Week of June 13th, 2008 - Volume 1 Number 9

LANCASTER POST

nothing but the truth...

The Case of the Missing Newspaper Box

This box was held by F&M Security for four days.



What did the president know and when did he know it?

story by Ron Harper, Jr., page 2

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INSIDE:

Our Readers Speak Out!.....pgs 3 & 5
Does Local Government Listen?.....pg 7
County Entertainment Guide.....pgs 10 & 11

Includes requested reprints of selected features from the May 30th "Stolen Edition" !!

The Case of the Missing Newspaper Box

Editor's note: This newspaper is put together by two people along with our graphic artist. It would be awkward and, frankly, strange to "interview" myself and write in the third person; therefore, a first person account is used.

-RH

by Ron Harper, Jr.
Lancaster Post

First, our papers are stolen. Next, our newspaper distribution box is stolen. Then I'm body slammed face first onto a public road by Franklin & Marshall police, and my co-publisher and I are arrested without violating any law. We were then held against our will for well over two hours. Now this?

On Friday morning, June 6, I received a phone call from our attorney that our stolen newspaper box was delivered to attorney's office porch with a note from Franklin & Marshall College saying they found the box. Honestly, I thought he was joking.

He wasn't, and, Len Brown, one of our lawyers, referred me to an email that had been sent to us. (I get too many emails!) Anyway, there's an email written late the day before, by college's attorney, Barley Snyder, on behalf of the college to our attorney.

It read, in part: "The box was found at approximately 5 a.m. on June 2 lying face down in [sic] School Lane." Now, this may be a coincidence, a poor choice of words, or a Freudian slip, but the fact is that the very next day it was I who was "lying face down in [sic] School Lane." (Chris thought the choice of words deliberate.)

But here's the really interesting part; again, quoting from the letter: "Although there is apparently no identification of the owner of the box itself, the inside newspaper display contains a single copy (or front page) with a Lancaster Post masthead. Accordingly, we conclude that it is your client's property. The box will be delivered by the college tomorrow."

Excuse me? "No identification"? How about the paper in the window? Apparently the head of the security, Maureen Kelly, has had her Philly detective skills dulled!

OK, the college police took the box on Monday. We reported our box stolen to the Lancaster city police on that same Monday. We replace the box on Tuesday, afterwards I'm beat up and locked up. They return the box that they knew was ours on Friday. You can't make this stuff up, folks!

Here's the way I think it went down. Some people or person connected with Franklin & Marshall college didn't like the article I wrote about two Franklin & Marshall basketball stars who were getting light "punishment" after burglarizing a local brewery and restaurant. F&M security sent me a warning that I would be arrested if I stepped foot on ANY of their property.



The stolen box was on the opposite corner. I was assaulted where the car across the street is parked.

According to their lawyer's letter they "found" the box. Did they not know where it belonged? Why didn't they return it to the bus stop where it was before? Why didn't they contact us with the information inside the newspaper?

Once again, listen to the College's excuse for holding it for four days - again from their lawyer's letter:

"The recovery of the box for safety and safekeeping, and the subsequent processing and identification of the box as your client's property, was entirely in the normal course of public safety operations; it would be highly inappropriate for anyone to speculate otherwise."

Inappropriate to speculate? More accurately, it was inappropriate to steal and hide my newspaper box and hold it for days when you knew it was mine!

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Via Facsimile and Electronic Mail

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Re: **Lancaster Post - Franklin & Marshall College**

Dear Mr. Brown:

Maureen Kelly, Director of Public Safety at Franklin & Marshall, learned today that a College public safety officer recovered a red newspaper box in the early morning of June 2. We surmise that this box is the Lancaster Post box placed on the south side of Marietta Avenue that your client has reported as being missing.

The box was found at approximately 5 a.m. on June 2 lying face down in School Lane north of Marietta Avenue. The officer took the box to the College Department of Public Safety office for safekeeping and placed it in a storage area. The officer who recovered the box has no information on how it got to where he found it. The recovery of the box for safety and safekeeping, and the subsequent processing and identification of the box as your client's property, was entirely in the normal course of public safety operations; it would be highly inappropriate for anyone to speculate otherwise.

Although there is apparently no identification of the owner on the box itself, the inside newspaper display contains a single copy (or front page) with a Lancaster Post masthead. Accordingly, we conclude that it is your client's property. The box will be delivered by the College tomorrow.

Sincerely yours,

John O. Shirk

No, instead of returning the box to the bus stop where it was or to me, they took the box and hid it in a place that where I'd be arrested if I went looking for it! F&M security knew my first instincts would be to look for it on the campus and that F&M would be my chief suspects! But instead of falling into their trap and looking for the box where I just knew it was, Chris and I reported it stolen to the city police the same day it went missing. (Wonder if the city police questioned anyone about the missing box?)



When F&M cops grabbed the Post's publishers, they were installing the box on this public right-of-way.

When that trap didn't work, F&M security used the occasion of Chris and me replacing our stolen box at the bus stop across the street (where we could lock it) to assault, molest, and detain me.

...story continues on Page 6

The Case of the Missing Newspaper Box

continued from page 2...



From Marietta Avenue, Nevonia stands in the distance.

It is also interesting that Chris and I -- whom they well knew were the publishers of the Lancaster Post -- were illegally detained in the same building where our box was being held.

This incident teaches us lessons about power, privilege in Lancaster. It also shows us the rights that are given to us by the Constitution, and how those rights are recognized by those in power on a local level.

We were denied our rights as Americans. This still stuns and saddens us today.



The F&M Public Safety building.

Will the F&M security force responsible be held accountable for their unConstitutional actions? Right now, I still face criminal sanctions for merely exercising my Constitutional rights while my tormentors remain unchecked. I don't think this is what Ben Franklin had in mind for the college that carries his name.