

Monumental fuss arises over audit

Anybody who reads this column regularly knows I occasionally talk about my days at Lincoln High School in Philadelphia.

Back at Lincoln there was a huge grassy lawn that fronted the high school, and in the center of the lawn was a granite monolith that stood as a monument to the Great



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Emancipator. Etched in the granite were the words, "With Malice Toward None, With Charity For All," which is an excerpt from Lincoln's second inaugural speech.

Rick Orloff jogged my memory about the monument the other day. Orloff and I were students at Lincoln back in the '60s and '70s. I called Orloff to talk about the pickle he finds himself in these days, but we got sidetracked to our days in high school and that's when Orloff reminded me about the monument.

You see, the monument is where you met a classmate after school to settle little disputes that cropped up during the day. Whenever diplomacy and negotiation failed the next step was pugilism, which was kicked off with a challenge to your adversary to meet me at the monument.

Word would get around school and by the appointed time there was usually a crowd of kids gathered around the monument to watch the action. Seldom did the fights last more than a few minutes, because faculty members would notice the crowd and take steps to break things up.

"Did you ever meet anybody at the monument?" I asked Orloff.

"Almost once," he replied. "I managed to slither my way out of it."

I'm sure Tom Glackin would be interested in that answer.

Last week, Glackin formed a shaky coalition with fellow Richland Township Supervisor Earl Kline to

"censure" Orloff, who is the third supervisor in Richland, and to strip him of his vice presidency of the board.

Orloff's crime?

He released an audit report on the township's finances to reporters. The audit was not complimentary to the township government and, in fact, pointed out that \$15,000 in township funds appears to be missing.

The report also said the debits don't equal the credits, which any accountant will tell you means that the township simply doesn't know how much money is coming in and going out.

"They can censure me all they want but they can't shut me up," Orloff told me.

I talked to Kline and Glackin about all this. Both said the township has nothing to hide and that if there are bookkeeping problems in the township office they certainly must be addressed.

But both supervisors said they should have had a chance to talk about the report as a board, in private, before reading about the audit in the newspapers.

Glackin suggested that Orloff released the report so he could begin establishing himself as a political presence in Upper Bucks. Glackin said Orloff has his eye on higher office. "He has a personal political agenda that has nothing to do with Richland Township," Glackin said.

Which may be true. You may recall that Orloff made a run for the state Senate three years ago but backed off when support fizzled.

Getting back to the audit, I don't think any elected official should be punished for giving out documents to reporters. Indeed, this newspaper reported yesterday that holding such a meeting to review the report prior to its public disclosure may violate the state's Sunshine Act.

I don't know what Kline and Glackin thought could be resolved in private — they were never going to change what the auditors uncovered, specifically that \$15,000 may be missing and that the township's books are seriously out of balance.

I guess Orloff could have etched those findings in granite for Glackin and Kline but, as you know, he tends to slither away from such confrontations.