

Sister of slain officer sues
Mudman Simon. B2.

Obituaries, B12.
Weather, B13.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

City & Region

Section B

In Chesco, woman shot
after police chase. B4.

News in Brief B2

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One last time, rower returns to the river

Ernie Bayer was a Dad Vail institution. His ashes will be cast on the Schuylkill.

David Boldt

Lucany reigns in judge election

Wednesday night's heavy beer for Philadelphia Democratic Party operatives probably bit too low for party chairman Bob Brady read off the party's candidates for local judgeships.

Putting as he came to Common Pleas Court candidate Ronald Sharper, one of the two Democratic-endorsed candidates found unqualified by the Philadelphia Bar Association, Brady issued this stirring rejoinder:

"To hell with the Bar Association," quoth he.

The Bar Association, for the record, also found another Democratic endorsee — Municipal Court candidate Linda Anderson — and two Republican-endorsed candidates unqualified. (The two Republicans were Common Pleas candidates Richard Hoy and Municipal Court candidate Lawrence Watson.) The Republicans have taken the same basic position as Brady on the ratings, though without the Democratic chief's eloquence.

None of which is surprising. Pennsylvania is one of only a handful of states that still elect state judges, and the meeting of the Democratic campaign committee was as good a place to capture the limelight of the widely despised process.

Things like ability don't count. One had to hope that no hapless innocent had wandered into the Schuylkill Workers banquet hall, where the Democrats met, hoping to learn anything substantive about the candidates.

At war with the westerners

Mayor Rendell, who has supposedly assured the Bar Association that he won't support unqualified candidates, gave no such signal. He spent most of his time trying to quiet the crowd, begging for just 11 minutes of attentiveness — one minute for each year Brady had served as party chairman.

He didn't get it. No one paid much attention. It was as if a few people were trying to hold a pop rally at the edge of a big cocktail party.

When it came to the statewide races for appellate courts, the rally theme became "Beat Pittsburgh" (City Council President John Street actually shouted those very words at the conclusion of his remarks).

Democratic judicial candidates from Philadelphia have historically fared miserably in statewide races, in part because the rest of the state thinks of Philadelphia as *Sodom-on-the-Schuylkill*.

Some years ago, the city's legislators tried to eliminate the requirement that a candidate's home county be shown on the ballot. This year, however, there are hopes that the two Democratic candidates for Supreme Court from Western Pennsylvania — Kate Ford Elliott and Joseph Del Sole — will split the western vote, thus opening the way for Montgomery County's Berle Schiller to win. Schiller played on this theme, telling the crowd he was "happy to be from Southeastern Pennsylvania."

No laughing matter

Seamus McCaffrey, a Philadelphia Municipal Court judge who is running for Commonwealth Court against westerners, warned the hokey Philadelphia Telnet. Every where he went, he said, Philadelphia was "laughed at," and it was time, he implied, to teach those disrespectful rubes a lesson.

The Philadelphia Democrats bemoaned badly at the state convention that no Philadelphia was nominated for the four openings on Superior Court. So while Brady magnanimously allowed the four endorsed candidates to stand on the stage, the only Superior Court candidate who spoke was Lydia Kirkland.

Kirkland, a Philadelphia municipal court judge, is running even though she not only failed to win the party's endorsement, but was also found unqualified by the state bar.

The Pittsburghers present did not seem moved. One of them said quietly that he would "run naked through Philadelphia's City Hall courtyard" if Philadelphia Democrats actually turned out in large numbers.

As one listened to the escalating claims of regional chauvinism, it was impossible not to wonder whether Philadelphia Democrats might do better if they put up judicial candidates who had something to say.

By Lea Sitten Stanley
PHILADELPHIA STAFF WRITER

Tomorrow night, when the Schuylkill clears of the Dad Vail youth, Ernie Bayer's "girls" will return and, with a few strokes, close the circle.

Bayer, a Fairmount native, an Olympic carman and the chief referee of the Dad Vail Regatta for three decades, died Jan. 13 at age 92 in New Hampshire, where he had lived about 25 years with his wife, Ernestine, and his daughter, Ernestine.

His wife and daughter and a flotilla of friends plan to cast his ashes on the river in a rowing farewell along Boathouse Row. The "row-by" was planned to coincide with the close of the 96th Dad Vail.

Together, the family has been the Three Eras and the Three Bayers, a "team" known up and down Boathouse Row and throughout the rowing world.

Bayer, who retired as senior vice president of First Pennsylvania Banking & Trust Co. in 1966, was a national leader of rowing and a coach to scores in Philadelphia. His wife remains a fierce competitor, even at age 88, and

is known as the mother of women's rowing for her early struggles against male dominance on the river.

Both of them are in the Rowing Hall of Fame, she as the first woman to win the honor. And together they raised "a marvelous rowing woman," Ernestine Bayer said of her daughter, who no longer rows, but who excelled nationally as a young athlete.

Had Ernest Bayer been more rigid, less thoughtful, and had Ernestine Sr., as she's called, been more complacent, the story might have been different.

Bayer was a guy who said "girls don't row." But his wife was a woman who said "that's what you think."

Nine months before the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, they had secretly married in Manhattan's Little Church Around the Corner, to steer clear of Philadelphia headlines.

"Today people would shake their heads in wonder," Ernestine Bayer said of the cloaked union. "It was the thought that sex lowered a man's resistance."

The pair had fought the superstition

At Phila. Zoo, in-your-face fun

Inquirer photographs
by Bonnie Weller

Lorikeets will perch at the zoo through October. They debut tomorrow.

Sharon Dietrich of North Wales gets close (too close?) to a lorikeet. The zoo will have nearly 100 of the birds. They're trained to wait nectar out of cups. Story is Weekend.

Megan fought back, murder suspect said

Statements by Jesse Timmendage were read to the court. It took 5 minutes to choke her, he said.

By Enelle Lunsford
PHILADELPHIA STAFF WRITER

TRENTON — Convicted sex offender Jesse K. Timmendage admitted that he strangled 7-year-old Megan Kanka with a belt, wrapped her bloody head with plastic bags and then "played with her" sexually just before dumping her body in a park, according to confessions outlined yesterday in his murder trial.

Megan fought back, Timmendage said in the statements, which were read to the hushed, somber jury. She tried to run. She screamed so loudly that he feared that someone had heard her. But the clothing ended in just five minutes, he told police, and when it was over, he stuffed her body into a large toolbox.

The graphic details — the most shocking evidence presented so far — created such a powerful image of the violent death of the child that a detective broke down on the witness stand as he read one statement and court was abruptly adjourned for the day.

The testimony is expected to be just as graphic today as further de-

Would-be hit man gets slapped with 40 years

Salvatore Brunetti liked to be around mobsters, his lawyer said. He has been in jail since 1993 for plotting several murders.

By George Anastasia
PHILADELPHIA STAFF WRITER

Wannabe wiseguy Salvatore Brunetti, convicted of taking part in a series of murder plots during a bloody 1993 South Philadelphia mob war, was sentenced to 40 years in prison yesterday following a four-hour hearing in which his lawyer described him as a hapless hit man with a long history of mental problems.

"This is a man who lives in a fantasy world, who tends to do things that make him feel big and important," argued Arnold Silverstein, before U.S. District Judge Judge Ronald Backwater imposed what amounted to the maximum sen-

tence for the racketeering and racketeering-conspiracy charges Brunetti faced.

Brunetti, 48, speaking in his defense, admitted that he played a role in at least some of the murder conspiracies for which he was convicted, but he insisted that he could never take anyone's life.

"I got myself in a lot of trouble here," Brunetti said in a rambling, somewhat disjointed statement in the same 17th-floor courtroom of the federal courthouse in Philadelphia in which he was convicted last year.

"I should have never gotten involved in this," he said at another point. "It was just plain stupid."

Brunetti was convicted of plotting with mob boss John Stanfa and a dozen top Stanfa associates to murder members of a rival mob faction headed by Joseph "Skinny Joey" Merlino.

Among other things, Brunetti was accused of helping to build a pipe

With its top award, public relations group honors city's biggest booster

Ed Rendell was a "shoo-in" for recognition.

By Howard Goodman
PHILADELPHIA STAFF WRITER

Ed Rendell has called himself "Philadelphia's number one PR practitioner."

Now he's got the medal to prove it.

The Philadelphia Public Relations Association yesterday gave Rendell its highest honor. The group's Gold Medal Award goes each year to a non-public relations professional whose accomplishments have brought national recognition to the city.

"He was a shoo-in," said Phyllis R. Polk, a PPRA vice president. She said the P.R. body needed to look no further than the President's Summit for America's Future, a bonanza of good publicity for the host city that succeeded far beyond "the wildest dreams of the membership of this organization."

Rendell is the third mayor to win the award since its inception in 1984. He joins Richardson Dilworth (1987) and James H. Tate (1980) on a roster of winners that also includes Walter Annenberg, Eugene Grandey, Julius Erving, Cardinal John Krol, Phillies owner William I. Gies, Frank Pasma, Thelma Longstrech and Ed Sander and the Philadelphia Flyers.

Why no other mayors? "No idea," said Polk.

She said she wasn't on the awards committee when it had the chance to vote on Frank Rizzo, whose call for the National Guard conjured panicky images of a 1978 Rickenbacker riot, or on the Rittenhouse Hotel that was part riot and part serious tribute — said Rendell had sparked a spirit of candor and a flash of self-interest that were sorely lacking in the Philadelphia of the

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