

The Dallas Post

50¢

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS & LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Vol. 105 No. 10

Dallas, PA

Wednesday, March 9, 1994

Parent's claims, official records differ on alleged assault

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

The mother of a Dallas High School ninth-grader thinks the teacher accused of assaulting her son should be charged with assault, not harassment. But her description of the incident and her son's alleged injuries does not match police and hospital reports on the incident.

According to Dallas Township patrolman Doug Higgins, Richard T. Cibula, 14, and consumer education teacher John J. Bencala, 45, were involved in what Higgins called "an altercation" after Cibula became unruly in class February 22 around 12:30 p.m.

Cibula was treated at 8 p.m. at the emergency room of the Nesbitt Hospital for a sprained left arm and scrapes and

bruising on his left elbow and the left side of his neck, Higgins said.

"I'm angry that they didn't charge him with assault," said the boy's mother, Mrs. Laura Cibula. "My son had a concussion, a sprained left arm, contusions and tenderness in his jaw. When the nurse saw him, she called the police immediately." Official records say that Mrs. Cibula insisted the hospital call police.

She said that her son had described the incident to her after returning home from school. He said that some students had been making noise, and that Bencala told him to leave the room.

When he refused to, Bencala used an arm lock on him, twisting his left arm behind his back, she said.

Although Mrs. Cibula said that her

son had a concussion, Higgins said that Cibula had not been diagnosed with a concussion, according to a report from the hospital.

"They advise most accident patients to be alert for signs of possible head injury as a precaution," he said.

Higgins said that the hospital contacted Dallas Township police at 8 p.m. that evening at the mother's request. The hospital didn't call police on their own, as Mrs. Cibula had stated, he said.

"Other students told me that Cibula had been making trouble in class and was involved in the disturbance, but that's hearsay right now," Higgins said.

Mrs. Cibula added that she had unsuccessfully asked school board president Ellen Nagy to request an emergency meeting to suspend Bencala.

"My son's only crime was that he wouldn't leave the room when he was told to," she said. "He didn't do anything wrong. Now the senior boys are teasing Rich that he let a teacher beat him up."

"The harassment charge is a lower form of assault, a summary offense," said Dallas Township police chief Carl Miers. "More serious assault charges are simple assault, a misdemeanor, and aggravated assault, a felony."

A conviction of harassment is punishable by a fine of up to \$300 or a 90-day jail sentence, Miers said.

The school administration is withholding any action until the case is resolved.

"Our policy is that Mr. Bencala is innocent until he has been proven guilty," said Dallas superintendent Gerald Wycallis. "The school board has been advised

of the incident and is awaiting the outcome of the hearing. The key is what will happen at the magistrate's office."

Wycallis said that if Bencala is found guilty, he could lose his teaching certificate.

Pennsylvania teachers' certificates can be revoked if a teacher has been convicted of a crime (moral turpitude) or in cases of intemperance, incompetence or severe or unusual cruelty, he said.

Other than confirming that the school is conducting an internal investigation of the matter, Dallas High School principal Frank Galicki refused to comment on the advice of district solicitor Ben R. Jones, III. Bencala is still on duty in the classroom, Galicki said.

A hearing date with District Magistrate James Tupper has not yet been set.

Insurance agents snowed by claims

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Snow may be pretty, but ice ain't nice.

Area homeowners may face more headaches as they begin repairs on seepage caused by ice which has accumulated in their roof gutters.

Not all homeowner's insurance policies cover the damage.

Area insurance agents say that the largest number of claims presently being filed are for damage from ice dam seepage.

Nationwide Insurance has received more than 4,000 seepage claims in Luzerne County alone, according to agent Chuck Garnett.

Of the three types of homeowner's policies available in Pennsylvania, seepage damage is covered by only one, according to Ward Hartman of Hartman Insurance.

The other policies, mostly written about 20 years ago, were never upgraded to cover it, Hartman said.

"Most people are underinsured or may not be aware of what their

See INSURANCE, pg 14



POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK

The old heave-ho

John Allen of Pioneer Avenue in Shavertown, shoveled the remains of the latest winter storm from his walk last Friday. Of course, by the time you read this, that storm may be only the next-to-last of this snowiest season so far.

Toddler knows her way around U.S.

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Learning the geography of the United States is still required in school, but a Dallas Township toddler may be able to skip the class.

Jenna Woychick, 2 1/2, knows the name and shape of every state and where to place it on a magnetic puzzle map which she enjoys playing with.

She can assemble the entire puzzle in 15 minutes and not miss a state.

"Michigan goes here. It has cars," she said, placing the brightly colored puzzle piece in its correct place on the map, which also shows each state's major industries.

Her parents, Darlene and Louis Woychick, had seen another two-year-old do the same thing on a CNN broadcast and decided to try teaching it to Jenna. Louis retrieved the old magnetic puzzle from his parents' attic.

"I was surprised - within six weeks she had the hang of it," her mother said. "It's a game. We taught her some ways to associate some of the states, but she picked up the rest herself."

South Carolina - that's where Momma and Pop-pop are on vacation.

New Jersey - that's where cousin Kristin lives.

Mickey Mouse lives in Florida.

Wyoming has a cow. "That's where the Bon-Ton is."

Jenna Woychick
2 1/2-year-old geography whiz

Methodically placing each state while showing them to her Cabbage Patch doll, Jenna chattered about the pictures of the products on the map. "Wisconsin has cheese," she said. "I like cheese. I saw California on TV."

The skyscraper for New York stumped her. "It has letters on it," she said.

For some reason that her parents can't figure out, she always saves Indiana for last. Maybe she's using the process of elimination.

"Jenna gets excited when she recognizes the different states on the Weather Channel," her mother said.

Jenna's talents aren't limited to geography, however.

She can count to 13, knows her ABC's and can say the Pledge of Allegiance, which she learned from her grandmother, Helen Caruso.

"Mom said that I had learned it early and had tried to teach it to her. She thought that Jenna wasn't paying attention," Darlene Woychick said. "One day, while she was in the bathtub, suddenly

See TODDLER, pg 5



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

IDAHO HAS APPLES - Jenna Woychick, 2-1/2, completes a puzzle of the 50 United States. She knows each state's name, shape and position on the map.

Gas leak by school was capped quickly

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Photo on page 14

Market Street in Lehman Center was closed to traffic for an hour March 4 when a backhoe clearing snow from the driveway of the Lehman-Jackson School accidentally hit a natural gas line box around 3:30 p.m.

The driver of the backhoe, owned by Malick's, was widening the driveway access to the school and didn't know that the box was there, according to Lake-Lehman finance manager Ray Bowersox.

"I don't know why the gas company didn't install protective concrete posts around the box, especially considering the number of vehicles coming through here," Bowersox said.

A Pennsylvania Gas and Water (PG&W) repair crew worked for two hours Friday afternoon replacing a damaged regulator inside the box.

The regulator in the box reduces gas pressure in the line leading into the school, the workers said.

"Something like this can cost between \$500 and \$1,000 to fix, depending on the extent of the damage," said worker Frease Jackson. "There's also some damage to piping."

Gas service to nearby homes was not shut off.

Gas was dissipating into the air but didn't leak into the building, according to Juneann Greco of PG&W.

No nearby homes were evacuated.

Because school had been cancelled for a snow day, there were no children in the building at the time, Bowersox said.

Jackson Twp. supes freeze talk of TV panel

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

After hearing a report on regulating cable television from solicitor Blythe Evans, the Jackson Township supervisors voted to postpone forming a regulatory commission until they can study the issue further.

Evans explained at the March 7 supervisors meeting that setting up a cable television regulatory commission would require "lots of legal work," including enacting several ordinances to establish the commission.

Only the first 12 channels provided to customers with the lowest level of basic service can be regulated, Evans said.

Jackson Township is served by Cable-TV in Hazleton.

Operating a cable television

commission would cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year, Evans said. Once the township takes on responsibility for regulating cable television, the cable company will pass on any costs to attend which their people incur directly to the basic service customers, Evans said.

"Several communities sharing one cable operator can form a joint operating authority to save on the costs, but there's no evidence that cable service will continue to increase (in price)," he said.

Of course, snow was also on the agenda. Road foreman Richard Manta reported that snowplow crews are continuing to encounter problems in residen-

See JACKSON TWP., pg 5

Tryouts for baseball, softball
Saturday. Page 10.

Bill Woolbert still loves boats, after 40 years in the business. How things changed over the years. Page 3.

INDEX

14 Pages 1 Section	
Calendar.....	11
Classified.....	12-13
Crossword.....	11
Editorials.....	4
Obituaries.....	5, 12
School.....	8
Sports.....	9-10

CALL 675-5211
FOR HOME DELIVERY,
NEWS OR ADVERTISING

The Dallas Post

MAILING LABEL- Please enclose this label with any address changes, and mail to The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612-0366