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System failure

Author upset with court process



LIFESTYLE, PAGE 7

NCPD Blue

Detective nabs position with the force

Bell pioneers
geography
with map

TOMORROW

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CRASHES

Injured during take-off



Investigators inspect the site of a single-engine plane crash near Zelenople Municipal Airport.

Mark E. Crepp/Special to the News

Seniors housing proposal offered

By Nancy Lowry
New Castle News

A housing complex for senior citizens is being proposed for the former New Castle Business College dormitory.

Local developer Thomas George of Castle Oaks Partnership will ask the New Castle Planning Commission tomorrow night for conditional use to renovate the building. He wants to use the 318 Rhodes Place structure as a convalescent home and apartments.

The planning commission meets at 8 p.m. in council chambers in City Hall.

"The zoning was granted for this years ago," he said. "We're just hoping to make use of it for the elderly and disabled."

George said his plan includes creating 32 to 34 apartments for senior citizens.

Residents will live in individual apartments, but have the option to have their meals in a central dining area with other residents. They may also contract for services such as housekeeping and laundry.

George said he is obtaining private financing for the \$1.2 million project. Rents, which have not

Probe centers on possible

LOCAL/STATE

Author says courts don't punish

By Nancy Lowry
New Castle News

The condition of an American justice system that excuses criminals from responsibilities for their actions disturbs local author Robert James Bidinotto.

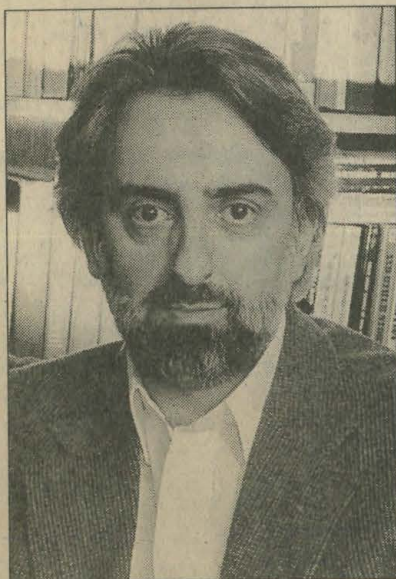
He examines how and why the system doesn't work and recommends ways to fix it in his book, "Criminal Justice? The Legal System vs. Individual Responsibility," a collection of articles by Bidinotto and 14 others.

The book becomes available nationwide in bookstores this week.

A New Castle native who lives here with his wife and daughter, Bidinotto, 46, is an award-winning investigative reporter. He has written about crime since 1987, with most of his work appearing in Reader's Digest.

Bidinotto's involvement in the criminal justice system came in the late 1980s with his now-infamous article on Willie Horton.

"Prior to that, I had no real knowledge of or sensitivity to the



Robert James Bidinotto

crime issue," he said. It wasn't until I investigated the story of furloughs for murderers in Massachusetts that I became aware of the outrageousness of the system and the plight of the ignored victims of crime."

Bidinotto said he found it "ap-

palling" that during the O.J. Simpson double murder trial there was indifference shown to the issues of truth and justice.

Many of the problems of the American justice system are built in, starting with the jury selection process, Bidinotto said.

"They dismiss anyone who shows signs of intelligence, opinions, common sense or who reads the papers. Anyone with analytical powers or the ability to make independent judgment need not apply."

Thinking people would also see the holes in the conspiracy defense presented by the Simpson "dream team," which claimed that Simpson was framed by a racist veteran police detective, he said.

"Their strategy was to appeal to race. (Defense lawyer) Robert Shapiro said this was the plan from the beginning when he admitted that they used the race card and dealt it from the bottom of the deck.

"(Defense attorney) Johnnie Cochran said, 'If the facts don't fit, you must acquit.' Well, I have

one for him. I say, 'If you've got no case, you sink to race.'"

While investigating for Readers Digest articles, Bidinotto said he saw corruption within the system.

"We don't have a system of justice in this country. What we have an excuse making industry of social scientists, legal professionals, scholars and others who have undermined what used to be a system of individual responsibility and accountability."

At one time, he said, internal constraints — a conscience — might have kept someone from doing bad things. Or fear of the consequences sure to follow bad behavior would keep someone in line.

"Now excuses are made, even for the lowest, most hideous acts. There is no longer punishment for crimes that warrant it," Bidinotto said.

Bidinotto said excuse makers have contributed to the current crime wave by saying people are driven to do what they do by circumstances that are beyond their control.

"If someone can't help what they did, how can we punish them for doing what they can't help?"

Proponents of the excuse-making industry believe that everyone, even the worst offender, should be given a second chance, he said.

He said 90 percent of all convictions in this country are plea bargained for lesser charges. This figure could be 98 percent in urban areas.

Bidinotto recommends a two-step cure for the ailing justice system.

He said he believes internal behavioral controls must be returned to society.

"The law can't do it all. We must begin in the home to teach children right from wrong," he said.

Accountability must be returned to the criminal justice system, Bidinotto said.

"We also must begin to punish people for what they do. 'We must stop the excuse making or we'll see more bloody tragedies like those we see every night on the news. And it will get worse.'"

Book rallies for change in criminal justice system

By Nancy Lowry
New Castle News

Preaching the gospel of old time law and order, Robert James Bidinotto is hitting the publicity trail calling for an overhaul of the American justice system.

Bidinotto, a New Castle native and investigative journalist, will be promoting his book, "Criminal Justice? The Legal System vs. Individual Responsibility," a collection of articles that take a critical look at the American justice system.

He will visit 30 cities in the next six weeks speaking out on his feelings for the system, and signing books from St. Louis to Richmond, Va., from the Great Lakes to New England, with special stops in New York City, Boston and Washington, D.C.

Besides appearances at various book stores, Bidinotto will speak on local and nationally

Public appearances listed

Robert James Bidinotto will make the following promotional appearances:

- Today — WKBN Radio Dan Ryan at 8:40 a.m.; followed by a noon appearance at the Little Professor Bookstore in Boardman where he will speak on criminal justice and sign books.

- From 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. today, he will sign books at the Book Nook on Wilmington Road.

- Tomorrow — KDKA Mike Pintek Show at 10 a.m.

He also expects to speak at the New Castle Public Library on Saturday, Nov. 18.

Two taped 30-minute interviews will be aired on Adelphia Cable Channel 5.

Those shows are scheduled to be aired at 5:30 p.m. on Friday; 12:30 p.m. on Saturday; 3:30 p.m. on Monday; 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 20; and 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 21.

syndicated radio and television shows.

Bidinotto's book is published by the Foundation for Economic Education, of Irvington, N.Y., a small press which asked him to compile a crime and criminal justice book in 1994.

Originally in paperback, the

book sold more than 5,000 copies, mostly to law enforcement agencies and victims of crime groups.

"It did so well, the publisher wanted to put it out in book stores," he said.

A new hard-cover edition, with a foreword by John Walsh, host of "America's Most Wanted,"

will appear in stores this week. Advance sales are going well, Bidinotto said.

The author said he believes timing — just after the O.J. Simpson verdict — has helped spark interest in his book.

"The subject, the justice system, is on everyone's mind."

His articles frequently appear at opportune times.

In March 1988 Bidinotto, writing for Reader's Digest, investigated the Massachusetts justice system's practice of granting unguarded, 48-hour prison furloughs to convicts, including some convicted of murder.

When his article, which included a reference to the the now-famous story of William R. Horton Jr., was printed in Reader's Digest in July 1988, the chief architect and defender of the plan, Gov. Michael Dukakis, was the front-runner in the Democratic race for president.

Horton, who had been convicted of armed robbery and first-degree murder in Massachusetts

never returned from his ninth prison furlough. He was arrested in Maryland almost a year later for brutally beating a man and raping a woman.

Willie Horton became a campaign issue and Bidinotto's article is credited with affecting the outcome of the presidential race that year.

Another article, "Must Our Prisons Be Resorts?" which examines the "country club nature" of prisons and appeared in the November 1994 Reader's Digest, inspired a pending federal prison reform bill to reduce inmate privileges and amenities.

Although glad that the subject of his book has grabbed public interest, Bidinotto said he would "rather that it did not have to be written."

"I would have preferred that the Simpson trial ended differently, rather than as a travesty of the justice system."

Meanwhile, he is setting out on his own campaign tour to promote his book.