

DICK ZANDER / *Petito Headed for Family Court Bench*

Even though the polls won't open for another eight months, Oyster Bay Town GOP Chairman Angelo Roncallo is about to chalk up the biggest election victory of his career.

He'll do it by promoting the one Democrat in town government, Supervisor Michael N. Petito, to a Nassau Family Court judgeship. Petito, who reportedly is an overwhelming favorite to win reelection in private Republican polls, is anxious to take the judgeship for a variety of reasons, including personal family considerations. The deal is expected to be completed next week. With Petito out of the way, the Republicans feel sure they will be able to win all town posts in November.

The only thing that could block Petito from the post is an uprising by Democratic committeemen who feel that the party will be out in the cold without Petito. This isn't likely to happen.

The way things were shaping up this week, Petito would be able to run for the judgeship on the GOP line alone. That's how much the Republicans want to regain his office. But the supervisor, who formerly served as a deputy county welfare commissioner, has



Dick Zander

told friends that he is interested in the judgeship only if he can have bipartisan support.

Some of his friends have told him that Family Court is a dead end and have urged him to remain in the political fray. But his support of Hubert Humphrey as his party's presidential nominee coupled with a conservative fiscal position has earned him the undying enmity of Coalition Democrats, those party members who supported Sen. Eugene McCarthy. The Coalition Democrats have vowed to oppose Petito in a primary for the supervisor's nomination.

Thus Petito faces some serious political problems. He also has been on the outs with Nassau County Executive Nickerson and retiring County Democratic Chairman John F. English. Neither of these men apparently wants to bar his elevation to the bench. Recently, when Petito went to Nickerson to ask if he had a place in the Democratic Party, the county executive told him his place was on the Family Court bench.

Petito has spent much of his time campaigning on issues, such as juvenile delinquency and drugs, that relate to the kind of problems a Family Court judge must deal with. He believes he has the disposition for such a judgeship. The Family Court, the supervisor said, is "a social court—one of the more enlightened concepts of this generation." And, he said, "I happen to like human problems." The judgeship carries a

term of 10 years and pays an annual salary of \$33,000.

Petito is expected to take over the post that will be vacated by Judge Elizabeth Bass Golding, who will have reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 before the end of the year. Both Republicans and Democrats are unclear on when she will step down from the bench. She has remained unavailable to reporters, but not to Republican leaders. The GOP leaders are attempting to find her some honorific state post, such as consultant to the state narcotics control commission, where age is no factor. Mrs. Golding had served as a state corrections commissioner before winning the court post.

If she steps down before the end of the year, Gov. Rockefeller would fill the vacancy through appointment. He normally makes such appointments on the basis of recommendations from county Republican leaders. Nassau GOP Chairman Joseph Margiotta said that he has not yet consulted Roncallo on making such a recommendation.

Not too long ago, Roncallo, who wants to win the supervisor's job for the party, said, "I'd move heaven and earth to get Petito a job." It didn't take all that. At this point, the Democrats have no idea who would run in Petito's place. Roncallo has Syosset lawyer John W. Burke as his candidate. He has already marked Burke as a winner.

JAMES J. KILPATRICK / *Imagining the Unimaginable*

Washington—The difficulty in appraising the President's decision on an antiballistic missile system—the difficulty that baffles leading senators and ordinary citizens alike—is that rational judgment calls upon us to imagine the unimaginable and to know the unknowable. None of the usual guides to decision-making is much help.



James J. Kilpatrick

Consider, if you please, only one of the variable assumptions that has to be taken into account: This is the assumption of casualties within the U.S. as a result of thermonuclear assault. It is said that if an effective ABM system is deployed, such casualties might be

reduced from 80,000,000 to 120,000,000 dead to perhaps 20,000,000 to 40,000,000 dead.

Now, those figures, as ordinary figures, are comprehensible. We read 20 to 40 and 80 to 120, and the familiar numbers register on the mind. But in the context of thermonuclear warfare, they carry no meaning that any of us really can grasp. What we are called upon to imagine is 20,000,000 to 120,000,000 dead persons, all killed in a matter of minutes, and this is quite simply unimaginable.

That is only one of the variable assumptions. The President, the Congress, and the people have to make a threshold decision on the technology of the thing: Will it work? The Sentinel system is to rely upon two rockets, one called Sprint, for low-level interception, and the other called Spartan, for long-range interception.

The idea is that the ABM system would detect incoming ballistic objects, separate real missiles from decoys and trash, and provide a President with 20 to 30 minutes—perhaps less—to launch the defensive Sprints or Spartans. If everything worked to perfection, our missiles would blow up the enemy's missiles—some of the enemy missiles, anyhow—and the Republic would survive.

But would the ABM work to perfection? No one knows, or can know, because such a system cannot be tested in practice. It can be tested only in theory; and when it comes to the theory of the Sentinel system, the most eminent experts are in total disagreement.

These considerations barely touch the basic assumptions. Nixon's proposal for a "substantially modified" ABM system would not protect our major cities even in theory. His two initial deployments would protect only our own major offensive missile

sites. His proposal rests upon a further assumption, that an enemy will not start a nuclear war in the first place if the enemy knows he will suffer terrible retaliation a few minutes later. The deterrent concept is known as the concept of "massive assured destruction," or MAD, and the acronym is well taken.

Still more: Assumptions must be made on the offensive capability of our prospective enemies three to five years hence. Even with the best intelligence, such assumptions have to be largely conjecture. In this nightmare game of chess, we must assume that the enemy does not perfect a defensive system of its own that would nullify our proposed retaliatory assault, whether from fixed missile bases or from Poseidons fired from nuclear submarines.

The beleaguered mind, unable to cope with such imponderables, turns to computers; but the computers, while they help, cannot help with the human elements: What will happen in China with Mao's death? Who will be running the Kremlin in 1973? Will mortal men come to their senses and back away, step by step, from the abyss?

For what it may be worth—and it is not worth much—I think Nixon acted wisely and responsibly. But in a loose sense of the word, do I "know" this? No. And neither does anyone else.

JACK ALTSHUL / *There Was Spring and Love in the Air*

Wednesday was early spring and at lunch break in the Nassau County Courthouse, employees deserted the stale interior air for the pretty mini-parks that separate the various wings of the building. The clerks, attendants and secretaries filled the benches and talked about the long, hard winter past.

Into their midst strolled a hand-holding couple. He was dark, wore a custom-made suit, and jewelry linked the cuffs of his shirt. She was pretty and demonstratively in love.

His name was Sonny **Franzese** and these days he is on trial in County Court on conspiracy charges that could bring him more years in prison than he has to live. She was his wife, Tina, who comes to court every day to contemplate their future. Wednesday spring reached them both. . . .



Jack Altshul

That's why he was somewhat puzzled the other night in his speech at the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, a Mormon congregation. In the front row sat an elderly lady who was paying no attention to him at all. In fact her face was turned away from the speaker and she was closely watching a woman who sat next to her and throughout Cahn's speech made motions with her fingers.

If the DA had any ruffled feelings, they were long gone by the time he finished his hour's lecture and noticed that the elderly woman was reacting as genuinely as the rest of the audience. He realized she was deaf and that his speech was being translated in sign language. . . .

Got my first opportunity to ride on one of those silver-gleaming Budd cars the other night with a crowd of Knicks fans who had just seen their team beat Baltimore. So settled down quite comfortably on imitation leather seat for the ride to Garden City on the 11:20 and was on the brink of a snooze when an alarm-clock kind of voice came over the in-car public address system. Listened in fascination to the following conversation:

"Hey Paddy, the doors on the last six cars won't close."

"I know, Bernie, I turned the key and nothing happened."

"Something must be wrong. I'll try ringing the bells."

"The bells are ringing. . . ."

(Time out for passengers who break out into chorus which finishes off the line with "for me and my gal.")

". . . But the doors still won't close."

"Try closing them on the track side manually."

"Which is the track side?"

"The one on the left."

"Okay, they're closed."

The 11:20, the Long Island Rail Road's hope of the future, began its majestic move east. It was 11:31.

At Stony Brook yesterday, one layer of clothing had been shed and the students gathered around a couple of beards who plunked guitars, in obeisance to the new season. Some listened, some talked about their classmates who had been given a jail sentence for this week's grab-in.

And a pretty little coed talked seriously to a middle-aged man, who said he was the father of a student and he was looking for him and hadn't had much luck so far. She said, "Do you know what he is majoring in?"

He said, "I think something called amnesty."