

# Valerie Wolfe's essay earns a scholarship

By GRACE R. DOVE  
Post Staff

**LEHMAN TOWNSHIP** - Having a conveniently placed locker helped Lake-Lehman Junior Valerie Wolfe win a scholarship in an essay contest.

Her assignment: "Imagine you have just written your autobiography. Turn to page 128 and see what it says."

In her entry in an Open House Essay Contest sponsored by Elizabethtown College, Valerie predicted her life in her mid-20's as a news reporter interviewing a candidate with a controversial past, portraying her work and her feelings about it.

"It's hard to tell what will happen so far ahead in my life," she said. "It's hard to picture what page 128 would look like. I settled for about 26 years old, single and living in California."

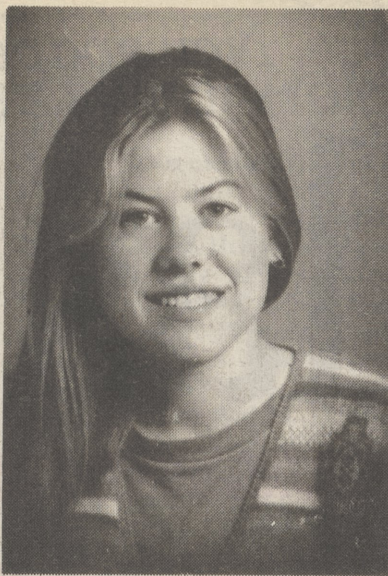
She found out about the contest from the guidance office bulletin board, directly across the hall from her locker.

"At first I didn't think I would win, but a friend's sister told me to try entering it anyway," she said.

Valerie, a student correspondent for *The Dallas Post*, has been writing for the school newspaper, *KnightLife*, for a year. As its news editor, she writes her own news stories, suggests story ideas and makes sure all the other reporters meet their deadlines.

Next year she plans to apply for the school paper's positions of features editor and managing editor, one step down from the editor-in-chief.

Her favorite topics are human interest stories in which people face and overcome challenges.



VALERIE WOLFE

## Her advice to young students: Take school seriously

"I don't like writing about myself," she said.

She also enjoys writing poetry and has been named a finalist in the National Library of Poetry contest.

"I also love to write short stories and share them with my best friend, Amy Shoemaker," Valerie said. "Sometimes I just get creative ideas and I write about them. I don't know where they come from."

She plans to attend Elizabethtown, majoring in communications and minoring in writing, with an eye toward going into public relations work. The \$1,000 scholarship she won will be applied towards her tuition for her freshman year.

Valerie has studied college prep writing and all of Lake-Lehman's accelerated English courses. She is considering applying for a scholarship to study journalism and creative writing next year at Penn State.

When she isn't writing, Valerie plays clarinet in the Marching Knights band, is a member of the National Honor Society, works as a cashier at McDonald's and enjoys going to the movies and hanging out with friends Jaime Elston, Jen Dinger and Erica Conrad.

"I thought working at McDonald's might enhance my writing, but so far it hasn't," she said. "I meet lots of different people and always try to treat them the

way I'd want to be treated. That's why I think I'd like working in public relations."

Her favorite subjects are English (of course) and American studies. She doesn't like science or math.

Her friends didn't know about the scholarship until May 5.

"It's neat!" said Jaime Elston. "I have no idea of what I want to do or where I want to go to school."

The daughter of Bing and Ruth Wolfe of Lehman Township, Valerie has a brother, Ben, 13, who is in eighth grade.

Attending Lake-Lehman is sort of a family tradition - Bing Wolfe is a Lake-Lehman graduate.

"I have some of the same teachers who taught my Dad," Valerie said. "He had Mrs. Finn, Ms. Purcell and Mrs. Oliver, but she wasn't married then. Ben will have them starting next year, too."

Valerie has some advice for junior high students coming into the high school: Take school seriously.

"We have so many very talented students who don't apply themselves, she said. "Take advantage of every opportunity the school offers you."

# Valerie Wolff's award-winning essay

Lake-Lehman Junior Valerie Wolfe wrote this prize-winning essay for Elizabethtown College's April 8 Open House Essay Competition. She won a \$1,000 scholarship.

Her assignment was to write what she would find on page 128 from her autobiography.

I sat and stared at the bold printed letters which seemed to stand out from the paper my editor handed me. "Pick a candidate who is running for governor and write a background story on them. Due this Wednesday..." Picturing my hectic schedule for the week, I decided I would keep a good attitude toward conquering the journey that lay ahead.

There were several candidates who chose to run for governor and choosing only one to write about was a difficult task. After looking over all of the selections, I decided to concentrate on a relatively unknown candidate. This way, the readers could be introduced to a new political figure and possibly their number one choice for governor. A name that looked unfamiliar was Mr. Mark Sandel, a former lawyer.

"He will be disappointed to hear that he missed this great opportunity, but I'm afraid, he is much too busy," answered his campaign manager when I requested an interview later that afternoon. Hoping he would change his mind about the interview, I left my phone number with the campaign manager. From the way things started, it looked as if I was going to have to rely on other sources to get information about this mysterious man.

I felt comparable to Sherlock Holmes, searching for clues to solve my case. I went to the local library to see if I could find background on Mr. Sandel. Luckily, one of the older librarians helped

me get started on the right track. She told me to look in old newspapers dating 20 years ago to see if he had been presented with rewards or honors. Since our newspaper had been in operation for only 10 years, I had to rely on our competitors' information. I found forgotten historical events and ads with new cars selling for a reasonable price, but I could not locate anything on Mr. Sandel. Then, a subtitle caught my attention, "A young respected lawyer's license was suspended twice for drunk driving." I read further and discovered that the man was Mr. Mark Sandel. Having my spirits dampened, I read and re-read wanting to make sure that the article was correct. Unfortunately, the statements were true....it was Mr. Sandel.

Not knowing what to do next, I sat and looked into space. I could write a mudslinging article and ruin Mr. Sandel's chance of becoming governor, or I could change my choice of candidate. Since the deadline was near, I chose to stay with Mr. Sandel, but I knew I couldn't write an article that would destroy him. I tried once more to get in contact with Mr. Sandel for an interview. This time when I called the office, he answered the phone. Without hesitation, he agreed to meet with me.

It was hard to keep my concentration while I asked Mr. Sandel simple political questions dealing with goals and morals and values. The information I knew was eating my insides. I finally mustered my courage and asked him about the article that I saw in the newspaper. Turning pale, he admitted to the offense and his past drinking problem. With desperate eyes he said, "I didn't expect people to find out about my past. Although it is over and that is why I am running for governor. I want to make a difference in the drinking problem society. In fact, I started drinking when I was a teenager and one of my goals if I become governor is to stop underage drinking." Hearing those words made me realize that Mr. Sandel's past did not need to be reshaped.

A month later, I received a lovely note. "Miss Wolfe, I want to thank you for the great story. I was afraid if my past drinking problem came out into the open, it would be destroyed, but you put me into the race by focusing on what I am able to do today. Even though I did not win, I'm happy to tell you that I have established myself with a profound speaking career. Traveling to high schools across the state, I address the dangers of alcohol."

## Bureau of Aging to hold dinner dance

The Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Bureau for the Aging will host its 28th Annual Dinner Dance May 18, at Genetti's Best Western Inn, Market Street, Wilkes-Barre.

Music will be provided by the Joe "I" Infantino Orchestra. Door prizes, a prime rib dinner, dancing and two special grand prizes donated by Pennsylvania Gas & Water will highlight the evening.

This event is open to all residents 60 years of age or older and who are residents of Luzerne or Wyoming Counties.

For more information on this event contact the Bureau for the Aging, Senior Center Program at 822-1158.

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Published weekly by Bartsen Media, Inc. \$18 per year in Luzerne and Wyoming counties (PA); \$20 elsewhere in PA, NY or NJ; \$22 all other states. Second-class postage paid at Dallas PA.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612.  
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