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Main Line Banter: Local couple receives 'Lifetime Commitment Award' and post-election thoughts

About T/E Elections

By Ray Hoffman Nov 15, 2017



Irene and Ken Campbell

Irene and Ken Campbell consider themselves “just plain people.” It may even be fair to say that they are more than content to “hide their light under a bushel.”

That's why being singled out for a "lifetime commitment award" last week by ChildPromise, Inc. Formerly Baptist Children's Service, it is a 138-year-old Philadelphia-based non-profit that celebrates the promise of each foster child through its commitment to their success.

As meaningful as it may be to the Campbells, the honor makes them a little uncomfortable. Especially Irene. "Being in the public spotlight always has given me a feeling of unease. I am not ungrateful, but I truly believe that if I deserve any reward for what I do, I will receive it in Heaven."

Theology notwithstanding, (Irene and Ken are deeply faithful Christians and active members of Devon's The Baptist Church in the Great Valley) the Bryn Mawr (Beaumont) residents were honored by about 200 guests at a gala at Green Valley Country Club, Lafayette Hills.

"Their tireless work in helping give hope to foster children from throughout the area for more than two decades with CPI has been key in helping the agency grow," said Dr. Nathaniel Williams, president and CEO of ChildPromise, Inc.

As further recognition to the Campbells' contribution of financial and personal support to the agency, the gala also acknowledged the Campbells' role in the inauguration of the organization's newly-created Angel Scholarship Fund to help send deserving foster children to college.

"Irene and Ken so embody the spirit of 'lifetime commitment' that ... this award they are receiving tonight will henceforth be named in their honor as 'The Irene and Kenneth Campbell Lifetime Commitment Award'." Dr. Williams announced.

In addition to honoring The Campbells, the gala presented its Humanitarian Award to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolff (that was accepted in his absence by Cathy Utz, deputy secretary for children, youth and families of the state's department of human services.)

Another highlight of the gala, emceed by Fox 29's Good Day Philadelphia personality, Jennaphr Frederick, was the keynote address of Vernon Earl "The Pearl" Monroe, South Philly native and former NBA All-Star player with the Baltimore Bullets and the New York Knicks.

Mr. Monroe, now 73, spoke about his youth in a tough neighborhood and playing soccer, baseball and basketball and not knowing what he would do after graduating from John Bartram High.

His opportunity to succeed in life occurred when he was approached about attending Winston Salem State University and playing basketball there. "I paid \$250 a year, and worked mopping up the basketball court (along with childhood friend Steve Smith) to make up the rest of my tuition," Earl said, "and I was lucky enough to be taken under the wings of Coach Clarence 'Big House' Gaines who helped me and my teammates gain national recognition as 1967 NCAA College Division Champions, and earn me the MVP of the tournament. Even more importantly, it was a great feeling that every one of my teammates graduated.

"Coach Gaines was like a father to me, and the biggest influence in my life. When I say 'big,'" Earl smiled, "I mean 6'5" and more than 300 pounds big!"

"We were 31-1 in our senior year, and a lot of people were asking around 'which one is called The Pearl' so we all decided to name ourselves Joe just for the fun of it," he said.

Earl's flashy style, innovative moves and scoring ability made him one of the most popular NBA players of his time,

Since retiring from the NBA in 1980 because of serious knee injuries, Earl turned his interests to a variety of business (restaurants, record and candy businesses, among them,) as well as community ventures like the New Jersey Urban Development Corp., the Crown Heights Youth Collective and the American Heart Assn.

Rounding out the gala, guests were treated to an upbeat "rock and roll" performance by 16-year-old Campbell Walker Fields, a singer and keyboardist from Oklahoma City who was featured last year on NBC's "America's Got Talent."

Nobody asked me, but it looks like the Republican Party may be a thing of the past in both Tredyffrin and Easttown townships. If the results of last week's elections are harbingers of what's to come, the GOP as we know it in these two important Chester County voting

strongholds could be hanging in the balance like the chads in the 2000 Florida presidential election (Remember Bush vs. Gore and the recount drama!)

Difference here, however, is that recounts are not in order.

Voters have derailed a couple hundred years of political history in Tredyffrin by opting for a Democratic Party controlled board of supervisors come next January. And inroads into the Easttown municipal government and T/E Board of School Directors are similarly telling. There is more to muse about, but no more space to do so today. To be continued next week.

The Last Word: Good day, good luck, and good news tomorrow.

Ray Hoffman writes a weekly column, and invites your comments to mainlinebanter@verizon.net or rayhoffman2@aol.com.

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