

Taking a wife, and her name

By Paula Span=(c) 1998, The Washington Post

I'd like to propose a toast - hoist those champagne flutes, please - to Brande and David Stellings.

Not just because they're hotshot young lawyers who, trailing Ivy League degrees and academic honors, are working at two of New York's most prestigious firms.

Not just because they were married recently at the TriBeCa Grill in Manhattan, where 105 guests ate fabulous pasta with goat cheese and wild mushrooms.

No, this toast commemorates a single sentence that appeared in their wedding announcement on the New York Times's society page the following day: "Mr. Soskin will take Ms. Stelling's surname."

David Soskin is now David Stelling, relinquishing his ... well, there isn't a term, no male equivalent of a woman's "maiden name." The

point is, instead of Brande Stelling changing her name to Soskin, or both parties keeping their last names, David Soskin changed his to hers. He says he likes Stelling's better anyway.

This is a bold act for a man - and apt to prompt shock and snickers, as David Stelling is learning. "They said, 'What are you, crazy?'" People invariably thought I was joking," he reports. They warned "that it would be really annoying, having to change my credit cards, change my business cards. How would people who knew me before find me?" Of course, these are the very annoyances new brides are supposed to be delighted to encounter.

Less-approving colleagues deemed him thoroughly whipped. "They view it as an assault on patriarchy," David Stelling says.

Almost 30 years after contemporary feminism bulldozed the social landscape, the proportion of women

who don't adopt their husbands' names is about 10 percent, according to a study done for American Demographics magazine. (That includes those who hyphenate or adopt combinations like Hillary Rodham Clinton.) The young and the college-educated are more likely to keep their names, but even among women with post-graduate degrees, more than three-quarters change their names.

This supposedly romantic tradition he "gives" her his name - reflects the British and American common law of "coverture," under which a woman lost any legal identity the moment she married. "She could no longer own property, enter contracts, sue or be sued," explains Deborah Ellis, who teaches the course "Women and the Law" at New York University law school. "She had no right to custody of her children. And taking his name exemplified that." American legislatures began dismantling cover-

ture 150 years ago, but we're still stuck with this name business.

And of course, there are pragmatic career considerations for sticking with your name.

Understand that I'm not unsympathetic to the rationale people usually offer for a name change: two individuals, one name, symbol of commitment and unity, etc., etc. It's the unidirectional nature of the change that bugs me. If a shared surname is about oneness, why don't half the guys who get married change their names?

I also acknowledge that we haven't come up with an entirely satisfactory answer to the question: "What are you going to name the children? Hyphenating is a short-term solution, unwieldy for one generation and impossible after two. My family's approach is scrupulously egalitarian: We agreed to give a son his surname and a daughter mine, with the other parent's name as a middle name. Thus, our daughter and only child is Emma Katz Span. But I have to say this idea never caught on with other couples, perhaps because of having siblings with different names. Most separate-surname couples throw in the towel and give the kids the husband's name.

Hence this toast to the pioneering Ms. and Mr. Stellings.

One could grow morose about how rarely that happens - rethinking outdated traditions - but this is supposed to be a happy occasion.

More champagne?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I would like to respond to a letter that Jonathan Kolbe wrote to join the Collegian on December 4, 1997. I feel very sorry for Mr. Kolbe because he has closed himself off from a large segment of our society and he obviously has a lot of anger built up inside of himself. Often when people are not doing as well as they wish to they want to blame other people or take it out on other people. In this case Mr. Kolbe seems to be taking his anger out on an entire race. He should not be trying to point the finger or lay blame, he should be trying to take action to make his own life better. Maybe he is having a very difficult time trying to make the grades he needs to be a chemical engineering major. If that is the case then maybe he should walk over to the office of the National Society of Black Engineers and see if they might be able to help him with some tutoring. They are always willing to help.

Thank you for your time,
Heather E. Jones
Operations Management

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EDITORIAL

Alternatives to bookstore prices

The beginning of each semester welcomes the students of Behrend with a slap in the face from the rigid, calloused hand of book prices. It is understood that this is not entirely attributed to our bookstore's local management. They are constrained by Barnes and Nobles, the company in control of the prices of books sold on campus. The bookstore's outrageous prices come as a result of a situation similar to the one students face with food prices and Housing and Food Service. Barnes and Nobles bookstore is solely in charge of the books sold at the campus bookstore, and therefore is at liberty to make such markups on the book's prices.

University Park has two bookstores in addition to the Penn State Bookstore. Competition between bookstores would lead to competitive pricing. Students seem to have few choices when it comes to buying books. There is the option of buying books from students who have had the class previously. However, since professors often change editions and textbooks, usually most books have to be purchased at the bookstore.

Student Government is looking into creating some sort of student-run alternative such as a book cooperative or book swap. A book coopera-

tive might involve Student Government or a student organization buying books from the publishers and selling them without making a profit. Also, with the extension of the public water system to Behrend, it is possible for an independent bookstore to open near campus. The competition this would create between the two would be a great benefit for students.

Another, lesser known alternative is buying books over the internet. There are sites that sell used books, and publishers or distributors may also sell books on the web. The campus bookstore would have to reconsider its prices if buying online became popular.

The bookstore is yet another monopoly on this campus. Students are forced to eat what is available from Housing and Food Services, use only one type of computer operating system at the computer center and have only one way to obtain books. In addition we pay high tuition and room and board fees without having a great deal of choice over what we get in return.

Books cost in the range of \$200 to \$400 for a semester. To have some alternative to paying these outrageous prices would be a benefit to all students.

Time to Abolish the IRS?

by Fred Hiatt=(c) 1998 Washington Post

With President Clinton having appropriated so many Republican issues - the balanced budget, caring about families and so on - you might think thRepublicans would be in a bind as this election year begins. But Rep. Bill Paxon, R-N.Y., their telegenic rising star, thinks he has a solution. Americans don't like paying taxes, right? Okay, let's abolish them. Americans don't like the IRS, either - so let's abolish that, too.

A bad joke, you say? A parody of political pandering? Not at all. Paxon in September introduced a bill that "prohibits the imposition of any tax by the Internal Revenue Code" after Dec. 31, 2000. It exempts - in an unexplained moment of weakness - Social Security taxes. It already has garnered 87 co-sponsors in the House.

"We (would) eliminate the overwhelming majority of the 5.5 million words in that Tax Code," Paxon said, "and, frankly" - please note that frankness - "eliminate the need for most, if not all, of the 113,000 folks who work at the Internal Revenue Service."

You may recall Paxon as the husband of ex-congresswoman Susan Molinari, now a television personality, and the father of baby Suzie, one of the stars of the 1996 Republican convention. In case you don't, Paxon would like to remind you, fre-

quently. When he introduced his bill to abolish the tax code, he happened to mention that "my wife Susan and I are very proud parents of a 16-month-old daughter, little Suzie. And every night, as she is sleeping I look in and feel that it is our job to make certain that her future is better than the ones that our parents handed to us."

How will Suzie's future be more secure without federal taxes? Doesn't Suzie want America to have an army, a border patrol, a national cancer institute?

It turns out that Suzie's father isn't really against those things, nor against collecting taxes. He just wants a different system of taxes, one "that allows the greatness of this country to flow from the American people, not from Washington, D.C." How this new and improved tax system would be administered without the help of some of those "113,000 folks" at the doomed IRS Paxon, frankly, doesn't make clear.

Now, no one would disagree that the tax code is too complicated and the IRS is too often rude, inefficient and even abusive. Everyone wants tax reform, everyone wants tax simplification. But very few taxpayers favor abolishing the tax deductions and tax credits that benefit them. That applies to Republicans like Paxon, who, for example, have favored taxing capital gains at a different rate from other income. It ap-

That Strange House on Station Road

Encouraging development around Behrend

by Anne Rajotte

managing editor

Before the semester break, plans for extending the the public water system to areas surrounding Behrend were redrawn. The new plans, which extend the water system past Behrend to I-90 were approved by the Harborcreek Township Board of Supervisors.

There was opposition to this decision from many local residents. Surrounding areas would like to preserve what they call the "rural atmosphere." By allowing businesses, especially businesses that would profit from college students, such as convenience stores and fast food restaurants, to move in, the look of Station Road would be drastically altered. Understandably, this would upset some of the people that live on Station Road. However, over one thousand Behrend students also live along Station Road,

and the appearance of stores and restaurants within walking distance would be a welcome sight. It is inevitable that where college students and full time residents live together, there will be conflict. In State College, there are numerous disputes every year regarding student housing and the downtown area. State College residents don't seem to want to yield to students' demands and don't want student housing in their neighborhoods. Because of Behrend's considerably smaller size and lack of a surrounding area of mostly student housing, the conflicts have been few. With Behrend's growing size, and the plans for Knowledge Park, there will probably be some dispute about the future of Station Road.

The extension of the water system will hopefully attract businesses to our area. The administration should back this with all of the power they can

and confidence that everyone else on the block is chipping in, too. Remove any one of those, and you could quickly undermine the whole system.

Portman and Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., led a commission that roundly and justifiably criticized the IRS and produced a series of recommendations to make it "fair, efficient and friendly." Paxon, on the other hand, proposes no alternative.

"Some of us make choices and take sides in the debate," he noted, and then added - with apparent and inexplicable pride - "I do not."

Some people like the idea of a flat tax, he observed, while others champion a national sales tax. "Now, those are two good ideas," Paxon tolerantly allowed. "I am sure there are many more out there out across this

country." So Paxon's proposal (to stretch that word) is to let the American people ("our employers") decide. How exactly would this abdication of leadership work? Again, Paxon isn't clear. "The only solution is the solution that moves this country forward to give ourselves a better future," he said. Can't argue with that. As for fleshing it out a bit - well, maybe Suzie has some thoughts.

"That Strange House on Station Road" will appear every three weeks in The Collegian.

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