

Community and Lifestyles**A grateful region celebrates Bill Welch**

Bill Welch, who served as mayor of State College for 15 years, died Sept. 4 of complications from leg artery surgery. Voices reached out to members of the community to remember their beloved mayor with stories about the impact he had on them and the entire community. Thank you to all who contributed to this tribute.

**Gini Horn, Librarian
American Philatelic Society
Bellefonte, Pa.**

I met Bill Welch in 1984 when he interviewed me for the position of Librarian of the American Philatelic Society. Several months after I became the librarian, Bill left the Centre Daily Times to become the APS's editor of *The American Philatelist*.

Making a discovery in the stamp world is every bit as important to a philatelist as creating a new vaccine would be to a pharmaceutical researcher. In the fall of 1986, Bill and I decided to determine what stamp album was the first published in the United States. We spent hours debating, and asking each other questions, searching through literature (which is not exactly easy since there are few indexes), and trying all avenues. When we finally found the factual details, we were thrilled. The album was published in 1862 by Appleton Co. of New York.

Bill wrote an article about this album that appeared in the *American Philatelist*. That article is cited today as the authority on this. It was through Bill's extremely wide network of friends in the philatelic community that he discovered that a friend of his had a copy of this album. It was loaned to us and graced the cover of the December 1987

**Donna S. Queeney
State College, Pa.**

Bill regularly referred to me as the twin sister he never had, occasionally leaving off the "never had" portion and thus promoting misinformation among the gullible.

Bill respected the dignity of all individuals, regardless of where they came from or what they believed. This philosophy was reflected in his oft-stated dictum, "Be unfailingly polite"... and he was.

Bill injected a lot of humor, pleasure, and also some education into our lives, sometimes under rather unlikely circumstances. After his kidney transplant, he'd asked that my late husband and I bring him

American Philatelist with the heading, Happy 125th Birthday! Today, 21 years later, only two copies of this album have been documented, making it one of the rarest pieces of philatelic literature. The National Postal Museum, part of the Smithsonian Institution, displayed the second United States album with the explanation that it was "Welch Album No. 2" meaning Bill had established the numbering for the first and second albums.

Always the perfectionist in research and documentation, Bill's articles reached around the world to more than 50,000 philatelists. He was considered part of the "truth" squad in philately. When attending a stamp show either in the United States or overseas, he was immediately recognized and greeted as a friend. Bill's knowledge, his friendly manner, his enthusiasm for the hobby will all be sorely missed.

home from Hershey. When I called the day before to confirm our arrangements, I heard a lot of chatter in the background. I asked him what was going on in his hospital room, and was told, "I'm conducting a book discussion group for some of the nurses and other people here." Bill Welch, kidney transplant patient, had organized those caring for him to all read the same book. On the day before leaving them, he was leading them in conversation about it. It was pure Bill.

We often hear it said that a person has touched others' lives. Bill did more than touch our lives, he entered them. Our perspectives and behaviors were enhanced by Bill's influence. This is a legacy he has left us, one we shall carry forth with gratitude.

**Bob Potter
Boalsburg, Pa.**

If you lived in State College or anywhere in the Centre Region, Bill Welch was someone you always knew.

I can't remember when I first met Bill, but an early memory was when I acquired my grandmother's stamp album. I had known of Bill when he was editor of the Centre Daily Times, but had become

friends with him only after he moved over to the American Philatelic Society. Naturally I took my stamps to Bill at the APS, hoping that perhaps I was now in the possession of untold wealth.

Looking back I'm sure Bill must have been approached with this same false hope by many other aspiring stamp collectors over the years. Yet he took his time in looking at my stamps, explaining this and commenting on that and finally said, "You have the basis of a wonderful collection." Hopes dashed, I knew I should keep my day job.

That was Bill: Honest, direct, helpful,

**Peter S. Marshall
Managing Consultant, Municipal
Resources of Pa., Boalsburg, Pa.**

I worked with Bill Welch during his years as a councilman on the State College Borough Council and for years when he served the borough as mayor.

He was a great mayor. He respected and cared for the people he served. He believed that one of the important missions of government is to help citizens who need help. He was never afraid to say what he believed and often spoke out

diplomatic and without pretension.

At some point around 20 years ago Bill and Nadine joined our informal Saturday lunch group at Duffy's Tavern in Boalsburg. The conversation was lively and often witty with Bill leading the way with his knowledge of local issues, films, history and anything else you can think of. We will miss him from these weekly gatherings.

From my many conversations with Bill, I know just how deeply he cared and thought about the future of this area. Although he may have been mayor only of the Borough of State College, he was really the mayor of us all, no matter where we happened to live. And, as such, he knew and understood that nearly all of our issues, challenges and opportunities are regional. That's right, Bill felt that the more cooperation we have between and among the borough and the various townships the better off we will be. He believed it was both inevitable and in our best interests that we continue a steady and reasoned march toward regional consolidation.

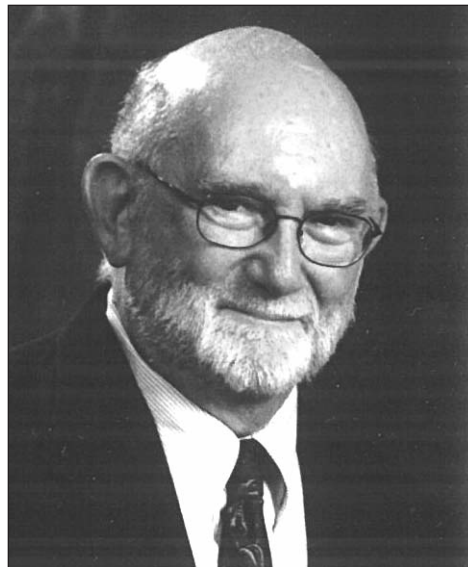
Future mayors will certainly be compared with Bill. That's to be expected even though they will bring their own styles, experiences and visions to this largely ceremonial and symbolic job. We can only hope they will also bring Bill's compassion, wisdom and sense of pure enjoyment to the mayor's office.

There could be no finer way to remember and honor him.

for his beliefs. He was not afraid to speak against ignorant or disrespectful behavior. He was always respectful of the opinions of others even when he did not agree with them. He had a great sense of humor and enjoyed people. He always represented the community with class.

It was an honor to have served with Bill.

**More remembrances of
Mayor Bill Welch - Pg. 9**



William Lee Welch, Jr. 1941-2009

Group connects black mentors with students

by Jordan Toronto

"It's not just an after school-school program," said Kayla Shelton-Burleigh, a sophomore at State College High School, about the African American Support Group. "It's a community."

"In my first year with the group, we talked about news, Obama, what was going on in school," said Andika Rodriguez, a junior at State High.

The African American Support Group (AASG) was created by Penn's Civilians, a non-profit organization with a mission "to increase the academic and social achievements of low socio-economic students," according to www.pennscivilians.org.

"It was founded by ex-PSU football player, Rick Sayles," said Curt Marshall, president of Penn's Civilians. "He was driven to this after he squandered his opportunity at PSU with a criminal act that cost him his football future.

When that door closed, this one opened."

"In today's ever-changing landscape, the one thing that is constant is education," said Curtis Johnson, Penn's Civilians' chairman of the board, assistant principal of State College Area High School and head of AASG.

The AASG provides students interaction with black college mentors, including guest speakers and one-on-one sessions, to expose the students to educational activities, college preparation, and career exploration.

"My mentor came to my house and introduced herself to my parents," said Shelton-Burleigh. "At the time, I was in trouble. She talked to me about how my punishment was going to be a good thing in the end and about better decision-making."

"I got a mentor to help with my grades," Rodriguez said. "She's the best, more like a big sister. But the seniors last year basically told the mentors to back off. They didn't want us to feel controlled by our mentors, but we

needed them."

"We (mentors) had energy to do a lot," said Evonna Crudup, mentor to Shelton-Burleigh, "but the students weren't motivated. I think the older students figured they were out of there soon, and the younger ones saw college as so far off, they weren't inspired to work toward it."

"I want to do big things this year," Johnson said to the students at the first meeting in September. That may include a trip to Atlanta, Georgia for a college tour, something the group would have to raise a lot of money to afford. "We have to start from scratch this year," Johnson said, "because past fundraisers have not been profitable."

The group's specific focus on black students has caused some concern that it may not seem welcoming to other students.

"It's open to everybody," said Johnson.

But Rodriguez admits that the name itself will limit who shows up.

"If it was called 'Hispanics Support Group' or 'Caucasian Support Group,' I wouldn't feel comfortable going," she said.

Crudup suggested that it's tough to improve things for one group without opening the discussion to all people who have contributed to the group's challenges.

"The problem doesn't start with the under-represented group," she said. "It starts with the represented group."

However, Johnson is not creating a forum



Photo by Jordan Toronto

State High Assistant Principal Curtis Johnson discusses goals for AASG with Jalelah Ahmed and Kayla Shelton-Burleigh, the newly-elected leaders of the group.

on diversity. He is creating opportunities for African American students specifically; to learn about their heritage and explore their racial identity with people who understand, so they can look ahead to bright futures as successful members of their communities.

The vision for Penn's Civilians, according to the group, "is to inspire the leadership, scholarship, and service exemplified by the life of Pennsylvania's founder, Mr. William Penn."

Rodriguez and Shelton-Burleigh, this year's president and vice president, said they plan to go to college and find opportunities to give back, like their mentors have, and in the spirit of William Penn's legacy.

Jody Alessandrine
Executive Director, Downtown State College Improvement District, State College, Pa.

Mayor Bill Welch had the unique ability to be a calming influence during public policy discourse, without being afraid to be assertive in advancing his own sagacious positions. And, he did that with grace and wit unlike no other I've witnessed in my own career. The mayor was definitely someone others in public service should try to emulate, as he did what he felt was right rather than acquiesce to prevailing sentiment.

He will be sorely missed by the professionals he worked with, the residents he worked for, and especially by those he loved and who loved him.

My thoughts and prayers go out to them.



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from Remembering
Mayor Welch, pg. 8

Ralph Papa
Chairman, Citizens Bank of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Although I moved away from State College approximately eight years ago, when I hear State College mentioned I can't help thinking of Bill.

Although I get back to State College a lot now and have seen Bill a lot over the past years, I miss not seeing Bill on a daily basis as I once did.

State College was lucky to have a mayor like Bill. Bill was known by everybody and represented the high ideals that State College stands for.

We are all better off for knowing Bill.

New column speaks to disabled, elderly issues

by Joel Solkoff

In high school I was a junior befriended by a sensual senior who shared her physical love with others, but talked philosophy to me. I would have preferred it the other way around, but I had no choice. If I wanted to benefit from the privilege of being in her presence (and I did), then I had to sublimate my lust by talking about existentialism—Sally's philosophical passion.

Existentialism is not as chic today as it was when I was 15 or 16. Jean Paul Sartre had not yet refused the Nobel Prize in Literature, nor had he turned his back on literature—deciding finally to complete Being and Nothingness and other non-fiction. The central philosophical question that haunted us adolescents—Why am I here?—remains through our old age.

For me the question takes on an added dimension. At 28 I was diagnosed as having a relatively-rare form of cancer that a generation earlier killed virtually everyone who had it. For much of my early adulthood, an astonishingly large number of physicians believed the disease was universally fatal. Oxford University Press published an impassioned plea to physicians to reconsider their notions of doom. Today, the disease is nearly-universally curable. For a while, the people who began the cure with radiation machines underestimated its power and a large number of radiologists died while curing others. My radiologist at George Washington University Hospital in Washington D.C.



died before I reached the five-year disease-free mark. Seymour Kaplan, the Stanford University radiologist who published the Oxford medical text, suffered a similar fate.

I lost the ability to run, walk, or stand without assistance, but the disease and its consequences did not prevent me from fathering two beautiful daughters. Why am I here? has become a consistent theme in my life. Consistent themes make it possible for people to become columnists for newspapers and for publications such as Voices of Central Pennsylvania. So, what you are reading is the first in a series of monthly columns on the subject of having physical disabilities and being elderly here in Centre County.

I will not pretend that physical disabilities and old age are inherently fascinating subjects. However, one of the advantages of being a columnist is that I do not have to come to the point too quickly—as long as I get there. So for my readers, beginning October, 2009 I plan to use my wiles to make me part of your life. I plan to start here at Addison Court, the 89-apartment complex in downtown State College, where at 3 a.m. nearly every day drunken students out of control (half a block from the police station) walk east in groups of 20 shrieking men and women who pause

to urinate and vomit in our parking lot.

I plan to find out why the police do not interfere with drunken activity and how it makes Addison Court residents feel.

I can't wait for you to meet my neighbors. A few weeks ago, Lillian (83), Audrey (80), Hilda (90), and I had a lively Corner Room breakfast talking about what it is like when most of one's friends are dead or too-far-gone to remember the same old stories.

Addison Court residents, with the exception of those with physical and emotional disabilities, are 55 or older, live in rent-subsidized apartments, have little money, not enough to do, and most vote



out of a sense of patriotic obligation.

From Addison Court, half a block north on Allen, is Webster's Bookstore Café. Webster's proprietor Elaine Meder-Wilgus surrounds herself with serious reformers who are not afraid to have fun.

This column will discuss reform and fun from my distinct perspective. I am 62. I am a paraplegic. I have rotten teeth—17 cavities.

I have strong ideas about the importance of uniting with others such as myself because as Al Smith once said, "The only cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy."

In the November column, I will tell you why I came to State College, how much money I earn, and how I plan to survive financial disaster.

Joel Solkoff is the author of The Politics of Food. Contact him at jsolkoff@gmail.com.

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