

# New secretary of DER isn't bothered by controversy



**By BRIAN MAGEE**  
Collegian Staff Writer

HARRISBURG — When he accepted the post of secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources in February, Nicholas DeBenedictis stepped into a hotbed of controversy. But, he claims that because of his experience in the environmental field, he has been able to step into the position, set enforcement priorities and act against violators.

The DER, whose role DeBenedictis believes is "the natural resource manager for the Commonwealth," is currently under investigation by the House conservation committee. The investigation, which began last month, was prompted by charges of abrupt personnel changes within the department, lax enforcement of regulations and slow prosecution of violators, especially of operators of hazardous waste sites.

DeBenedictis' appointment by Gov. Dick Thornburgh was one of those personnel changes, although DeBenedictis emphasized that he was approved by a bipartisan Senate, 45-0.

His past position on the governor's Economic Development Committee prompted rumors that DeBenedictis would make DER soft on industry, but he said that the position "broadened my scope."

"I truly believe that (environmental and economic development) goals are complementary. I think it's a cut-out when people have to take one side or the other all the time. I've seen both sides," DeBenedictis said.

DeBenedictis, who holds a master's degree in environmental sciences, worked at the Environmental Protection Agency for 11 years. He credits his experience for his ability "to jump right into the issues that normally take 18 months to get to."

Referring to reacting to pressure from the public or the press, DeBenedictis said: "The minute you start becoming a populist in this business you've compromised your scientific and administrative responding responsibilities."

DeBenedictis defended DER against charges that it is being "politicized" because 22 management positions no longer need to be civil servants. They can be what is termed "senior executive service" which makes them more answerable to DeBenedictis and Thornburgh.

Managers who are not civil servants are generally more responsible, DeBenedictis said. He said the governor can better implement his policies under this system.

Amid claims by environmentalists that the DER is not operating independently from the governor's office, DeBenedictis said the department is not supposed to.

"I'm a member of a cabinet selected by the governor to run this state. I'm just convinced by that entire concept (of acting independently)." He said that his role is "designing, forming, selecting all the people in this agency" and deciding on enforcement actions and permits.

"This issue that the governor's office is calling all the shots is absolutely incorrect," he said, but added that on major policy issues he would consult other state departments, including the governor's office.

DeBenedictis said the department's current priorities are safe disposal of hazardous waste, surface mine reclamation, waste water treatment, safe drinking water and enacting legislation to regulate oil and gas drilling.

DeBenedictis said one of his priorities is to screen the plethora of regulations to update some and eliminate others. He said DER "can't be all things to all people. Everyone who has a problem picks DER as the one to solve it," noting that DER oversees everything from drinking water in restaurants to the cleanup of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

He said DER recently took action against two hazardous waste disposal sites. One in Chester County will be allowed to operate but not expand, while another in Berks County was denied an operating permit because of pollution problems.

The recent consolidation and elimination of many DER regional offices across the state will not affect enforcement "as long as you have the same number of people," he said.

DeBenedictis said the economy of scale saves money in larger offices. The real measure of success with decreasing the number of offices is whether the number of inspections stays consistent.

Although many construed the recent decrease in the coal mining bonding fund, paid at the start of a mine to cover possible reclamation costs, as opening the door to the coal industry, DeBenedictis said, the issue is more complicated than that.

While the cost of the bonds decreased from \$4,000 to \$3,000 per acre, DER added on ongoing \$50 per acre fee to mines currently in use, generating \$1.5 to clean up closed coal mines where the bond paid was insufficient.

DeBenedictis said he favors legislation which would regulate oil and gas well drilling. Currently there are no restrictions on drilling on state land.

He also favors the proposed plan to organize a Northeast compact of 11 states to find a common site for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste. Pennsylvania trucks its waste, generated by hospital, industries and researchers, to South Carolina and Washington, but by 1986 these states will no longer have to accept out-of-state wastes.

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# Phi Psi 500 Ready, Set, Drink!

## \$21,000 raised through running and chugging

**By JODIE DORNAN and MARIA NICOLLO**  
Collegian Staff Writers

The Pope blessing throngs of people straining for a glimpse. Nothing unusual? How about the pope being escorted by two penguins and then heading to a bar for a cold beer? Of course, this wacky scenario could only indicate that the annual Phi Psi 500 was in town, raising money for charity and stirring up some fun for its 15th anniversary.

Last weekend, 1,800 people ran and chugged in Saturday's race to raise about \$21,000 for the Centre County Association for Retarded Citizens. Equalling the amount raised by last year's race, the money will be used for a job placement program. The association needs a full-time handicapped person, who will counsel handicapped adults during their search for employment, and also supply them with on-the-job training.

The 1.1 mile race was sponsored by Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity, 402 Locust Lane, in cooperation with the Stroh Brewing Company under the auspices of Nittany Beverage.

Overall Chairman Tom Aichele said the event went smoothly because of the fraternity members' preparations, the support of other fraternities and the State College Police Department.

A campaign to promote responsible behavior at the Phi Psi 500 proved successful as only one race-related incident of criminal mischief was reported by police.

A tree on borough property was snapped off at 139 S. Pugh St. Jeff Callan, traffic specialist with the State College police, said the incident was minor and overall the crowd was well-behaved. He estimated that the race drew about 12,000 spectators.

Callan commended the race organizers and the 125 security marshals that worked on crowd control.

"Anytime we had a problem along the race route the Phi Psi team was

right on the scene clearing it up," he said.

The night before the event, sororities participated in canoe races — chugging relays between teams of five. Kappa Alpha Theta sorority won the race for the first time and also took the sorority enthusiasm award for the fourth straight year, raising more than \$2,000.

Although spring-like weather has been the exception rather than the rule lately, the weather cooperated on race day by supplying the sunny, warm temperatures that allowed runners and spectators to enjoy the day.

Spectators sat curb-side, lined sidewalks and hung from windows to watch as, first, the more serious runners raced the clock and then those who took more time to joke with the crowd and pose for a picture made their way from Phi Kappa Psi fraternity to the six bars on the race route.

Seniors such as Sherrie Weiden-Calkin (12th-business logistics) ran an effort to complete the must-do-before-graduating list while alumni returned to re-capitalize the Phi Psi 500 spirit and continue the tradition.

"You don't get back to Penn State very often and it's a good cause," Bert Kramer, a 1980 graduate said. "It gets better every year," added Tom and Karen Robinson, class of '79 graduates.

Joe Goehring, who has watched the race grow during the last nine or 10 years, said: "It's much bigger now. They do a much better job of organizing and coordinating it with the town now."

"It gets harder as you get older," Dick Hess, Associate Director of the Career Development and Placement Center, said after his Saturday run for which he received a second in the Master's category. A race veteran of four years and Masters champ in 1975, he said he came out of retirement to participate this year with his daughter, Barb Shulman.

Watching for the second year from the sidelines, alumna Joan Williams was asked if an event comparable to the Phi Psi 500 was held when they were here.

"The class of '83 was not this creative," Joan Williams responded, adding that such an event would have been x-rated at the time.

The Phi Psi 500 reputation has spread beyond Centre County boundaries, often through alumni. "We heard it was a lot of fun," Bruce Smith gave as his reason for traveling from the Washington, D.C. area to participate. Smith said he and four others came at the urging of two friends who graduated from the University.

Also attracted by the race were students of other colleges and universities.

"This is one hundred times better," said John Ciptak in comparing the Phi Psi 500 to its closest counterpart at Carnegie-Mellon University where he is a junior.

Mary Kulbacki from Indiana University of Pennsylvania said the race was more fun than she expected. "People are a lot weirder than I gave them credit for."

Aside from the six timed divisions in Saturday's race, the untimed Anything Goes Category was a real crowd pleaser. In the style of Monty Python, many of the themes attacked social and political issues.

On the national level, aluminum-clad MX missiles bunched together in a dense pack and the Times Beech Community Pool gang, covered by a polluted tarp, was accompanied by a merchant of death in a black cloak with the words "EPA Swim Team" on his back.

Jabs at the campus level included the wandering Dino's Pizza man, the Ritehour Quacks, and the Campus Looped bus reading "Bus to Hell—alpoints."

Even the fairy tale was not safe from the mockery of the Anything Goes crowd.

Snow White and the Seven Deviants included Spock, Hunny, and Slezzy — not to be confused with one of three little pigs who was also renamed Slezzy.

One of 15 "pool balls," Sheila Paig (10th-speech communications) said, "We look better when we're all rucked up." Gathering in front of each bar in formation, the "stick" struck the "cue ball," as in a break, and all rolled into the bar to drink.

Judging in the Anything Goes contest on creativity, originality and crowd appeal resulted in a first place paper with long craning necks. Dave Hutzack claimed the job of "Ostrich Trainer."

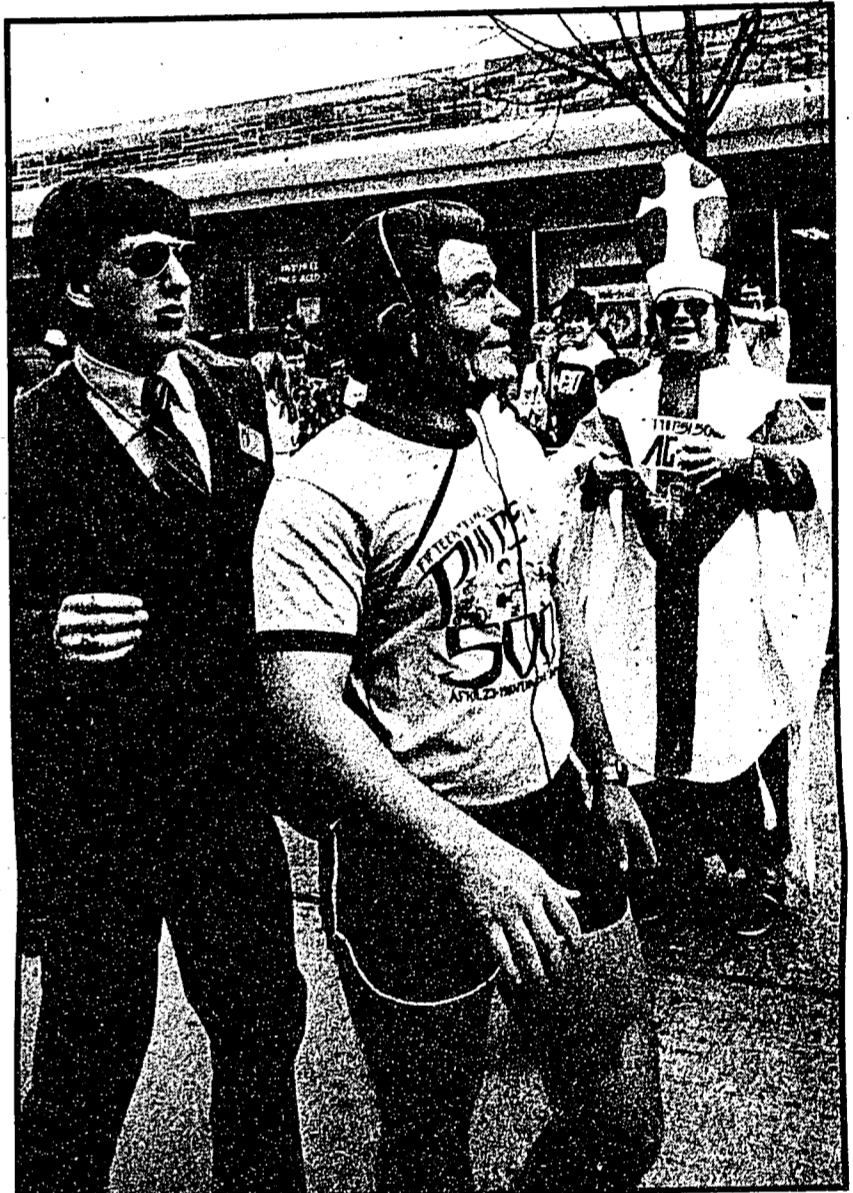
Second place went to Ben Herr and Peas, a group of women dressed in green costumes singing of the dangers of complex one and two.

Decked out in white sheets with blue-painted limbs and bulbous blue heads of paper mache with Spock-like ears, "The Big Heads" captured third place.

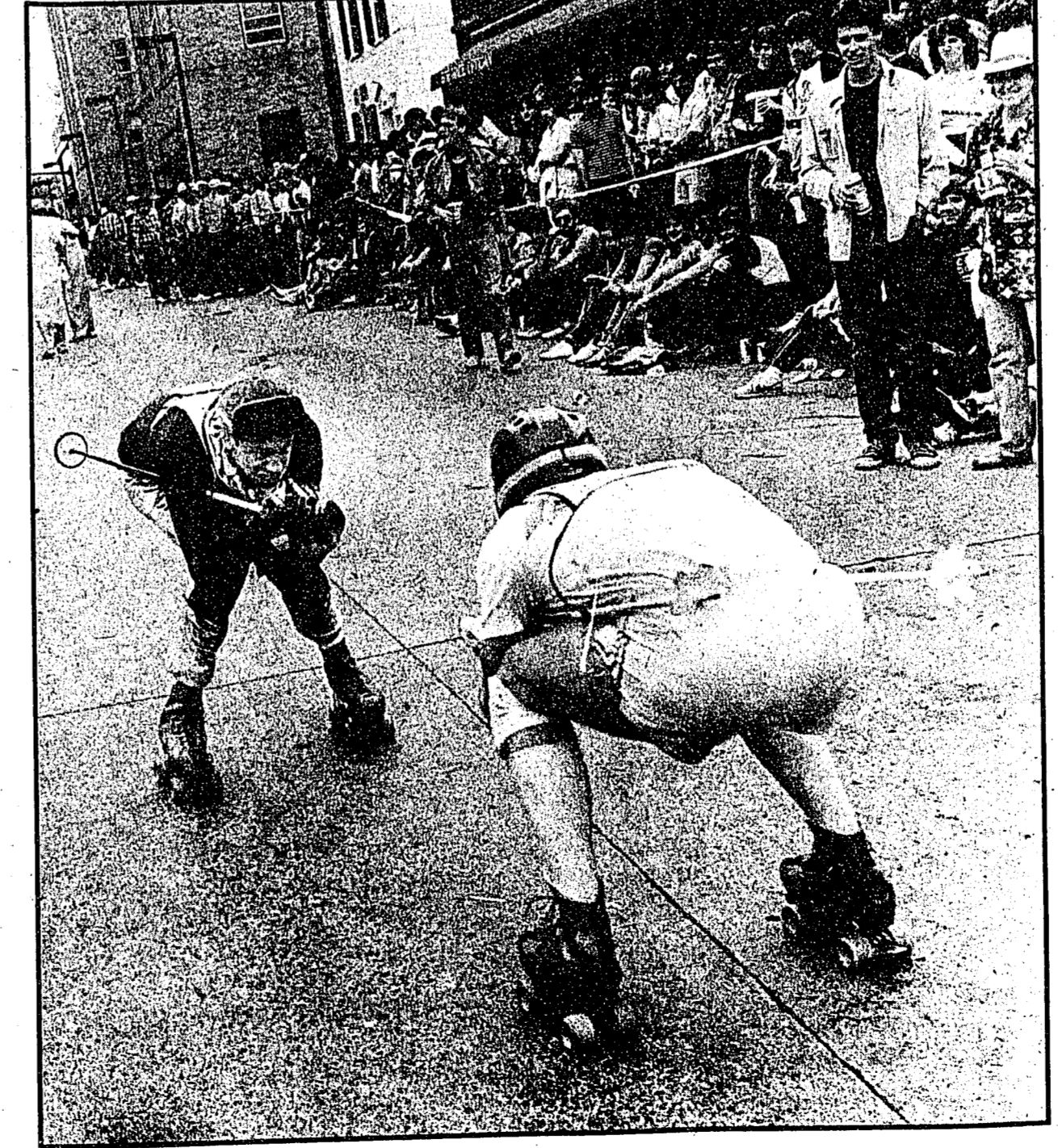
Also proving that anything goes were: the porcupine punkers, Prince Prophylactic and his well-hung servants, preppie krishnas, the booze brothers, FTD men, scrabbling bubbles, Briarwood's Barbarians, the common cold and a six pack of Stroh's complete with sun-opener. Of course, men in drag abounded, providing Klingsers for many a MASH group.

The Phi Psi 500 spirit spilled over from the race route into the six bars as participants entered to down soda and beer. Racers and spectators joined in the jokes and laughter directed at individual costumes.

As one group of men dressed in Pitt cheerleading uniforms entered The Brewery, 223 E. Beaver Ave., chants cursing Pitt sounded from the crowd. But the curses were soon overcome by another group dressed as giant cards spelling out the familiar and fitting cheer "We Are — Penn State."



For some participants, the Phi Psi 500 was a serious running race for charity. The start and finish line at the sponsor fraternity was of great importance to those who raced against the clock (top). When the starting gun sounded they carried out the true spirit of competition, stopping at each of the six bars, guzzling their beer and sprinting to the end, searching for a record time. However, spectators of the four and one-half hour event found more entertainment in the display of unique costumes worn by teams and runners in the "Anything Goes" category. Imagination was a key for those participants. Where else could one find a human pool table, extra-large test tube babies and skiers on a collision course (bottom left)? Those watching also received a momentous visit from both the Pope and President Ronald Reagan, who came complete with a security squad (above).



**15th Annual Phi Psi 500 results**

<b>Independent</b>	1) Bill Conklin / 6:11 2) Tim Runco / 6:21 3) Bill Wise / 6:40	<b>Masters</b>	1) David R. Peterson / 7:20 2) Dick Hess / 7:54 3) Ron DeNeur / 8:15
<b>Teams</b>	1) Beta Theta Pi fraternity / 33:07 2) Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity / 33:37 3) Phi Kappa Psi alumni / 24:11	<b>Women</b>	1) Barb Hess 8:26 2) Mary Jo Irvin 9:00 3) Sandy Miller 9:06
<b>Fraternity</b>	1) Mike Hanlon, Sigma Pi / 5:39 2) Bill Ziegler, Tau Kappa Epsilon / 6:11 3) Scott Triplett, Phi Kappa Epsilon / 6:11	<b>Anything Goes</b>	1) Ostrich Jockeys 2) Ben Herr and Peas 3) The Big Heads
<b>Sorority</b>	1) Delta Gamma 2) Phi Mu 3) Omega	<b>Sorority Canoe Race</b>	1) Kappa Alpha Theta 2) Alpha Sigma Alpha 3) Phi Mu

Photos by: (clockwise from top) Thomas Swarr, Paul Chiland, Daniel Rodgers and Thomas Swarr.