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NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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Could Pigeon be innocent, despite Judge Michalek's guilty plea?



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Speculation on the Defenses of Steve Pigeon

Frank Parlato

A lot has been written about political operative and attorney G. Steven Pigeon, 55, after a state grand jury was led to indict him on June 30th on nine felony counts of bribery, rewarding official misconduct and grand larceny by extortion.

Pigeon has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

“The grand jury only hears one side of the story. There will be another side presented when we go to trial,” said Pigeon’s attorney, Paul Cambria.

MICHALEK SAYS HE IS DIRTY

Pigeon’s alleged partner in crime, former State Supreme Court Justice John A. Michalek, 65, accepted a plea deal last month, admitting to bribe-receiving and offering a false instrument.

Prosecutors allege that an “understanding” existed between Michalek and Pigeon that the judge would engage in “official misconduct which advanced Pigeon’s interests”.

In return, Michalek allegedly agreed to accept and accepted “benefits from Pigeon.”

Michalek faces a prison sentence of up to seven years. He will be sentenced by a Syracuse judge who, up until last month, was of equal standing with Michalek - State Supreme Court Justice Donald F. Cerio Jr..

Sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 21.

MICHALEK’S PLEA MAY FACTOR IN THE DEFENSE

Michalek’s attorney, Carrie H. Cohen negotiated a plea deal where the Attorney General’s office, headed by Eric Schneiderman, will not make a sentencing recommendation provided Michalek cooperates as a witness against Pigeon.

In return, Cohen is free to argue, without opposition, that the judge should spare Michalek prison time.

Michalek’s quick and timely plea en-

sured his pension, calculated by the Buffalo News at \$120,500 annually, is safe – ironically, it will be paid by the taxpayers he admitted to defrauding through corruption. Presently there are bills in Albany wending toward law that could revoke pensions of public officials convicted of corruption.

Sources say Michalek may have readily taken his plea to avoid more serious charges for him or a member of his family.

Defense lawyer Cambria is expected to seek in a motion all relevant information concerning his emails to others, especially emails, if any, Michalek sent to other attorneys with cases before him.

It is known Michalek gave interviews to law enforcement. Did those interviews reveal other crimes?

The pages of modern jurisprudence are replete with examples of people avoiding prosecution by lying as prosecution witnesses.

Several sources say Michalek’s friends were shocked when he took the plea because Michalek privately and vehemently protested his innocence.

As lawyer Jim Ostrowski wrote in this publication, “It may be shocking but the fact that a judge pleads guilty doesn’t mean that much. People plead guilty all the time to avoid the risk of being (unjustly) convicted of much more serious charges and going to prison.”

Parsing this down, it seems, at the heart of the Pigeon case are allegations of a two-way bribery scheme.

Pigeon’s lawyer says his client claims innocence.

Michalek says he is guilty. If Michalek is telling the truth and not lying to save himself, will Pigeon argue that, while the judge was trying to solicit a bribe from him, he was not aware that that was the judge’s intention?

The question for a jury is did Pigeon knowingly participate in the bribery scheme?



l-r: Tom Golisano, Bill Clinton and Steve Pigeon

Before the jury can attempt to determine that, they will have to examine what the two men got as a result of their alleged bribery scheme.

EMAILS IN EVIDENCE

Much of the case depends on a series of emails exchanged by the two men.

The state alleged, “Emails written between Pigeon and Judge Michalek illustrate the official conduct that Judge Michalek engaged in and the benefits that Pigeon provided to him and his family members.”

Some who have read Michalek’s emails, which he sent on his official state courts email service, say they are chatty, and often lengthy, and include discussions of his personal health, family matters, and business and political observations as well as information about the cases Pigeon had before him.

Pigeon’s replies, said to be typed from his cell phone, were typically short.

As a possible explanation for the personal tone in Michalek’s emails, sources close to the two men say that Pigeon and Michalek were personal and family friends since Pigeon was a teenager and Michalek was in his mid 20’s.

According to a source, Pigeon and Michalek remained close and worked together in political campaigns in the south towns in the late 70’s and 80’s. Pigeon worked on Michalek’s campaign for judge and his wife’s campaign for Town Supervisor of Hamburg. Through the years, they worked closely and spoke often. Pigeon knew his children since they were born.

In addition to the emails, court documents entered with Michalek’s guilty plea allege Pigeon and Michalek met for “breakfast, lunch and coffee at various times between February 2012 and early 2015.”

What the former judge will testify about those meetings and how they inform the context of the emails is unknown.

But friendship aside, the state alleges Michalek corruptly helped Pigeon. How did he help him?

THE CASES MICHALEK ALLEGEDLY HELPED PIGEON

The state alleges “At the same time that Judge Michalek sought benefits from Pigeon, Pigeon had an interest in lawsuits pending before Judge Michalek. During this period, Judge Michalek kept Pigeon apprised of the status of the lawsuits, engaged in ex parte communications with Pigeon about them, sought Pigeon’s advice and input on various issues that arose when the cases came up on his calendar, provided Pigeon with advice as to how the cases should be handled, and made favorable rulings in certain situations to protect Pigeon’s clients and business associates’ interests.”

While other Michalek cases may be under investigation, raising the specter of additional federal charges, the state has focused on two cases, both involving Palladian LLC, a West Seneca health care company.

Pigeon was, for years before the lawsuits commenced, a consultant and attorney for Palladian and its managing members, Kevin Cichocki and Paul Candino.

The Pigeon trial will likely review the result of the two Palladian cases. Did Pigeon’s clients win their two cases?

One was a lawsuit filed by Palladian against HealthNow, alleging HealthNow misappropriated corporate trade secrets.

The case settled out of court, after a number of convoluted turns, pitting family members against each other, for an undisclosed terms and a financial settlement.

The final outcome was decided not by Michalek but HealthNow and Palladian.

The second case, filed in 2012, was an inter-company dispute between Pigeon’s clients, Cichocki and Candino, against another Palladian member, Summer Street Capital II, over control of Palladian.

That case also settled out of court, but led to a poor result for Pigeon’s clients. Given a short window of time to find funding, Pigeon’s clients lost control of the company. Summer Street Capital II manages Palladian

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What did Michalek and Pigeon get from each other?



Andrew Cuomo holds Steve Pigeon's nephew Landon at an event with Pigeon.



Former State Supreme Court Justice John Michalek. He saved his pension, maybe spared himself prison by accepting a plea deal that requires him to testify against Steve Pigeon.

today.

The defense may argue that not only did Michalek not make a ruling on the ultimate merits of the case, Michalek's alleged "favorable rulings" were procedural and not substantive and were properly based on law.

Substantive or not, the state may argue, Pigeon's clients, hence Pigeon, received benefits from Michalek's ex-parte communications and his actions.

The defense may rebut, if an active bribery scheme was in effect, why didn't Pigeon take the case to trial where his corrupt judge would rule in his favor?

The state may further argue that even if Michalek did not rule on the merits, it was a crime for them to even have certain discussions while the cases were pending.

The defense may rebut that a judge, not a lawyer before him, is held more responsible to determine the propriety of ex parte communications, and moreover, judges are held to higher standards than lawyers.

JUDGES WHO ACCEPT BRIBES ARE USUALLY HELD MORE RESPONSIBLE

While New York State Supreme Court Justice Thomas J. Spargo was sentenced to more than two years in federal prison in 2009 for trying to solicit a \$10,000 bribe, the attorney who paid the bribe, Bruce Blatchly, was not charged.

Two Lucerne County PA. judges, Mark Ciavarella and Michael Conahan, were convicted of accepting money from Robert Mericle, builder of two private, for-profit youth centers for the detention of juveniles, in return for contracting with the facilities and imposing harsh adjudications on juveniles brought before their courts to increase the number of residents in the centers.

Judge Ciavarella was sentenced to 28 years in federal prison. Judge Conahan was sentenced to 17 and-a-half years. But the man who made the bribes, and had the most to gain, Robert Mericle, was sentenced to one year in Federal Prison.

An Arkansas judge, Michael Maggio was convicted of receiving bribes in exchange for lowering the damages awarded in a civil suit. He got 10-years.

U.S. District Judge Brian Miller of Little Rock declared at sentencing, "A dirty judge is more harmful to society than a dope dealer."

But wealthy nursing home owner, Michael Morton, who made the bribes, was not charged.

MICHALEK'S THREE WISHES

So if Pigeon was helped by Michalek in his two legal cases, as the state alleges, what did Michalek get in return?

In his emails, written over the course of three years, Michalek, who seems to have initiated most of the communications, asked Pigeon for help on three matters:

The first was to help find a job for "relative 1" as the indictment reads, who is, in fact, Michalek's son, John Conner Michalek.

According to sources, Michalek and his wife, Patricia thought if John Connor found a good paying, decent, respectable job, possibly in Washington DC, he might abandon his plan of joining the armed services and going overseas, possibly to Afghanistan.

Pigeon, sources say, knew John Connor since he was a baby and sympathized with his worried parents.

Pigeon, however, was unable to find the young man a paying job.

However, based on an email from Michalek to Pigeon, and as clarified by sources -- in 2012, John Conner was permitted to work as an (unpaid) volunteer in the Obama presidential campaign.

A source familiar with the family said, John Conner and the Obama camp didn't particularly please each other and he left after one week--and despite his parents' wishes, John Conner joined the Navy and was stationed overseas.

Michalek also sought an appointment to a government task force or committee on education for "relative 2", which was, in fact,

er court judge.

None were accomplished.

TICKETS ARE BRIBES?

Still, even if Pigeon didn't deliver on Michalek's three requests, the state alleges that Pigeon "knowingly conferred, offered and agreed to confer on" Michalek a ticket to a fundraiser for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, which was given to Michalek's wife.

The state says it was a \$1,000 ticket, but a source who was there said it was a \$250 ticket.

Is it a crime? Gifts of tickets to political affairs are common enough that they are exempted as banned gifts in the New York State Public Officers Law which reads (1-c [(j)] reads, "... The following are excluded from the definition of gift: (i) complimentary attendance, including food and beverage, at bona fide charitable or political events..."

Pigeon, a source says, also comped 50 other people with tickets which cost him nothing. Pigeon was the co-host of the event with Howard Zensky.

HOCKEY TICKETS IN BOX SEATS

The state also alleged that once in February and once in March 2013, Pigeon "knowingly conferred, offered and agreed to confer on" Michalek Buffalo Sabres hockey tickets in payment "for (Michalek) having violated his duty as a public servant."

Michalek did accept two tickets, two times for box seats at a Sabres game. He brought his wife to the games. Pigeon attended one game.

Pigeon, who in 2003, had a hand in saving the Buffalo Sabres by encouraging billionaire Tom Golisano to purchase the bankrupt team, has over the years given out hundreds of free tickets which are provided to him by clients.

The tickets he gave to Michalek and his wife were for box seats owned by a client who had no cases before Michalek. The tickets cost Pigeon nothing.

Pigeon has also arranged for comp tickets to be given to Bill Clinton, US Sen. Charles Schumer, Dick Gephardt, and scores of local officials including county legislators, town supervisors, councilman and many area judges.

A RECEIVERSHIP FOR A PIGEON PAL

The last of the 9-count indictment against Pigeon concerns how "Judge Michalek selected an attorney of Pigeon's choosing to handle a receivership."

Michalek, like many judges, appointed numerous attorneys as receivers for cases he was handling. In fact, when Michalek had his cases transferred as a result of his alleged crimes, he had more than 350 cases before him.

In 2012, he asked Pigeon to recommend an attorney for receiver for a golf course in a foreclosure case.

The 9th and final count against Pigeon concerns a young attorney named Edward Betz. Betz has not been charged and is cooperating with the prosecution.

In 2009, Betz graduated from University at Buffalo Law School making him about 27 when the events named in the indictment occurred.

(Continued on page 4)

Michalek's wife, Patricia, who is a Democratic Committeewoman and once ran for supervisor for the Town of Hamburg.

Such an appointment, while unpaid, offers political cache, prestige and social opportunities.

In Jan. 2015, the judge emailed Pigeon and arranged to send Pigeon a copy of his wife's resume. Pigeon was unable to help. Patricia never received an appointment to any committee.

The charges also allege that between 2012 and 2015, Michalek asked Pigeon to recommend him to Pigeon's alleged friend, Gov. Andrew Cuomo for an appointment to the Appellate Division, a higher judicial post.

On Dec. 10, 2012, Michalek emailed Pigeon, "think there is a seat open in App Div... I applied... Normally I wouldn't mention it to you... wonder if you could help."

Pigeon replied: "I will start talking u up."

On Jan. 8, 2013, Michalek wrote to Pigeon: "Unc Steve...How'd you do with the Gov??? ..."

Pigeon responded: "Bunch happening ... in albany now... Gov went well ... Talked u up ... Let's have coffee soon."

Michalek was not appointed by the governor to the appellate court.

Pigeon was known in political circles to be pushing another judge for the appellate appointment, who was in fact appointed. Other than the emails, there seems to be no indication that he pushed Michalek's appointment.

Did Pigeon, succumbing to Judge Michalek's constant requests, offer lip service to the judge?

As far as the two-way bribery scheme goes, the state has focused on three specific requests Michalek made of Pigeon: 1. to find his son a job, 2. his wife a committee appointment 3. An appointment for himself as a high-

Pigeon: Could he be innocent?

(Continued from page 3)

Sources say Betz's friendship with political operative Jack O'Donnell - a close Pigeon ally - helped Betz become assistant corporation counsel for the City of Buffalo in 2010. In 2011, after O'Donnell became an Erie County Water Commissioner, which he secured, sources say, in part because Pigeon helped engineer a new majority in the Erie County Legislature, Betz was named associate counsel of the Erie County Water Authority, earning \$117,000 a year. Soon afterward Betz became general counsel of the Water Authority at a salary of \$124,000.

After the majority in the legislature switched, Betz lost his six figure job.

In 2012, Michalek asked Pigeon to recommend a lawyer to be appointed as a receiver to temporarily manage a golf course involved in foreclosure litigation before Michalek.

Michalek admitted he appointed Betz as a receiver as a political favor to Pigeon. He also admitted that Betz had not been approved by the courts as a qualified receiver.

Michalek emailed Pigeon in 2012, "We pushed it through anyway ... have to give them a spec reason etc. ... will figure it out ..."

The defense may argue that it was not Pigeon, but Michalek who appointed Betz. It was not Pigeon, but Michalek whose responsibility it was to determine whether Betz was

on the list of qualified receivers. It was not Pigeon's responsibility to ascertain qualifications for being a receiver.

It is not known if Michalek appointed other attorneys in other cases that were not on the list of qualified receivers.

A YOUNG LAWYER EXTORTED?

After Betz became receiver, for which duties he earned about \$45,000, according to Assistant Attorney General Susan Sadinsky, who is the lead prosecutor in the case, Pigeon attempted to persuade Betz to fire the property's managers and replace them with "cronies."

Sources say there were not multiple "cronies" that Pigeon asked Betz to hire, but only one person, David Pfaff, a longtime Pigeon ally, who, at the time, lost his job and was facing foreclosure.

Just as Pigeon secured work for Betz who lost his job, Pigeon tried for Pfaff.

According to court papers, Betz refused to hire the "cronies," and Pigeon retaliated by taking \$5,000 from the receiver by "extortion."

Sadinsky said the money was listed as consulting services. She says they were never performed.

Pigeon's defense may argue that Pigeon did consult with Betz and that the \$5,000 fee was earned. Even if it wasn't, an attorney may pay a referral fee to another attorney.

An attorney however, may not pay extortion to another attorney.

If Betz, a lawyer, thought he was being extorted by another lawyer (Pigeon), he had an obligation to report it to the grievance committee of the bar association and law enforcement.

Part 1200 Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 8.3., of The New York State Unified Court System reads: "A lawyer who knows that another lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question as to that lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer shall report such knowledge to a tribunal or other authority empowered to investigate or act upon such violation."

But instead of reporting the extortion, Betz paid it - as the state claims.

Why?

What will likely come out at trial is that Betz continued to accept client referrals from Pigeon after Betz paid Pigeon the alleged \$5,000 extortion.

According to a source, Betz accepted client referrals from Pigeon, including Seneca businessman Aaron Pierce, who paid Betz more than \$100,000 in legal fees. Betz also accepted referrals from lawyer John Bartolomei, a close Pigeon ally, at Pigeon's recommendation. That work brought Betz additional income.

All told Betz accepted more than \$100,000 in fees from Pigeon referrals after Betz allegedly paid Pigeon \$5,000 in extortion.

In addition, in 2014, through working with Pigeon's political wing of the Democratic party, Betz was introduced to the then-majority on the Buffalo School Board and Pigeon associates were reportedly supporting their candidates.

In Jan. 2016, the School Board majority selected Betz to be counsel to the School District at \$160,000 per year. According to sources, Betz eagerly sought and accepted Pigeon's help in getting this appointment and once again was restored to a six figure political position.

If these facts are true, and if they come

out at trial, will Betz be able to credibly claim he was so afraid of Pigeon that he paid \$5,000 in extortion, failed to report it, yet continued to accept lucrative clients from Pigeon which earned him more than 20 times the original alleged extortion?

The defense may also argue that if, as the state alleges, Pigeon was retaliating for Betz's decision not to hire Pfaff and other "cronies", why did Pigeon continue to refer clients to Betz?

Betz told The Buffalo News: "My only involvement in this matter is that I was asked to violate my ethical responsibilities as a receiver, and I steadfastly refused to do that."

Cambria said Pigeon has denied all of the prosecutors' allegations, including the charge of extortion.

On June 30, when Attorney General Schneiderman came to town to announce the indictment and his views of the case, he said that his probe is not over.

Next week, we will review the political backdrop, including the relationships others have had with Pigeon to question whether these people and their motives influenced the nature of the case and the deals thus far made.

If the state has, as it claims, pursued this case untainted by political considerations and solely in the name of justice, shouldn't the state, like the defendant, be required to bear the closest scrutiny? The truth is always fair.



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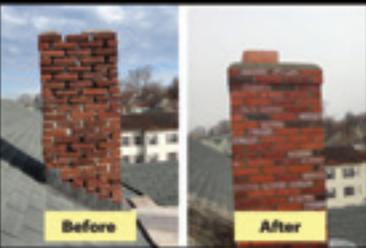
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'Discover Niagara' Shuttle Numbers Disappoint Ridership, Tourism Impact Fail To Meet Expectations

Jim Hufnagel

Recently the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area reported that its new Discover Niagara shuttle, which functions to remove tourists from downtown Niagara Falls to attractions in Lewiston and Youngstown, including their Center Street and Main Street business districts, respectively, boarded its 10,000th rider over the weekend of July 9-10.

The shuttle is funded by NYPA, State Parks, the NTCC, USA Niagara, Niagara Falls National Heritage and Assemblyman Ceretto's office to the tune of \$820,000 a year for two years.

Uncharacteristically, since they usually throw money at anything that moves and, considering the soon-to-be-unveiled \$585,000 Boundary Waters sculpture, much that does not, it appears that Mayor Dyster and his council majority for some reason passed on the opportunity to subsidize the ferrying of tourists out of downtown Niagara Falls.

We decided to do a little 4th grade math in an attempt to determine the cost effectiveness of the new shuttle service.

Running approximately every 35 minutes from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, that's 18 circuits a day, and having commenced on May 26, as of July 3 the Discover Niagara shuttle had made some 702 round trips accommodating, according to National Heritage, 7,664 riders. A week later it was claimed the number of riders was projected to surpass 10,000.

We're going to work with the 7,664 figure since that was an actual count given for a specific date.

7,664 passengers divided by 702 trips works out to slightly less than 11 passengers getting on the shuttle at some point during every 14 mile trip from downtown Niagara Falls to Fort Niagara and back again.

Therefore, a typical trip could look like the following: two riders board at "the Turtle", two in front of the NTCC, two at Old Falls Street, and let's say, four of those six get off at the Aquarium or Whirlpool State Park. Our sample shuttle would conceivably make the trip to Lewiston with two lone passengers. Picking up six more at the Castellani, Power



The passenger windows on the Discover Niagara shuttle were recently heavily tinted so that the empty seats wouldn't be so embarrassingly evident.



At a more than \$28 subsidy per passenger, these Redcoats are in no hurry to "Brex" the Discovery shuttle!

Vista, Lewiston and Youngstown strips or Fort Niagara and bringing them back to downtown Niagara Falls, completing the circuit with just this sparse handful of tourists, would more than exceed the observed 11-passenger ridership per trip, which amounts to substantially less than one boarding passenger for each of 14 stops.

And if passengers disembark at attractions like the Castellani, Power Vista or Fort Niagara, and re-board one or more times later (which, after all, is the purpose of the whole enterprise, to drop tourists off at one or more locations and pick them up afterwards), does that mean they're counted more than once? Could the 7,664 reported total actually comprise 3832 who got on and off once during the trip? Are people who get on and off the shuttle repeatedly on their Discover Niagara shuttle excursion counted multiple times?

Most who have been in the position of justifying funding from granting agencies to support some project have an appreciation for the strategic fudging of numbers. "We want to make a really strong case for this to continue for years to come," revealed National Heritage director Sara Capen in a recent Gazette write-up on the shuttle, "(the ridership statistics) providing a model that we can continue to cultivate."

The May 26 through October 19 scheduled run for the shuttle amounts to 147

days of operation.

Extrapolating from the official tally of 7,664 on July 3, total 2016 ridership is projected to be 28,887.

As previously stated, the shuttle's annual budget is \$820,000.

Therefore, the cost per passenger is \$28.39, and that doesn't take into consideration that tourist attendance drops off precipitously after Labor Day, which would produce an even higher result.

It may be the taxpayers (courtesy of State Parks, Ceretto's office and USA Niagara), ratepayers (courtesy of NYPA) and hotels

that pay bed tax (courtesy of NTCC), that are on the hook for bankrolling this experiment for two years, and possibly beyond, would be better off simply paying people \$28 at the door to visit their attractions. Or offering a mail-in rebate of some kind.

The Discover Niagara shuttle initiative so far appears entirely consistent with all the other so-called economic development programs inflicted on Niagara Falls over the years by the politicians, state agencies and professional tourism bureaucrats, ensuring that the maximum amount of public money is spent to minimal impact.



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Touma, Bird Seek to Reassure Taxpayers on Reassessment As Plans Move Forward on First Revaluation in 14 Years

Tony Farina

The first citywide property reassessment in 14 years is likely to begin in November, says Niagara Falls Assessor James Bird, with the new rates for taxpayers likely to be included with the school tax bill of August, 2018, if all goes according to plan.

“A lot of people believe it is a good thing to determine fair market value, starting with the city’s Financial Advisory Panel,” says Council Chairman Andrew Touma who expects Bird will present the plan to move forward with the reassessment at the council’s first session in September, including recommendations on an outside contractor who would conduct the revaluation at an expected cost of about \$500,000.

Touma says the purpose of the reassessment is to ensure that all properties are assessed fairly at a uniform level, adding that no matter the results of the revaluation, the tax levy of \$28.7 million would stay the same.

Both Touma and Bird stress that it is unlikely that property owners will see major up-or-down changes in their assessments, with the possibility of a 10 to 15 percent increase very rare.

In a recent Guest View column in the Niagara Gazette, Touma wrote “all assessments in Niagara Falls will be reviewed to determine where assessments should be increased, decreased, or remain the same. It is common that 1/3 of assessments will decrease, 1/3 will remain the same, 1/3 will increase.”

As Touma said again during an interview this week, the idea behind the revaluation is to determine fair market value, noting that properties become under assessed over time when assessments are not being regularly updated, causing inequities in the taxes property owners are paying.

“Even if assessments go up, it does not mean taxes will increase,” said Touma who is clearly concerned with reassuring homestead and non-homestead taxpayers in Niagara Falls that the reassessment of properties—which is going on in Buffalo and other communities across Western New York—does not automatically mean that tax rates will go up. But despite the words of Touma, who believes he has been elected to “do the right thing for the citizens of the city,” some property owners will undoubtedly be unhappy with their new assessment.

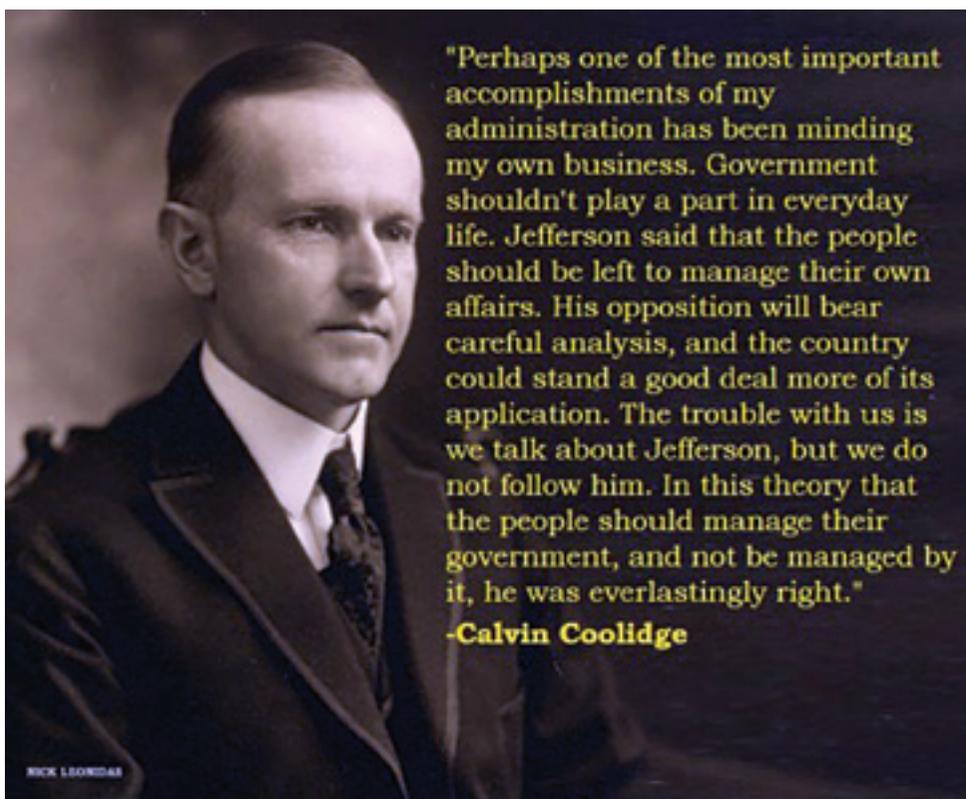
There is a grievance process in place for taxpayers who disagree with their assessment, said Touma, and each grievance will be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated as the city attempts to find the formula for fair and equitable full value assessments.

Currently, the city has a two-tier tax system, with the homestead rate at \$17.98 per \$1,000 of assessed value and the non-homestead rate at \$32.55 per \$1,000 assessed value. Touma thinks that as a result of the citywide assessment, there is a chance the two-tier system may soon go away.

After the council has reviewed the asses-

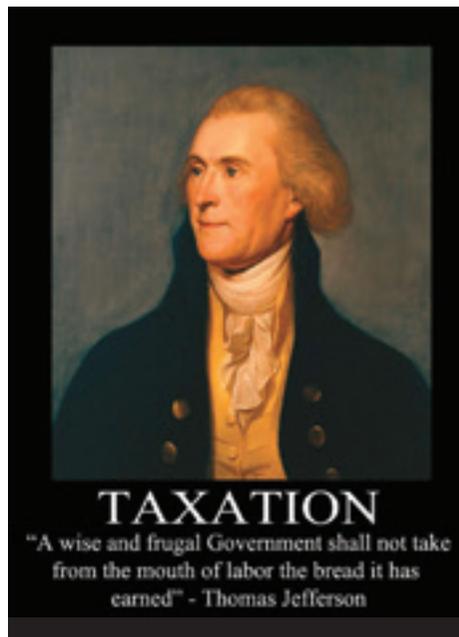
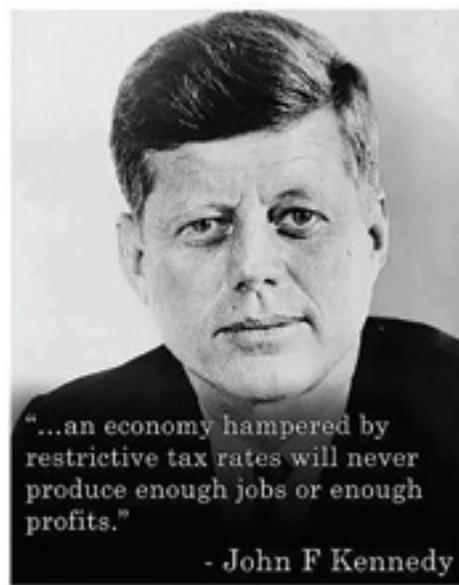


Niagara Falls City Council Chairman Andrew Touma says not everyone will see tax increases with his planned reassessment.



sor’s recommendations in September, a vote will likely soon follow and Bird says work would begin in November.

“As an assessor, I want tax rates to be assessed at where they should be,” says Bird.



“We want everybody paying their fair share, and while some rates will go up and some will go down, the tax levy (\$28.7 million) is the tax levy. And people unhappy with their revaluation can fight it,” echoing Touma’s



According to WalletHub, New York ranks as the worst state in America for taxpayers.

The average burden for state and local taxes is \$9,718, which is 39% higher than the national average with average annual state and local taxes at \$9,718.

This comparison was based on nine different types of taxation: real estate taxes, state and local income taxes, vehicle property taxes, vehicle sales taxes, sales and use taxes, fuel taxes, alcohol taxes, food taxes, and telecom taxes. According to New York State’s Financial Restructuring Board for Local Governments, Niagara Falls is the highest taxed municipality in New York which, as mentioned above, is the highest state in the US.

Therefore, the City of Niagara Falls is the highest taxed municipality in the highest taxed state. One cannot help but wonder, if, rather than work on a tax reassessment, city officials could work to cut taxes?

words.

The process will begin at September’s first council meeting and taxpayers are expected to show up and have their say about the city’s first citywide revaluation since 2002, as some fear it will cause their tax rates to rise. That may be the case, in some instances, but Touma and Bird emphasize the purpose of the reassessment is not to punish anybody but to bring the assessments after 14 long years and work to make sure everybody is paying their fair share.



Michalek's Famous Lawyer Paid Well to Take Guilty Plea

Tony Farina

Carrie Cohen was a big-time prosecutor with corruption-fighting U. S. Attorney Preet Bharara in the Southern District of New York and before that, with the State Attorney General's office. But she left it all behind a few months ago to return to possibly greener financial pastures in private practice with the New York firm of Morrison & Foerster where she once worked as an associate.

Well, Cohen's first high-profile defense case could hardly be called a win compared to her Shelly Silver days as she represented then-State Supreme Court Justice John Michalek last month as he pleaded guilty to two bribery-related felony counts in the long-running investigation of political operative Steve Pigeon who was indicted the next day.

So how did the former big-time federal prosecutor wind up in a Buffalo courtroom last month taking a guilty plea with her client, a sitting judge? I asked one of Buffalo's leading defense attorneys, Joel Daniels, who had been representing Michalek, how Cohen came into the picture.

"I was surprised when I received a call from the New York lawyer and we had a conversation," said Daniels. "She said 'I've been retained [on Michalek].' I asked her if she was going to come here and try the case,



Carrie Cohen
'I try cases' only she didn't.

and she said, 'that's what I do. I try cases.'"

We now know of course that's not what she did. Legal sources say she wound up taking a deal that had been on the table for some time, one that would let Michalek plead guilty and possibly spare him jail if he cooperated in the

case against Pigeon, the original target of the probe by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. And Michalek borrowed \$20,000 to retain Cohen and get the deal that was already pretty much there, according to informed sources.

One legal source said Michalek didn't

need a Fifth Avenue lawyer to take the deal, he could have done just as well by flipping through the Yellow Pages and finding a lawyer closer to home. Legal sources speculate that Michalek went to Fifth Avenue because of Cohen's possible influence in the attorney general's office that might help him get a better deal. It now appears he got the same deal that had been available for some time.

"My advice to the judge [Michalek] was not to take a plea, but to try the case," said Daniels. "I was not in favor of cooperation and I told him to man up." Michalek didn't take Daniels' legal advice, hired the Fifth Avenue lawyer, and is now expected to be a key witness against Pigeon at trial in order to keep himself from going to jail on his guilty pleas. As we have previously reported, sources say Michalek faced possible federal charges if he didn't go along with a deal where he would cooperate against Pigeon, something Daniels recommended he not do.

If the case against Pigeon eventually goes to trial, Michalek will likely face a very tough cross-examination by Pigeon's lawyer, Paul Cambria, and he will surely be grilled on why he became a witness. Cohen may be there representing him, in a Buffalo courtroom, far from her Fifth Avenue base and her fame as one of Preet Bharara's top legal guns. Welcome to Buffalo, Ms. Cohen.

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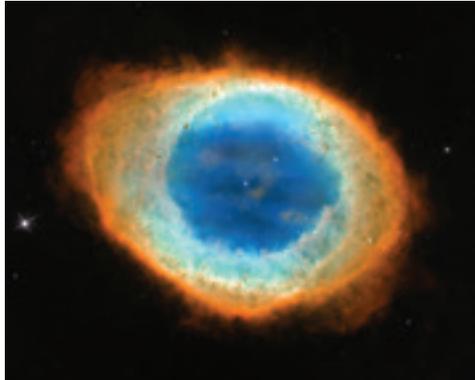
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Blasdell's Penn Dixie Invites Public to View 'The Classical Planets of Antiquity' Five planets will be visible in one night!

Frank Parlato



The ring nebula is 2300 light years from earth but is likely to be seen at Penn Dixie in Blasdell.



If you haven't seen Jupiter's four moons yet, July 30th may your best next chance.



Saturn is surrounded by a disk of rocks and ice fragments orbits the planet's equatorial plane.

Here's something different.

On Saturday evening, July 30, starting at 7:30, the Penn Dixie Paleontological & Outdoor Education Center will afford the public an opportunity, weather permitting, to view through telescopes "The Classical Planets of Antiquity".

Absent significant cloud cover, all in one night people will be able to see Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

In classical antiquity, the naked eye planets were these five, plus the Sun and the Moon.

Penn Dixie is in Blasdell, a 54 acre, outdoor educational center, located at 4050 North Street.

Penn Dixie's astronomers will be there to guide the public.

Although amateur astronomers are welcome to bring their own telescopes, Penn Dixie will provide telescopes for use during

the outdoor, evening program.

In addition to the five planets, with clear skies, people will be able to view the four moons of Jupiter – named Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto. The moons were discovered by Galileo around 1610 and were the first group of objects found to orbit another planet.

Viewers should also be able to see the Great Red Spot, an ancient high-pressure storm on Jupiter that can be likened to the worst hurricanes on Earth. It is so large that three Earths could fit inside it.

Viewers should also be able to get a marvelous look at Saturn's rings, which are made of ice mixed with a trace of rock that orbit constantly about Saturn.

As the evening progresses different sights can be seen. The public should get a chance to view M57 -- the ring nebula in the constellation Lyra. A tiny silver-grey smoke

ring, the Ring Nebula is set in a rich and beautiful section of the northern summer Milky Way. It lies about 3/5 of the way from gamma Lyrae to beta Lyrae in the southern end of the Lyra, and is marked by the brilliant blue-white star Vega which rises overhead in the mid-summer months.

Actually when viewers see the two toned oval ring wrapped around the middle of a cloud of glowing gas, they are looking at how M57 appeared 2300 years ago.

During this end of July night, the night the public will also get a chance to see the Summer Constellations: Cygnus, Lyra, Aquila, Sagittarius and Scorpius. The three brightest stars of Aquila, Cygnus, and Lyra -- Altair, Deneb, and Vega form what is called "the Summer Triangle."

In addition, viewers may be able, in the moonless sky, to see meteors shower from the breakup of the Marsden and Kracht Sungraz-

ing comets, called the Delta Aquarid Meteor Shower.

The program is free for Penn Dixie members and \$4 for the public. No reservations are needed.

Please check the weather; the program may be canceled due to excessive cloud cover or rainy conditions.

For more information, visit <https://penn-dixie.org/astronomy-programs>.

The New Direction Band to Play Chicago Style Polka Music at local events



Sunday, August 7th - Town of Cambria Gazebo Concert Series - behind the Cambria Town Hall 4160 Upper Mountain Road Sanborn, NY. Visit Niagara County's Wineries then come to a Free Polka Concert in the country. Music starts at 6:00 pm and goes until 8:00 pm.

Sunday, August 28th - POLKA PARTY at the NOOK 2242 Cudaback Ave, Niagara Falls, NY. Call Kathy for reservations at (716) 282-6712. Admission is \$12.00 and includes the famous Polish Platter Dinner and music by the New Direction Band from 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm.

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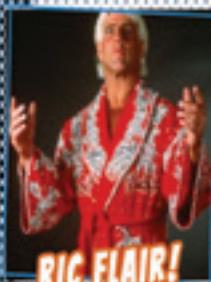
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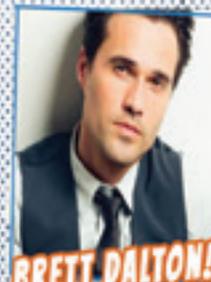
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Stupid Party ? I Think Not, Stupid Politicians ?...I Think So!



Both parties can claim some really stupid people BUT... there is a MAJOR difference between the two parties and that is...which one believes in our RULE of LAW!?

You see, the Democrat Party believes in the true definition of a Democratic society and that is a duly elected majority ruling the Democracy with the minority (losers) enjoying only those rights "granted" by the winning majority (Democrats). They believe that they should make the laws and the Government should provide all necessities of life; from food, work, housing, health care (to those THEY feel should get it) , education

and so forth. AND ...there is NO private ownership of property in a Democratic Society! Don't read it ...just vote for her, you'll find out later!

Republicans, similarly believe that the duly elected winning majority (Republicans) should "rule" BUT, within our RULE OF LAW, and ALL people should enjoy the RIGHTS that are guaranteed by our CONSTITUTION and our RULE OF LAW in our CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC!

Now getting a Democrat to admit to the truth, as Hillary CLEARLY demonstrated before Congress, is really tough as the truth hurts so they call it "progressive". That's right, "progressive" thinking! It's progressive for you to lose the right to bear arms, as long as the Ruling Democrats have guns. It's progressive for you to lose your right to privacy (ask your doctor to show you what he has put on the Obama Care Government computer about your health)!

These are things that are going on that you should be smart enough to realize!

But I MUST say that the STUPID decisions by really freaking STUPID, elected, Democrats seem to cost MANY more lives that the STUPID Republican decisions!

Allow me to give you JUST a few examples... It is universally accepted that

Iran, and it's Supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, are responsible for 99% of the Terrorism in the WORLD! How did that happen? President Jimmy Carter, a stupid DEMOCRAT, listened to his stupid advisers who assured him that the Ayatollah was a humanitarian, peace loving, a wonderful human being that Jimmy should get released from exile and help put the Shah of Iran (a proven US friend) into exile.

Long story short, thanks to Carter, in early 1979 the Ayatollah took over Iran and was behind the taking of Americans hostage from the US Embassy and kept them for 444 days, UNTIL the very day a Republican, President Reagan was SWORN IN! Now for you people who say we can't stop Muslims from entering the US, Jimmy Carter DID when he realized how stupid he is! Using the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 he BANNED ALL Iranian Muslims from entering the US, ordered ALL Iranian Muslim college students to register and DEPORTED 15,000! How many deaths is Khomeini responsible for, 40 years AFTER Carter, thanks to President Carter's brilliant decisions?

Here's another one... President Clinton knew who Osama Bin Laden was because Lt Col Ollie North told both him and brain

dead Al Gore in 1989 during the Iran Contra Hearings!

According to the CIA Operative who went public, the CIA had Bin Laden in their sights no less than 3 times. Clinton said "NO", "NO", "NO",... not the Director of the CIA but Clinton said "NO"! Then 8 years of that moron and 8 months of George Bush and Bin Laden causes the death of more Americans than Pearl Harbor... 3000 dead Americans!

Name a Republican President as stupid as either one of those two and who caused the deaths of more innocent Americans than Pearl Harbor! Name ONE!

I do know one, who IS that stupid! She is none other than the "presumptive" Democrat Candidate, a "truthful", "honest", "experienced", "good decision making Democrat", who also killed Americans!

If only we could find a candidate who wants to stop the terrorist Muslims from ENTERING the US and who wants to attack them at THEIR home instead at OUR home... a candidate who would NOT have given Iran 1.5 Billion dollars to kill Americans, or a candidate who wants to build up our economy and military and enforce OUR RULE OF LAW!

Anybody know of one?

Japan...NO Muslims...NO terrorism?!

Paladino Leads Trump Brigade

Tony Farina

The big political news this week, of course, was the nomination of New York billionaire Donald Trump as the Republican nominee for president at the GOP convention in Cleveland.

Prominent among the Trump supporters is Buffalo developer Carl Paladino, front and center in front of the podium at the head of the New York convention delegation and the leader of Trump's campaign in the Empire State, meaning Carl will be traveling across the state trying to help Trump somehow win

New York's electoral votes over presumptive Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

Now anyone who knows Carl knows that when he's into something, there's no holding back. Whether it is fighting for what he believes is best for Buffalo's children as a member of the Buffalo school board, or fighting corruption in government, Paladino is all in. That mentality will certainly serve the Trump team well, even though Carl knows that, at times, he will have to check his sometimes all-or-nothing style at the door and help Trump cultivate an image that will attract voters who may be on the fence about his candidacy, especially women. We reached out to

Paladino this week, as the states were voting on the nominee, to give us some of what he was thinking as it was unfolding before him. He took a moment to send the following message:

"We are watching history being made. It's the second American Revolution. The

American people will take back their government from the elitist, aristocratic, bureaucratic phonies in the Washington establishment."

Now that's the Carl Paladino that we know, blunt, outspoken, and hard-hitting. I'm sure Trump is very glad that Carl is in his corner.



Donald Trump and Carl Paladino

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War Is The Health Of The State: An Argument For The Impeachment Of Obama And Hillary

Jim Ostrowski

“War is the health of the state,” said Randolph Bourne. “War is hell,” said General Sherman. The war criminal Sherman was an expert in the subjects of hell and war. When I was twelve, I attended my brother Mike’s graduation from St. Joe’s. The year was 1970 and the Vietnam War was raging. The commencement speaker, himself a hero of World War II, was, nevertheless, a man of peace. He blasted away at the war at some risk to his career as a judge in the very conventional and timorous world that was Buffalo in that era.

That same man would later spend many years working for free for the rights of pro-lifers to protest. To him, it was the same issue, life. He also opposed the death penalty so he accomplished the pro-life trifecta, a rarity these days. The commencement speaker that May day was our father, William J. Ostrowski. He knew war and hated it. At age 18, he had marched off to face the Nazis while passing row by row of young American boys dead by the roadside.

Dad left Mike and I five years ago but in a twist of fate, Mike and I have teamed up to write a profoundly antiwar book that we expect to publish on Saturday. When you read



the title, you may be tempted to think it’s a partisan book: “The Impeachment of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton for High Crimes in Syria and Libya. But it’s not. It’s mainly an antiwar and anti-state book. Mike is not involved in electoral politics. I am a registered Republican toying with the idea of burning my GOP card one of these days over their support for draft registration for women. (I

oppose it for men too.) We are not connected to the Trump campaign. I was hoping Trump would veer towards the libertarian view and I passed along some ideas to his campaign but he has not adopted any of those ideas.

I watched the GOP convention Monday night and, as usual, they missed the point. They were still focusing on Hillary’s “damn emails” and on her alleged negligent super-

vision of the CIA compound in Benghazi. Don’t expect the clueless GOP to ask why the hell the CIA had a compound in Libya in the first place? Never forget that the GOP is the stupid party.

Our book, short as it is, is really four books in one. First, we explain the colossal error that was American foreign policy in the Middle East for the last 100 years. Second, we expand the theory of progressivism (developed in my 2014 book) and apply it to foreign policy. Hint: progressivism is even worse when applied to foreign affairs. Third, we introduce a new concept into political dialogue, archism, that helps clarify the source of so many seemingly intractable problems plaguing the modern world. Finally, we do deliver on the promise of the title. The book is a sustained argument for the impeachment of Obama and Hillary for starting or joining two illegal and extremely destructive wars that have the world on the edge of disaster. Stay tuned. You have NEVER read a book like this one.

Jim Ostrowski is a trial and appellate lawyer in Buffalo, NY. He is CEO of Libertymovement.org and author of several books including Progressivism: A Primer on the Idea Destroying America. Copyright 2016 by James Ostrowski.

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Dear Judge Bayger:

A few months ago, I was in an accident with another vehicle that ran a red light. His insurance company is refusing to pay for my injuries because I wasn't wearing my seat belt. Can the insurance company get away with this?

Signed,

An Injured Party

Answer: As it is with many situations, there is no simple answer to the question. By failing to wear your seat belt, you essentially allowed the insurance company to limit their liability. Seat belts are there for your protec-



Judge Frank R. Bayger

tion, both physically and legally.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2010, seat belts saved 12,500 lives, prevented 308,000 serious injuries, and saved \$50

billion in medical care and lost productivity. The cost of medical care when seat belts are not used becomes a component of auto insurance claims. Those increased costs are felt by all consumers through the premiums we all pay.

In New York, we are a "no-fault" state, therefore, your economic damages would be paid by your own automobile insurer, regardless of whomever was at fault, unless it exceeds \$50,000. You cannot make a personal injury claim against the other driver unless you meet the "serious injury" threshold, which is specifically defined in the New York Insurance Law.

Looking again at New York law, liability for damages can be reduced by the percentage the injured party is at fault for the accident or the damages. If it can be established that your injuries could have been prevented or limited by the use of a seat belt, a court would be bound to consider that fact. For example, if 20% of your damages were related to the fail-

ure to use a seat belt, then any award would be reduced by 20% (a \$100,000 award would result in a \$80,000 recovery).

An insurance adjuster will focus on your contribution to the damages, perhaps more so than a court would when trying to consider a settlement. It would clearly be beneficial to have a knowledgeable and experienced personal injury attorney to guide you and protect your interest.

And it may go without saying, next time wear your seat belt.

(Retired State Supreme Court Justice Frank R. Bayger is inviting you to submit legal questions pertaining to personal injury or wrongful death cases to him for a published response. Email your questions to Judge Bayger, a Hall of Fame trial lawyer, and the judge will respond in writing in the Niagara Falls Reporter. Send your email to frankrbayger@gmail.com or write to the Law Firm of Frank R. Bayger, P.C., 2578 Niagara Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14304.)

NEWS, PRESS RELEASES, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



If you have a news tip, a news story, or if your organization has a press release, or if you just have something important to say which would be interesting to our readers in the communities we serve, send it to us by email at news1926@gmail.com.

Or call at 716-284-5595

All submissions are reviewed carefully and whenever possible published in our pages.



The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration.

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Swami Vivekananda

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Governor Cuomo Says, “No Excuses – Get Your Breast Cancer Screening”

By Renae Kimble

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo is now one of the greatest crusaders for breast cancer screening in the nation since the announcement in May 2015 that his longtime partner, Sandra Lee was diagnosed with breast cancer.

The governor has initiated a statewide “Get Screened, No Excuses” campaign that features the 2016 Breast Cancer Ride by the governor, Ms. Lee and singer Billy Joel riding motorcycles June 27 at Citi Field – home of the New York Mets. There the governor signed legislation that aims to increase access to breast cancer screenings and raise awareness about the importance of having a mammogram regularly.

The 2016 Breast Cancer Ride continued July 8 with stops in Albany, Utica, East Syracuse, the Rochester area and Buffalo. The last leg of the ride was July 13.

When cancer is discovered at an earlier stage, an individual has a wider range of treatment options to choose from and a better chance of successful treatment than if the



New York is expanding access to breast cancer screening by requiring hospitals to extend hours for mammograms and eliminating insurance costs for the procedure. Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the measure into law at a ceremony on Long Island.



cancer has progressed to a more advanced stage.

Women not diagnosed with breast cancer until the disease’s latter stages require more invasive treatments to arrest, cure, stop or slow down the spread of this heinous disease. Sadly, those who are diagnosed later rather than sooner are also more likely to die.

Getting screened for breast cancer saves lives. While screening guidelines may vary

depending on a woman’s age and risk, mammograms remain the best way to detect early stage breast cancer.

Studies have shown that the lack of health insurance is a tremendous barrier to regular mammogram screening. Screening is underutilized by women with no regular source of health care. Other contributing factors are a lack of transportation to and from the screening site, a lack of flexible screening hours and a lack of paid leave time from work for a cancer screening.

The expanded health insurance options provided by the Affordable Care Act, the New York State Marketplace and the Cancer Services Program of Niagara County, an affiliate of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, have helped decrease the financial barriers many women face. These programs have provided affordable or free access to screening and diagnostic services.

Governor Cuomo’s Breast Cancer Initiatives, which will invest \$91 million dollars to increase breast cancer education, awareness and screening access, give New Yorkers another option in the fight to curtail breast cancer.

These initiatives will ensure that breast cancer screenings will be even more readily accessible to all New York residents with the



Cuomo’s girlfriend Sandra Lee’s successful treatment for breast cancer prompted Cuomo to introduce the legislation this year.

addition of the mobile mammography vans, extended hours for breast cancer screenings in area hospitals, public awareness campaigns, community outreach teams, one-on-one assistance navigating the health care system, paid leave for cancer screenings and venture capital funding for cancer related research and technology.

New Yorkers are fortunate to have a governor who is using his bully pulpit to advocate for the residents of this state to get a breast cancer screening. Remember: Getting screened for breast cancer can save your life!

Renae Kimble is program coordinator for the Cancer Services Program of Niagara County, a service of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. For information about the program, call (716) 278-4898.



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Sales Tax Collections Show Drop in Spending

The 2nd quarter was another slow sales tax quarter for counties in New York State the highest taxed state in the nation as well as the fastest shrinking state.

Thirty seven counties out of the state’s 62 counties collected less in the 2nd quarter of 2016 than they did in the same quarter of 2015.

There continues volatility and unevenness across this liberal state, with numbers coming in much lower than historic averages for most counties. Motor fuel sales tax collections are down about \$56 million in the

first six months compared to last year, but that does not explain all of the low numbers.

• Total county collections (not including NYC) were down \$9.7 million, -.5%

• The average percent change per county was -.79%.

• The range was -9.72% to +7.5%

One place where collections are up is in New York City, where the one sided government of this state always favors.

Sales tax revenues in NYC are up 1.8% in the 2nd quarter and 2.4% for the first 6 months of the year.



BUY AMERICAN THE JOB YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN

There are no better stories on the evening news than the Made in America special assignment segments on ABC World News. We need look no further than a mirror to find a major part of the blame for any economic problem this country faces. Despite constant reminders that significant parts of the United States are economically depressed, face high unemployment and are suffering through bleak economic times, we as a nation, still fail in large part to support US companies that employ US citizens and produce goods made... wait for it – in the United States. It is a point made very public time and again when high profile purchases are made from foreign companies operating outside the borders of the United States. Everything from clothing and produce to steel, bridges, furniture and electronics are imported and purchased from China, Southeast Asia and Mexico on a daily basis.

But once again, ABC World News focuses on American made products that range from Major League Baseball team apparel to Wilson footballs to sunglasses all made right here in the United States employing Americans who in turn spend their income in our local communities. It is always heartwarming to see a story that takes place in a small town in Ohio or Pennsylvania making quality goods with the Made in America label. One such success story comes from Easton, PA, and the Majestic Athletic Company which makes all apparel for MLB. But you do not need to be a MLB player to wear or purchase products Made in America. We fortunately have a store focused on American made products in our own backyard. Now in 7 locations around Western New York, the Made in America store is packed with quality merchandise ALL made in America. From hats and shirts, to sandals and wind chimes, summer wear to winter protection, the Made in America store can outfit you from head to toe. From home goods to hardware, groceries to games, they make it easy to buy American. In addition to these convenient outlets, there are hundreds of American companies online to purchase thousands of products all Made in America by American hands. We and we alone have the power to change our economy. We need not wait on an incompetent Congress or count on a lame duck President to make the necessary changes to build this country to greatness once again. We need not look beyond a mirror to see who can choose to purchase goods made in this country by our neighbors and refuse to purchase an inferior good made overseas. We possess the power every time we decide whether or not to purchase that imported product. Take a close look. There are still products made in the United States by US citizens. Buy American – the job you save may be your own.

Former Sorrento Cheese Exec Finds Perfect Career Match

Tony Farina

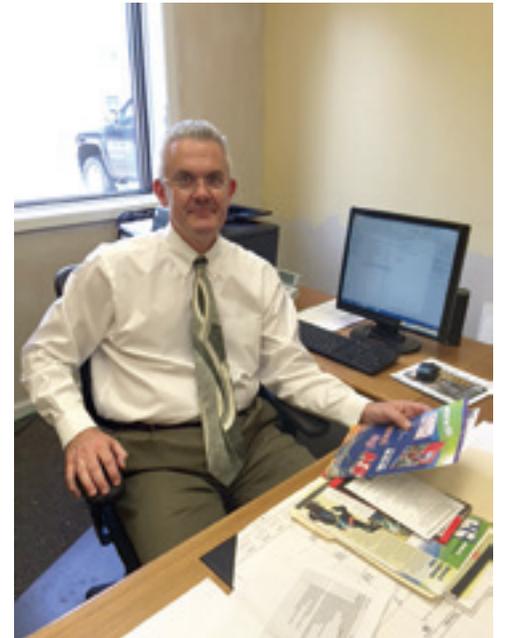
Every once in a while in life, we find a perfect match. It may be a golf club, a pet, a career, or a partner. There is something that tells us this is it! This fits me perfectly and I know it, a once in a lifetime match that I will treasure. That looks like what's happened to 54-year-old Ed Sullivan, a longtime business executive who dreamed of someday owning his own business, one that would fit for his background and experience and would offer him a challenge and a chance to grow professionally and personally. A so-called perfect match.

So how did Ed Sullivan, a longtime executive at Sorrento Cheese, find his perfect match which turned out to be an established sign manufacturing business in a small village in Chautauqua County with a nationwide customer base that ships to both Canada and the UK plus Mexico that was looking for a buyer?

Ed Sullivan found his dream with the help of Amherst-based Sunbelt Business Brokers of Amherst, a firm that we featured in a story last February, a company that looks for the right match between buyer and seller, aligning their interests for mutual benefit. Sunbelt co-owner Lidia Cuzo brought Ed Sullivan and the Hanson Sign Companies of Falconer together, and after 18 months of negotiations, Sullivan and an investment partner purchased Hanson, with the closing six weeks ago. To say Sullivan believes he has found the right fit would be an understatement.

"We have a great team, 37 fantastic workers," said Sullivan during an interview at the company's offices, brimming with excitement about the challenging days ahead. "It is indeed the perfect fit for me. Great business, great product, great quality, lots of opportunity to build and grow."

Sullivan, who lives in Angola with his family, still has a long commute to get to work, like he did for the last 15 years with Sorrento Cheese of Buffalo, the last several years as vice president for sales in the retail dairy division. But he's committed to putting



Ed Sullivan, former Sorrento executive now owns Hanson Sign Company

his experience to work helping to grow Hanson which did \$4.8 million in business last year, 95 percent of it in the U. S.

Hanson's customers are retail sign shops, sign franchises, ad agencies, and companies that sell or broker national accounts. Sullivan notes that most retail sign operations do not have in-house capabilities to manufacture all of the complex sign types his company produces. "They can generally produce some of what we do," he says, "but they turn to us to fill in the gaps when they have a customer that needs a sign type they cannot produce. We manufacture to their specs and ship the sign to them."

Sullivan has clearly learned fast, and has hit the ground running in his new digs after acquiring the company from Gene Aversa who transformed what was a small retail sign shop into what it is today. But Gene was looking to sell the company and retire, and that's where Sunbelt took over and matched Aversa and Sullivan and helped broker the sale.

It appears that so far, everybody is happy, especially Sullivan who believes his background at Sorrento suits him perfectly in his new career as a business owner.

"The skills I learned there will be invaluable as we work to take Hanson to the next level," says Sullivan, and it looks like he's off to a good start just six weeks into his perfect match. You can find out more about Sullivan and his business at www.hanson-sign.com.

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7/21/16, 7/28/16

Your Weekly Horoscope

By Jean Topascani



Aries: (March 21 - April 19)

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but no one has to use their eyes to see your stupid. When shoplifting, avoid stealing purple bathing suit. It will reveal unflattering dimple. High appeal to the opposite gender. Fun to be around. Very caring. This doesn't sound like you, and the stars can do nothing to change it.



Cancer: (June 21 - July 22)

A skydiving accident may befall you if you go skydiving. Return home to Poland at the earliest opportunity. A bat wielding Capricorn will provide answer to lingering question, "What is it about me that makes people want to beat me with a baseball bat?" Your taste for loud music may cause you to incur an unfortunate accident.



Libra: (September 23 - October 22)

Forget about wanting people's respect; what you really need is their cold, hard cash. Try not to do too much speaking or walking or living. An attractive member of the opposite sex is secretly laughing at you. Encouraging news on Tuesday will turn out to be false.



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19)

Date night goes horribly wrong when your sweetie wants to be spanked, and you send a note home to the parents because you don't believe in corporal punishment. Your talents as a musician come to the fore when several recognize you as skilled at playing the liar. AM: Monday: Nose appears to grow longer.



Taurus: (April 20 - May 20)

Spreading lies about friends may give you extra pleasure this week. Co-workers think you had too much Botox. You finally realize that taking drugs is neither smart nor savvy. However, selling drugs is. Begin at once. You will have ample reason to exclaim this week: "Nobody makes a good deodorant."



Leo: (July 23 - August 22)

Just because people laugh at you doesn't make you a comedian. Consider swimming the English Channel. Lover breaks up with you and the writes sequel to Milton, called "Paradise Regained." People regard you as dense, but you never notice. Everything has its place, and yours is on the floor scrubbing.



Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21)

Buy a friend a beer and steal his wallet while he isn't looking. Try to figure out why people often say, "If I throw a stick, will you leave?" Be enthusiastic about the success of others, since you will have none yourself. Rely on outgoing personality and winning smile to get you into a lot of trouble.



Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18)

Things seem pretty crappy right now, but look at the bright side: you can always make some extra cash selling fertilizer. The stars indicate that if you eat regularly and take restful sleep, it will be healthful. PM: Brush your tongue.



Gemini: (May 21 - June 20)

Next time, write your pick-up lines before you order tequila. Your lucky horse for today is: Silent Flash. This week you'll become displeased to discover you are known among co-workers as "goat face." You will come face to face with your worst fears this week after standing in front of a bathroom mirror. Your first instinct will be to run.



Virgo: (August 23 - September 22)

If you lose money today you can be assured that the nature of human kindness will mean you never see it again. The widow of an African political leader will offer you \$10m sometime this week by email. Laxative proves effective, but spoils hot tub party.



Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21)

Surprise your family by doing something productive. You will be torn away from friends and cast out of the only home you've ever known, now that your prison sentence is over. A short trip is in the stars, possibly to the bathroom. A personal-injury attorney with a warm smile will advertise on a billboard not far from your home.



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

Either invest in some drapes for your windows, or declare your place as a haunted house and charge everyone five bucks for the show. Unlike Socrates, who was smart and died from an overdose of hemlock, you are stupid and will likely die from an overdose of wedlock.

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"Such was the will of the Father that his Son, blessed and glorious, whom he gave to us, and who was born for us, should by his own blood, sacrifice, and oblation, offer himself on the altar of the cross, not for himself, by whom "all things were made," but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."

St Francis of Assisi

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Multi-million dollar settlements and verdicts in personal injury and wrongful death cases. Selected cases:

- Construction Accident - \$1.4 Million - Verdict - Scaffold Collapsed
- Head-on Collision - \$2 Million - During Trial - Two Car Accident
- Medical Malpractice - \$2.7 Million - Recovery - Faulty Equipment & Anesthesia
- Automobile Accident - \$2.9 Million - Recovery - Car Crash at Intersection
- Explosion - \$3 Million - Recovery - Improper Maintenance of Machine
- Construction Accident - \$3.5 Million - During Trial - Failure to Provide Safety Signs
- Car Crash - \$3.9 Million - Verdict - Death & Severe Facial Scarring
- Car and Truck Crash - \$7.5 Million - During Trial - Tractor Trailer Caused Death
- Product Liability - \$7.5 Million - During Trial - Loss of Eye due to Defective Hammer
- Job Site Accident - \$8 Million - Verdict - Failure to Provide Safety Harness
- Falling Tree on Automobile - \$8 Million - Recovery - NYS Failed to Remove Tree
- Airplane Crash - \$9 Million - Recovery - Pilot Error & Lack of Training
- Tractor Trailer Accident - \$10.5 Million - Recovery - Unsafe Load of Steel Coils
- Libel - \$18.5 Million - Verdict - John Prozoralk case
- Medical Malpractice - \$35 Million - During Trial - Brain Damage Upon Birth

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