

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2001

# Independence life support for Straniere's campaign

He's got a political pulse.

Just when Borough Hall thought they had finished off Assemblyman Bob Straniere for good, with the Molinari-Molinari forces convinced they had defeated their old foe in the paper-ballot Independence Party primary — presto! — Straniere survives and lives to campaign another day.

In fact, Straniere was so dispirited after the 65-percent-to-35-percent drubbing he suffered at the hands of Deputy BP Jim Molinaro in the Sept. 25 Republican primary, he had become convinced that he'd lost the Independence contest, too.

But when the paper ballots were finally counted last week, Straniere, who had the backing of the Independence Party in the primary, easily defeated Molinaro 188 votes to 68 votes.

True, it wasn't what you'd call a resounding victory — given the number of votes cast — but it was resounding enough to secure a ballot position for Straniere and keep him in the Borough Hall sweepstakes against Molinaro and Democratic Councilman Jay O'Donovan.

In fact, it was close to the margin of votes cast at the GOP convention last May, which gave Molinaro the Republican nomination over Straniere.

Straniere cracked open a bottle of champagne to celebrate — New York state champagne, he assured us.

After the fact, Molinaro claimed he never thought he'd win the Independence primary — made more complicated for him by its write-in status — and only mounted the challenge to distract Straniere from winning the real prize: The GOP line.

But both Molinaro and his campaign manager, BP Guy Molinari, were on record as having predicted victory in the minor party primary.

Straniere and Molinaro both worked super-hard to convince Independence voters to support them, but even the Straniere forces privately conceded they thought Molinaro had the better operation going into Primary Day.

That's why they were so happy — and stunned — to learn from Elections officials that they had actually pulled it off.

The conventional wisdom is that Straniere's continued presence on the ballot will hurt Molinaro in a tight race. But the O'Donovan camp is split on that score. Some believe it will help their man, while others say they were hoping O'Donovan would be the beneficiary of independent-minded vot-



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ers and renegade Republicans.

## Kudos all around

Staten Island Board of Elections workers, under the direction of Democratic chief clerk Barbara Kett and Republican deputy Mary Ann Yennella, did yeoman's work last week tallying the votes, both machine and paper, in the hotly contested primaries for Borough Hall and the North Shore City Council race.

Normally, Elections workers have up to 10 days after a primary to sort it all out. But these are far from normal times and both women did their utmost to see to it that all parties got the numbers they needed and as quickly as possible. And that meant all through last weekend and every evening this past week.

Through it all, they displayed patience and good humor with edgy candidates and their even edgier supporters, who crowded into Board of Elections headquarters in Rosebank, checking out the ballots, then double- and triple-checking them.

The Florida Board of Elections could learn a thing or two from the team of Kett and Yennella.

## On second thought

Both the Democratic and Republican parties have changed the dates of their housekeeping conventions to re-nominate John Lavelle and Leticia Remauro.

Dems will now meet on Tuesday, at 8 p.m., in the Crystal Room, while Republicans will gather on Oct. 15, at 7:30, in the Labetti Post.

Sandwiched in between, of course, is Thursday's Democratic run-off for mayor and public advocate.

Neither Mrs. Remauro nor Lavelle is expected to face opposition — most especially because the conventions are in advance of the Nov. 6 general election. If they were held after that, it might be a different story.

Both are looking for a second two-year term, but neither has had what you'd call a stellar first term.

Mrs. Remauro inherited a losing campaign for district attorney in 1999 and then was sideswiped by Molinari in early 2000 over Bush-McMain presidential primary politics — and things have never been quite the same for the GOP since.

Last fall, she publicly begged Molinari & Co. to hold off on the early-bird campaign for Molinaro until after the 2000 races, but was again rebuffed by Molinari. Through it all, she continued to back Straniere for borough president, publicly cheering him on, only to come around to Molinari's way of thinking late in the game — after convincing a slew of loyal Republicans to join her in sticking with Straniere.

Should Molinaro lose the race for Borough Hall, Mrs. Remauro will have the distinction of having spurned her party's candidate only to nominate a losing Conservative for Staten Island's top post.

As for Lavelle, he did not have the early distraction of the D.A.'s race, nor the public wrangling over presidential politics. But he grabbed for himself the first Democratic seat to come down the pike — the North Shore Assembly post — bullying others aside, after having professed no personal interest in attaining elective office.

He then came out too soon for Libby Hikind for the Mid-Island Council seat and not soon enough for O'Donovan for borough president. And after his lieutenants tried to convince Debi Rose to get out of the North Shore City Council primary, he never condemned the act of attempting to send a black woman packing.

Should O'Donovan lose the race for Borough Hall, Lavelle will have the distinction of presiding over a Democratic Party even weaker than the one he inherited. Not to mention having to deal with a North Shore councilman, in Democrat Mike McMahon, whom he's repeatedly rebuffed.

Lavelle's saving grace would be a Ferrer victory for mayor.

## Now, that's dedication

Helen Donlan Sacco, the Republican-Conservative candidate for Civil Court, has a husband so devoted to her cause that he led campaign workers into a thicket of poison ivy to put up her lawn signs. George Sacco can honestly say he did it for love.

## Mark your calendar

■ On Oct. 17, Democratic Ball, the Staaten, 8 p.m.; \$50 per person.

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## STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2001

**Mayor has been great in crisis,  
but we shouldn't extend his term**

In regard to the extension of Mayor [Rudolph] Giuliani's term:

Though the mayor has been a tower of strength during the World Trade Center crisis, I do not believe his term should be extended. To do that would open the door to undoing the democratic process of electing our Congressional representatives and mayors, presidents or even borough presidents.

There is a much simpler solution to acknowledging the job that Giuliani has done, and yet preventing the foundations of this nation from further damage, which was the terrorists' goal.

They resent that our wealth and laws have helped raise the standard of living for average citizens, not only here, but in former enemy nations such as Japan and Germany. Through modern communication methods, the downtrodden of those terrorist nations now know that there are millions living better and freer lives.

The terrorists are using our nation as a scapegoat to distract their people from the real cause of their misery — unwillingness of the wealthy of their country to share their wealth with their poorer citizens. Imagine if the current monies spent to harass us had been spent in those Third World countries; what a difference in the people's lives.

But most importantly, these terrorists seem to resent our many freedoms. Because terrorists believe that might makes right, they seem most to resent our right to peacefully select our leaders. They resent that we do not believe in divine rights of leadership. They resent that each person is considered equal in his nation.

A friend of mine named Grace has suggested that Giuliani be appointed by whoever is the newly-elected mayor as a commissioner in charge of the rehabilitation of the World Trade Center and problems attendant to that rehabilitation. Experts have estimated this will take at least two years to do so.

This suggestion makes much more sense than penning the door to the possibility of a dictatorship in the future. Extension of term without election would establish an unwanted precedence. Since most of our laws are based on precedence, what would keep this from happening on all other levels of government?

**Memorial to the WTC victims  
should show sadness, hope, love**

*An open letter to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki:*

As an American, like everyone else in this nation, I was affected by this horrific tragedy. Watching it from my college campus of Wagner College, I was very saddened and had a feeling of helplessness and anger. Like anyone, I would have liked to have helped in any way that I could. But circumstances wouldn't let me. I, as well as all people that I have encountered, would like to be a part of the puzzle of alleviating the pain for people and ourselves who were affected by this.

So, using my skills, I have designed a memorial, a monument, that could be built in remembrance of this dark day. I feel by doing this, I, in my own particular way, have helped or contributed to this effort of helping people to see visually how real people have pulled together to help, and to always remember their lost friends or family members.

I know that this is probably premature, and something that might happen long from now, but this has helped me to get out my feelings of sadness, faith, hope, confidence and love for the way the people of New York City and the rest of America have pulled together in their time of tragedy.

I feel that the design is a symbol of power, love, courage, heroism and the unbreakable human spirit that we have in our country. I know that this is a rough sketch and a very informal thing, but when I thought of the drawing and this letter, I felt like this was fit to be done, and done with my pure emotion and confidence in our people. And that if I didn't do this, my thought and design would be lost.

I don't need any recognition, any thanks, and certainly no money. I would just like for you distinguished men to know that many people near and far have manifested their thoughts and prayers in more ways than one. My thoughts and prayers go out for everyone affected and not.

Thank you for taking the time for looking at this and reading it.

**JOSEPH KULAKOWSKI**  
Middletown, N.J.

*[The writer is a former Great Kills resident.]*

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