

Obituaries

Additional obituaries, B4

Pauline J. Beears

Pauline J. Beears, 82, of North Eighth Street, died Dec. 2 at 4:45 p.m. in St. Joseph Medical Center, where she had been a patient three days. Her husband, Jack H. Beears, died Jan. 30, 1994.

Born in Pittston, Luzerne County, she was a daughter of the late Angelo and Antoinina (DeBenadetto) Talluto.

Beears was employed for 20 years as a packer by the Arkay Knitting Mill, Reading, retiring in 1983.

She was a member of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Reading.

Beears was inducted into the Secular Franciscans in October 1996.

Surviving are two daughters, Eva L. Beears, at home, and Dorothy A. (Beears) Murray, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Other survivors include a brother, John Talluto, Philadelphia; and a sister, Lena (Talluto) Grayson, in Florida.

There is also a grandson.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Tuesday at 10 a.m. in St. Joseph's Church. Burial will be in Gethsemane Cemetery, Laureldale. Lutz Funeral Home Inc., Mount Penn, is in charge of arrangements.

Mildred I. Ziegler

Mildred I. Ziegler, 94, of High Street, Schuylkill Haven, died Dec. 3 in Lehigh Valley Hospital near Allentown, where she had been a patient one day.

Her husband, Charles Ziegler, died in 1998.

Born in Washington Township, Schuylkill County, she was a daughter of the late Henry and Minnie (Krause) Fehr.

Ziegler was last employed as a saleswoman by Sunshine Products, Schuylkill Haven, until her retirement.

She was a member of Grace Evangelical Congregational Church, Schuylkill Haven.

Surviving are two daughters, Helen (Ziegler) Kramer and Margaret (Ziegler) Kerschner, both of Schuylkill Haven.

Other survivors include two sisters, Beatrice (Fehr) Kerschner, Schuylkill Haven, and Pearl (Fehr) Wolfe, Pine Grove, Schuylkill County.

There are also two grandchildren and a great-grandson.

Graveside services will be Monday at 11 a.m. in Manbeck's Cemetery, Washington Township. Geschwindt-Stabingas Funeral Home Inc., Schuylkill Haven, is in charge of arrangements.

George Wilinsky

George Wilinsky, 81, died Dec. 4 at 5:20 a.m. in his residence on Barlow Avenue, Bern Township. He was the husband of Helen (Kostic) Wilinsky.

Born in Frackville, Schuylkill County, he was a son of the late Stanley and Anna (Damiter) Wilinsky.

Wilinsky was employed for 31 years by Parish Structural Products Division of Dana Corp., Reading, retiring in 1987.

He was an Army veteran of World War II.

Wilinsky was a member of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, Reading.

He is also survived by a daughter, Anita D. Wilinsky, at home.

Other survivors include two sisters, Rose (Wilinsky) Kolas and Mildred (Wilinsky) Panikarchuck, both of Frackville.

A Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Tuesday at 10 a.m. in the Nativity BVM Ukrainian Church. Burial will be in the parish cemetery, Cumru Township. Gallman-Sonoski Funeral Home Inc., Reading, is in charge of arrangements.

Groundbreaking set for middle school

From our news staff

A ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Daniel Boone Middle School will be held indoors Sunday at the Amity Intermediate Center off Old Airport Road, Amity Township.

The ceremony, slated for 1 p.m., will mark the start of construction on the \$38 million middle school, which is set to open September 2005.

The middle school site is along Weavertown Road in Amity Township.

Court log

Sentences

Judge Linda K.M. Ludgate presided over the following cases:
Edward Bendick, 37, of the 1300 block of Hilltop Road, Bern Township, was sentenced to one to three years in state prison after pleading guilty to burglary in Spring Township.

Ronald L. Carter, 43, of the 100 block of South Fourth Street was sentenced to 21 months to four years in state prison after pleading guilty to delivering a substance purported to be cocaine in Reading.

Fences on overpass urged

The father of the Berks County woman killed by dropped ice tells New Jersey lawmakers that barriers on bridges would make highways safer.

From our news services

TRENTON, N.J. — The grieving father of a Penn Township woman who was killed when a basketball-size chunk of ice was dropped from a highway overpass told lawmakers Thursday that a law requiring protective fencing on all highway overpasses could have saved his daughter's life.

Elaine Cowell, a 33-year-old mother of three, was killed in January when ice dropped by a teen from an overpass near Allentown smashed through the windshield of her family's minivan.

Since Cowell's death, her father, William Ubry of Hopewell Township, N.J., has worked to get local, state and federal authorities to pass laws to place fences on all roadway overpasses. The high fences prevent objects from being dropped over the side.

"Every day we think of our daughter," Ubry said. "The reason I am doing this is so other families don't go through what we are going through."

On Thursday the Senate Transportation Committee unanimously approved a bill requiring protective fencing on all New Jersey highway over-

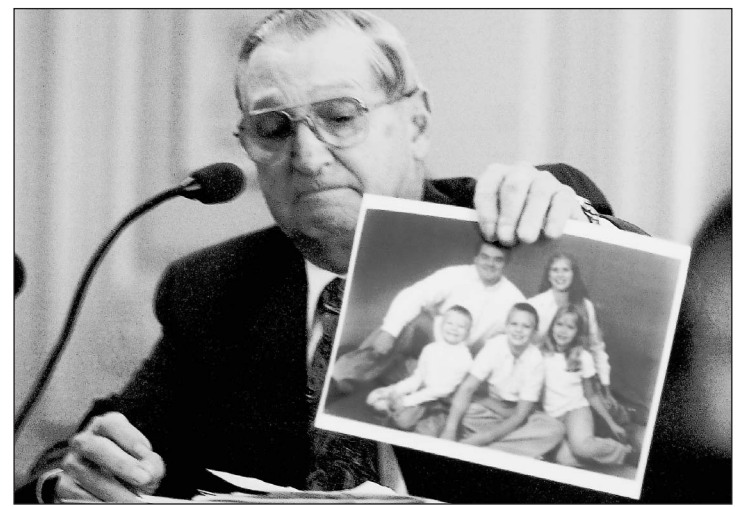
passes. The bill must now go to the Senate for a vote.

Similar legislation is awaiting action in the Assembly.

"This was not only tragic, it was senseless and unnecessary," said Sen. Shirley Turner, a Mercer County Democrat and sponsor of the bill. "If that bridge had protective fencing, that 33-year-old mother of three would be alive today."

Dennis Gumbs, 16, of Allentown was convicted Aug. 4 in Lehigh County Court of third-degree murder for throwing the nearly 19-pound chunk of ice onto the highway.

He was ordered to spend four years in a treatment program at Alternative Rehabilitation Communities in Chambersburg, Franklin County.



William Ubry of Hopewell Township, N.J., holds up a photo of his daughter, Elaine Cowell, and her family as he testifies Thursday before a legislative committee in Trenton. Cowell, who lived in Berks County, was killed when a teen dropped ice on her family's minivan.

INSIDE OPPORTUNITY HOUSE



Yvette A. Roberts, left, a supervisor at Opportunity House, 430 N. Second St., shows off the women's dormitory to Crystal L. Hoffman of Gibraltar and Larry S. Shaub of Mohnton during an open house Thursday. Opportunity House, formerly the Reading Emergency Shelter, has evolved during the last 20 years from a shelter for homeless men to a facility that offers a variety of programs and services for all homeless people. Its name was changed in July to reflect the broader mission.

With electric cost too high, holiday lights remain unlit

A group in Claysburg, Blair County, raises money to buy decorations but finds it can't afford to use them.

The Associated Press

CLAYSBURG — The Christmas lights in this tiny community are all packed up with no place to glow.

A local group, Communities That Care, collected \$500 from businesses and residents to purchase the festive lights for Claysburg, an unincorporated community that's part of Greenfield Township, Blair County, about 80 miles east of Pittsburgh.

But because Claysburg, population 1,500, has never had Christmas lights, community organizers didn't realize it would cost \$4,000 to use them.

That's because Penelec, the power company serving the area, is charging a one-time fee to tap into secondary lighting receptacles that are already in place. The community group also has to pay a small rental fee to hang the lights from 23 utility poles along Bedford Street — the main drag that stretches from the library to the local high school.

"I just thought people put them up and they looked nice," said Randy Potter, a community advocate who says the group underestimated the cost and

complexity of the project.

The lights were purchased secondhand from nearby Roaring Spring, but community organizers are loath to ask for more donations.

"We don't want to go back to them now and say, 'Can you give us another \$4,000?'" said Frank McIntyre, a local businessman who headed the fund-raising effort.

Penelec spokeswoman Beverly Green said the fee covers a variety of costs. Communities must purchase either un-metered service, which means the lights are turned on and off by sensors that monitor daylight, or a metered service, which means somebody manually turns the lights on and off each day. There's also liability insurance to cover workers compensation or other claims should someone be injured.

"Penelec works as much as possible with communities at this time of year because many have Christmas lights and lighted Christmas trees," Green said. "But there are regulations, and they come with costs."

The community group didn't realize all the lights entailed,

such as regulations that keep the lights from interfering with cable television or telephone service lines on the same poles, and PennDOT rules requiring minimum heights so the lights don't interfere with street traffic.

Claysburg isn't alone. Many larger communities, facing rising costs and poor economic conditions, are cutting back or struggling to find ways to pay for light displays, according to the National League of Cities.

Mesa, Ariz., citing the \$150,000 cost, decided not to hang 500,000 lights on a one-mile stretch of Main Street.

Sometimes benefactors step in to help.

A community committee in Ashwaubenon, Wis., a suburb of Green Bay, raised \$8,000 to replace fading holiday lights. The National Football League Green Bay Packers chipped in, but most of that money was raised by individuals who donated \$100 or less.

"We'll continue to work with Penelec and the Greenfield Township supervisors to come up with ideas to help get the Christmas lights up," Potter said. "If we're going to get the lights up, though, I guess we don't have an option other than to come up with more money some way."

Write-in choice for school seat wins second post

Dale H. Reppert, who won a position on the Kutztown School Board, is chosen by lottery for a constable post he didn't seek. He legally cannot hold both offices, an official says.

By Dan Kelly
Reading Eagle

A Maxatawny Township man who launched a successful write-in campaign for a Kutztown School Board seat also was elected by lottery Thursday to township constable, a position he didn't run for.

The Berks County Board of Elections broke ties and declared winners in 19 municipal elections at its final meeting of the year.

"Dale H. Reppert was a write-in candidate and wants to serve on the Kutztown School Board," county Election Services Director V. Kurt Bellman told the elections board. "Apparently, someone accidentally cast a write-in vote for him for constable."

A person cannot legally serve as a constable and a school board member, Bellman said.

Call it luck, but Reppert found himself in a five-way tie of constable candidates with one vote each.

That wasn't a problem, Bellman said. The board of elections breaks all ties by picking numbered balls from a canvas bag.

But "luck" struck again when Judge Jeffrey L. Schmehl, chairman of the elections board, picked the number "3" ball for Reppert and it turned out to be the lowest, meaning Reppert was the winner.

That was a problem, or could have been.

But then Bellman told the board that Reppert said he would not serve as Maxatawny's constable. Bellman said, however, he had not received a formal communication from Reppert resigning the office.

Reppert didn't attend the meeting at which the balls were drawn and was unavailable later Thursday.

"I think he thought he would lose the drawing and that would end it," Bellman said.

The constable office will be declared vacant and someone will be appointed by the county judges, Schmehl said.

Contact reporter Dan Kelly at 610-371-5040 or at dkelly@readingeagle.com.

Election Lottery Results

Elections for 19 municipal offices in Berks County ended in ties. The county board of elections met Thursday to conduct a lottery to select winners in each race. The winners and their offices are:

- Christopher J. Boylan, Wernersville Borough Council
- Paul K. Blunt, Womelsdorf Borough Council
- Margaret L. Mege, auditor, Alsace Township
- Jason R. Hall, auditor, Lower Alsace Township
- Donald D. Daub, auditor, Bethel Township
- Sally Ann Greth, auditor, Centre Township
- Ruth E. Gore, auditor, Douglass Township
- Ralph D. Stamm, auditor, Maiden Creek Township
- Jason I. Reider, auditor, Oley Township
- Sandra M. Smale, auditor, Robeson Township
- Jill L. Yoder, auditor, Shoemakersville
- Jill L. Yoder, constable, Shoemakersville*
- Timothy A. Leon Guerrero, auditor, Union Township
- Jacob O. Meyer, constable, Bethel Township
- Sonya B. Hughes, constable, District Township
- Robert L. Barshinger, Jr., constable, North Heidelberg Township
- Dale H. Reppert, constable, Maxatawny Township
- Perry L. Templin, constable, Union Township
- Vincent P. Pettine Jr., constable, Washington Township

*Yoder must select one office and the other will be declared vacant. The auditor vacancy is filled by borough council. The constable vacancy would be filled by county court judges.

Source: Berks County Board of Elections.

Trooper arrested in thefts, break-ins

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A Pennsylvania State Police trooper was charged with breaking into houses while in uniform and stealing money and prescription drugs, officials said Thursday.

The arrest of Trooper John Travis Layne, 31, comes a week after state police released a study showing that dozens of its troopers had been arrested over the past decade for crimes ranging from rape to disorderly conduct. Gov. Ed Rendell called the arrests a problem and vowed to fix the situation.

Layne, a nine-year state police veteran, was charged with four counts each of burglary and criminal trespass and one count of attempted burglary after state police said they caught him in the act Wednesday. Officials said he is a suspect in other recent burglaries in Chester County.

Layne, who police said admitted the burglaries, was suspended without pay. His commanding officer, Capt. Steven McDaniel, said he is likely to be fired pending the results of the criminal case and an internal investigation. He is free on unsecured bail.

"We are sworn not to swerve from the path of duty, but to obey the law and enforce it," McDaniel said Thursday. "In this case, he has chosen not to obey the law and enforce the law. We, therefore, will."

The investigation began Nov. 21 when a West Fallowfield Township police sergeant, responding to a burglary call, noticed a boot print where the door had been kicked in and recognized it as coming from a state trooper's boot.

By coincidence, the sergeant, Charles Wilmont, had been chatting with Layne just a few minutes earlier when he got the burglary call. Layne

did not offer to assist, and when Wilmont saw the boot print he called the state police barracks in Avondale.

Attention quickly focused on Layne, who spent eight uneventful years on patrol duty before transferring a year ago to a staff support role.

Investigators conducting surveillance on Layne on Wednesday morning said they saw him peering into the windows of one house and entering another house through an unlocked garage door. Troopers later confronted Layne at the Avondale barracks and he admitted to the four burglaries and the attempted burglary, according to court documents.

Layne told police he was looking for pain medication that he would then take for his own use, the documents said. In one burglary on Nov. 12, he stole medicine and \$160 in wrapped quarters, the documents said.

City man held for court in 2000 stabbing death

From our news staff

A Reading man arrested in a fatal stabbing after police obtained samples of his DNA from the military has been held for court.

Abimael Casiano-Fernandez, 25, of the 600 block of North 10th Street was held for court Wednesday after a hearing before District Justice Michael J. Leonardziak on murder and related charges.

He was returned to Berks County Prison without bail.

Casiano-Fernandez killed Luis A. Sabala-Familia, 43, during a knife fight May 31, 2000, in the 1100 block of Franklin Street, police said.

In July, Berks sheriff's deputies arrested Casiano-

Fernandez in Puerto Rico after city Detective Sgt. Joseph T. Cafoncelli obtained an arrest warrant from District Attorney Mark C. Baldwin based on a blood sample from the U.S. Department of Defense DNA Registry.

The sample matched blood found on Sabala-Familia's shirt the night of the slaying, investigators said.

It was the first time anyone had been apprehended in a criminal case based on DNA collected by the military, officials said.

Cafoncelli said he contacted the Defense Department after he learned Casiano-Fernandez — already a suspect in the slaying — had been in the military.