking—and baffling—part of all this is the way Hope’s mother, Darlene, has been persecuted for seeking justice for her teenage daughter. Frankly, we thought this was a nightmare peculiar to Greene County, but a story in the Sept. 7, 2009 issue of *People* magazine puts it in perspective a little for us.

On Aug. 20, 2008, Max Gilpin, 15, collapsed and died on the field at Pleasure Ridge Park High School, Ky. during football practice. Now his coach, Jason Stinson, 36, has been charged with reckless homicide, accused of “running an usually brutal practice and depriving players of water, which prosecutors say caused Max’s death from heatstroke.”

The community has become polarized due to the coach’s position and popularity. Max’s parents say an apology and admission of “making a mistake” by Stinson would have gone a long way to alleviate their pain and anger. “Now I just want to see him do time,” Max’s mom said.

Meanwhile, Max’s parents say they have become ostracized and people are telling them to just move away and move on, but she says the kids on the football team “are the closest tie I have to my son.”

This is where the similarities end, because that community has tossed salt into the wounds by rallying around Stinson, raising over \$90,000 toward his legal fees by hosting fun events: a picnic, dinner, auction, and golf outing.

In Greene County, there was no need to raise funds as taxpayers will be taking care of the legal fees and the defense attorney is now asking for relief from the court costs (see facing page). Of course it’s a Constitutional right to have free legal counsel, but Public Defender Harry Cancelmi says that there are no uniform guidelines for deciding who is entitled to it.

A legal source told *GreeneSpeak* off the record that most courts pretty much hand it out to whoever is bold enough to ask for it, just to be on the safe side. We have no proof that this is true in Greene County, however.

Still, it is eye-opening—and devastating—to see the same utter lack of compassion for Max’s surviving family as we have witnessed toward Hope’s mother and her immediate family.

Unfortunately, Hope’s parents are estranged. For reasons that are no one’s business, her father and his family have chosen not to publicly speak on behalf of justice for Hope, as is their right. Maybe it’s just easier to allow Hope’s mom to take all the hits; perhaps there is a more honorable explanation.

However, the verbal, nasty attacks on Hope’s mom as she wades through the trenches of grief and seeks justice constitutes unacceptable behavior for people who revere liberty and justice—and who possess any common sense at all.

Attacking her for speaking up and slamming anyone who feels compassion for her—including this newspaper—confirms how close we are becoming to nations which execute and imprison people for the same reason.

GreeneSpeak is dedicated to shining light in corners that otherwise probably would have remained dark. One day, one of our harshest critics might ask us for help with a nightmare of their own.

And *GreeneSpeak* will be there.

“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” John 1:5.

Some elected officials have forgotten who they work for

It seems that there is so much discord in our small municipalities. Some elected officials tend to rule by intimidation. If the public sits back and does not attend the local meetings of the boroughs and townships, they have no input if the authority elects to force you to live in a more restricted society by taking away more of your freedoms instead of enhancing life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Volunteers have been the foundation that helped our country and communities survive and be admired by other nations, but when the volunteers are questioned and held to a higher standard than the authorities who do the questioning, volunteers will dwindle and be non-existent.

I believe that some elected officials refuse to acknowledge that they represent the people who elected them to office and that they work for the people who pay taxes to support their salaries. Some say question authority, but if you do, be prepared to be ridiculed and put in a “box” and contend with discrimination sarcasm, selective prosecution, and stonewalling.

In the past I have asked the Perry Township Supervisors to pass some type of ordinance that would prevent parking on the sidewalks in Mt. Morris. The handicapped and elderly citizens have to manipulate their walkers, wheelchairs or scooters into traffic to exercise what little freedom they still enjoy. I applaud the supervisors for placing “no parking” signs on sidewalks which are on state routes. Most of the signs are ignored and one removed. At this time there is no way to enforce this violation to the less fortunate.

I agree that the citizens probably own the sidewalk adjacent to their home, I also believe it is imperative to maintain the sidewalk and keep it clear so as not impede the pedestrian traffic.

As for stonewalling, there seems to be an impasse concerning the ordinances previously adopted by the governing body and approved by the Perry Township Planning Board. Several citizens have asked the supervisors to send violation notices to residents who have distressed properties, i.e. unkempt lawns, junk cars, rotten hay bales as well as other eyesores. The argument can be made that if it doesn’t bother the landowner, it shouldn’t concern the neighbors. This might be true if the neighbor’s property value does not decrease your property value several thousands of dollars.

The excuse is that they don’t have code enforcement officer which is not exactly true. My wife, Patricia Lemley, was the code enforcement officer until June 4, 2008 when the board of supervisors hired a firm to enforce the building codes only. Pattie had completed and passed the BCO course as well as studying PSSATS courses and codes on her own. As of now she has never received an official correspondence written or verbally terminating her as code enforcement officer with a legitimate reason.

The powers that be tend to ignore qualification. We need qualified, ambitious individuals who will not use the office as a springboard to further their personal or political agendas and ignore their constituents’ concerns.

Ron Lemley, Perry Township

‘Budget tantrum’ could have serious affect on people with disabilities

This is written in hopes of saving the personal, community, and professional lives of people with disabilities who are being used as poker chips and chess pieces by their state representatives and senators during the legislature’s childish budget tantrum. It is also written to once again point out that de-funding community based services in favor of institutional incarceration of people with disabilities is not an act of austerity, but of Hitlerism.

As a person receiving community based attendant care I have not yet been affected, but as I have stated in committee hearings and other gatherings in the Capitol and other venues around the state, my life could be ruined with a stroke of a pen. Needless to say, I am concerned and that is my Number 1 priority.

But as a coordinator of Nursing Home Transition efforts I feel for the people I serve who are being affected daily during this debacle. Some of them cannot get out of prison because new services are frozen which would allow them to live free.

I also feel for my family and the families of others who might feel compelled to give up jobs to keep me or their loved ones free if we lost-in home services. I feel for my attendants and the attendants of others who rely on the income from my attendant care to stay financially solvent and personally fulfilled. I also feel for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who must be sitting back wondering what it could have done wrong to raise public servants and political leaders who have forgotten why they are there.

If it helps I would like to let those servants and leaders know that I for one would rather pay an increase in taxes than lose my freedom, or worse yet become the grist of an institutional killing machine funded by Commonwealth representatives.

John Lorence, Carmichaels