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To rest in peace

October 18, 2007

Protecting the free speech rights of a church group that callously disrupts the funerals of Iraq war veterans with rants about homosexuality might be a tough call for some. But U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett struck the right balance this week in upholding that right while also allowing a lawsuit against the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church to proceed.

Now it's up to a Maryland jury to send the message that in a civil society, parents of slain soldiers should be able to bury their sons and daughters in peace.

The lawsuit was filed by Albert Snyder of York, Pa., after members of the Westboro church staged one of their protests at the March 10, 2006, funeral of his son, Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder, in Westminster. It was an unseemly stunt, with church members holding placards that read, "Thank God for dead soldiers." The group also posted inflammatory statements on its Web site that accused Mr. Snyder of raising his son "to defy his Creator, to divorce and commit adultery." The soldier's parents were divorced.

The church group sought to have the lawsuit dismissed on the grounds that its speech was protected under the Constitution. Judge Bennett ruled Monday that the group's statements didn't defame Corporal Snyder or his family, nor did the protesters violate the family's privacy because their comments against gays and divorce were a product of their religious beliefs.

But the judge let several other counts in the lawsuit remain, and a jury hearing the case next week will be asked to decide if the Westboro church intentionally inflicted emotional distress on the Snyder family and whether its protest outside the funeral violated the family's expectation of privacy.

The Snyder family's decision to sue the Kansas group, the first individual lawsuit against the protests, was courageous. This group has held hundreds of protests at funerals across the country, charging that the U.S. performance in the war was the result of immoral behavior, including homosexuality.

The church group's nonsensical attack could be dismissed as a loony rant except that it displays unfairly malign the soldiers who have died in the Iraq war and egregiously intrude on grieving families.

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Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

Corporal's Aunt Calls Funeral Protests "Devastating"

Tuesday, October 16, 2007 - WBAL Radio as reported by Robert Lang and The Associated Press

The aunt of a Westminister Marine killed in Iraq, whose funeral was picketed by an anti-gay church group says the protesters violated a private funeral, and their conduct was "devastating" to her family.

Bonnie Snyder called WBAL's Shari Elliker this morning.

Snyder's brother Albert, the marine's father, has filed a federal lawsuit against the Westboro Baptist Church.

Yesterday, a federal judge threw out a defamation claim against the church.

"I thought he (the judge) was wrong," Bonnie Snyder said, "I have people coming up to me asking 'was your nephew gay?' "

Bonnie Snyder says he wasn't.

During a hearing yesterday, Snyder's lawyers introduced pictures of signs carried by Westboro members, with messages such as "God Hates You" and "You're Going to Hell."

The church unsuccessfully tried to argue they were referring to the American public, not the dead Marine personally.

"This is a nation that laughs and mocks and scorns," Church spokeswoman Shirley Phelps-Roper said. "This nation doesn't want us to say that God is punishing her for her sins."

The rest of the suit will proceed to trial next week. The trial is expected to last two weeks.

The suit was filed by Snyder's father, but a spokesman for his mother says the corporal's mother is not part of the suit.

WBAL Radio
<http://wbal.com/>



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

TRANSCRIPT OF BONNIE SNYDER BEING INTERVIEWED BY SHARI
ELLIKER ON THE RADIO WBAL AM 1090 ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2007
4 minutes, 22 seconds <http://wbal.com/news/story.asp?articleid=64432>

Bonnie: See...the protestors standing behind little children from that school with flags in their hands. And you can see these signs waving in the air.

Interviewer: So Bonnie, let me ask you this. The protestors claim that they were 1,000 feet from the service

B: They were not a thousand...

I: Is that not true?

B: That is not true. You can look at these pictures and tell how close they were to the patriot guard.

I: Did Albert present this evidence yesterday? That, that in fact they were that much closer based on the pictures you had?

B: Well, you can see the pictures for yourself...

I: Uh, hmmm...

B: ...if you pull up the website, but you know these people are, are, they're crazy. I mean...

I: They are crazy. No, I, I think we can all agree that they are, they are absolutely nuts. But...

B: It's devastating enough to bury someone that you, that's really precious to you, but to have this happen. And then to go home that night and to turn your television on and that's the first story that is on the TV. It's, it's devastating...it's, it's really devastating.

I: Bonnie, how did you feel yesterday about the judgment? And, and how did your brother say, feel?

B: I felt. In my, in my point of view, I can't speak for my brother...

I: Right.

B: ...but in my point of view, I thought he was wrong. I thought it was, you know, I mean, he, to me, I have people coming up to me and saying, you know, "is your, is your, was your nephew gay?" You know, but that's not the point...

I: That was you know, you know Bonnie, I gotta tell you, that was the first question that I asked. Because I said, well wait a minute, was this a gay soldier? No, it's just that they...

B: No, he was not gay.

I: ...just, they just, they just target these, these soldiers' funerals because of the whole gays in the military thing and therefore the military needs to be picketed because...it's bizarre!

B: I know, but, you know, the point is, I mean, these people have got to be stopped somehow somehow, it's, it's too, it's, it's very painful to see something like this in your family.

I: Absolutely. Um, what is, what is your brother gonna to do now, uh, um, Bonnie, is he gonna pursue, I know that he, they're able to uh, pursue, um, the civil case.

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B: Uh, yeah, he's gonna, he's gonna go with this, I mean, and I'm behind him 100%. I mean...

I: Bonnie, how are you doing, how is the family doing after all of this?

B: It's, it's hard, it really is hard. My brother, he, you know, he's devastated, he lost his only son. And, you know, for this to happen to him. It's, it's, it's really it tears him up. These, these people, they have just. But he's doing it for Matt, he's doing it for Matt, because he doesn't want another family to go through this.

I: Uh, hmm...well, does he think that, um, when he, when he pursues, continues to pursue the case, uh, the civil case...what does he hope to have happen?

B: He hopes, well, uh, yeah, he just hopes that these people stop. And if this what is, is what it takes to make these people stop, to take, you know, if he, you know, I don't know if he's going to win, or, or, or whatever. But, you know, if it takes, you know, everything away from these people so they can't take their money and go protest or something like that.

I: Uh, hmmm....

B: You know what I mean? Take everything they have, I don't, uh, you know, just to make them stop.

I: Well, also, if it just slows them down a little Bonnie. Where maybe the next time...

B: Exactly

I: The next time they go to, to, uh, picket, uh a soldier's funeral, or the next time they try to do this, they'll think twice about it because this lawsuit is going to cost them money whether they win or lose, and that's a fact. So, if, if, if nothing else, um, you're, you know, he's to be commended on doing this.

B: Right, and, and you know, for, for another family, you know, I mean there's so many young boys that are being killed over in Iraq. And for them to come home and to say your last goodbyes to them and, and to have this, you know, plastered all over the TV because if it wasn't for them being there protesting my nephew's funeral. The media, it was a private funeral, the media wouldn't have been there to cover them.

I: Uh, hmmm....

B: You know what I mean? And it, and it wouldn't be like this.

I: Right.

B: So they caused all of these problems.

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Local

Fallen soldier's family hopes lawsuit cripples fringe church

Mike Silvestri, The Examiner

2007-10-18 07:00:00.0

Current rank: # 56 of 6,709

BALTIMORE -

The family of a fallen soldier whose funeral was picketed by Westboro Baptist Church remains hopeful its lawsuit will financially cripple the fringe, gay-bashing group.

"We just want them to stop damaging other people," said Craig Trebilcock, a lawyer for the family of fallen Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, whose March 2006 funeral in Westminster had been picketed by the church. "If these people would fold their tent tomorrow and stop victimizing innocent families, this case could probably be resolved."

Despite having two of five claims against the Topeka, Kan., church dismissed in a federal court this week, attorneys for the family of Snyder, a Westminster High graduate, say damages would be no less than if the judge had allowed all claims go forward.

Snyder was killed serving in Iraq last year and church members picketed with signs reading, "You're going to Hell" and "Pope in Hell."

They believe soldiers' deaths are God's revenge for America's tolerance of homosexuality.

"This case has very little to do with money," Trebilcock said. "It's to send a message to that this type of conduct is unacceptable in our society today, and people aren't going to put up with it."

Claims of intentional infliction of emotional distress, invasion of privacy and civil conspiracy are to go to a jury trial next week at U.S. District Court in Baltimore.

Westboro representatives could not be reached for comment.

The dismissed claims stemmed from messages written on the church's Web site that claimed Matthew's father, Albert, of York, Pa., raised him "for the devil, taught Matthew to defy his creator and commit adultery, and taught him to be an idolater."

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett ruled Monday that a realistic person would not believe the messages, and that committing adultery was not defamatory.

"This has been a long haul for him," Sean Summers, attorney for the family, said of Albert Snyder. "Litigation is tough for a person, even if you haven't recently buried your child."

Bennett limited church members' ability to use the First Amendment as protection for their protest at the funeral, saying their messages could have been directed at the family and were not of public concern.

"Yesterday was a success in that the judge ruled they can't use the First Amendment as a defense," said another family attorney, Sean Summers. "If you read the headlines, you'd think, 'Oh my god, the case fell apart,' but in reality only one small portion fell apart."

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Examiner

www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-md.funeral16oct16,0,5985697.story

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Suit OK'd against anti-gay group

Judge cuts scope of trial about protest at Marine's funeral

By Matthew Dolan

Sun reporter

October 16, 2007

The father claimed protesters destroyed his only chance to bury in peace the son he lost in Iraq. The picketers who carried signs with such messages as "Thank God for dead soldiers" countered they were only trying to oppose gays in the military.

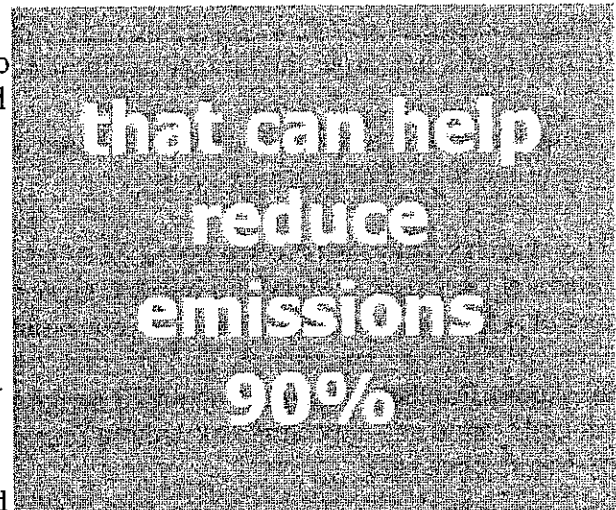
After the two sides presented legal arguments in a Baltimore courtroom yesterday, a federal judge offered a split decision. He ruled that a more limited lawsuit brought by Albert Snyder, the father of the slain Marine whose funeral was targeted by the Kansas-based anti-gay group, can proceed to trial next week.

At times incensed over what he described as long-winded theological speeches given by a member of Westboro Baptist Church, U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett nonetheless dismissed two of the five counts against the church and three of its leaders, saying in part that their statements, no matter how incendiary, amounted to protected speech.

Comments posted on the church's Web site that Snyder raised his son "for the devil" and taught his son how to "defy his Creator, to divorce and to commit adultery" did not defame the father because it was "not the kind of information that a reasonable person is going to assume was presented to be considered fact," Bennett said.

In granting part of the defendants' motion for summary judgment, Bennett found church members did not defame Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder or his family by implying that he was gay or raised by adulterers because his parents divorced. Nor did the church members invade the family's privacy, the judge ruled, because their anti-gay and anti-divorce accusations were based on a general expression of the church members' fundamentalist beliefs.

At the civil trial set to begin Monday in federal court, the jury will be able to consider whether Westboro Baptist Church is liable for an intentional infliction of emotional distress based on the message from its members' signs, Bennett said. The judge also will allow jurors to decide whether the Snyder family's expectation of privacy at Matthew Snyder's funeral was violated by the church members' protest outside St. John Roman Catholic Church in Westminster.



The complaint filed in June 2006 - the first individual lawsuit brought against the Kansas organization for its protests at these ceremonies - does not seek a specific amount of damages. The trial is expected to last two weeks.

In Iraq for only a month, 20-year-old Matthew Snyder died in March 2006 in a vehicle accident in Anbar province. The 2003 Westminster High School graduate served with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Albert Snyder filed the suit because he wanted to deter a group that has staged similar demonstrations more than 30,000 times around the nation - including hundreds of times at funerals - according to his attorneys.

"Why are they doing this to me?" Snyder lamented at the time, according to his attorney Sean E. Summers.

One of the defendants, Shirley Phelps-Roper, is an attorney and church member whose father, Fred Phelps, helped establish Westboro in 1955. Representing herself in court yesterday, she insisted church members did not target the Snyder family personally.

"This is a religious opinion ... that was based on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ," she told the judge during the four-hour hearing.

The church's protests have prompted 22 states to enact or propose laws to limit the rights of protesters at funerals. Last year, a Maryland bill was signed into law that prohibits people from picketing within 100 feet of a funeral, memorial, burial or procession.

Westboro Baptist - which has about 75 members, the vast majority of whom are relatives - protests at funerals using anti-gay slurs but without regard to the presumed sexual orientation of the soldier, church members have said.

Seven people - three adults and four children - marched on public city property outside Snyder's funeral March 10, 2006, at St. John Church, waving placards expressing their belief that the military's combat losses is a direct result of immoral behavior, including homosexuality, among its ranks.

Members claimed they were on public land at least 1,000 feet from the church. They cited depositions that Albert Snyder said he did not even see their messages on the day of the funeral. Attorneys for the Marine's father have argued he heard about the nature of the protest on the television news later and was traumatized by the experience.

First Amendment experts have said these types of lawsuits often founder because even the most hateful speech is usually protected.


But Bennett said yesterday that Matthew Snyder was a courageous Marine who was not a public figure and so a jury would need to decide whether his family was harmed by the words protesters used at his funeral.

Members of the jury, Bennett said, will need to decide whether the Westboro members were simply protesting a war or "celebrating the death of a soldier" in an extreme and outrageous way that entitles Snyder to compensation.

"The signs did not say 'Get out of Iraq,'" the judge added.

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Monday, Oct. 15, 2007

Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

By KRISTEN WYATT

- Associated Press Writer

BALTIMORE — A fundamentalist church that pickets at soldiers' funerals was cleared of defamation charges Monday in a first-in-the-nation lawsuit filed by the family of a fallen serviceman.

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the father of a fallen Marine.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., argued that Web postings by church members defamed his family. The church claimed that Snyder's son, 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who was killed in Iraq, was taught idolatry and adultery by his parents because they divorced.

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett dismissed that claim in pretrial motions, saying that adultery - defined as having sex outside marriage - was not defamatory.

"You think in 2007, that being accused of having sex with someone not your spouse, including premarital sex, you think that amounts to subjecting someone to public scorn?" Bennett asked plaintiffs before dismissing the claim.

Bennett said the church's other claims, such as a statement that Albert Snyder raised his son "for the devil" was a religious opinion and unlikely to be taken seriously.

"Where does any reasonable person have cause to lose respect for Al Snyder?" because of the devil accusation, Bennett asked.

Bennett ruled Snyder's lawsuit may proceed on two fronts - invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Snyder, who did attend Monday's motions hearing, seeks unspecified damages from the Rev. Fred Phelps and his church.

The church attempted to argue Monday that it did not invade the Snyder family's privacy during the Marine's March 2006 funeral in Westminster. The church picketed several hundred feet away, out of view of the family.

Snyder's lawyers argued that just the knowledge Westboro was picketing outside interrupted the family's grieving.

Church members, who believe military deaths in Iraq are God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality, argued that they were too far away to disturb the funeral. Just because Albert Snyder saw the protest on television later, that did not disturb the funeral when it happened, they argued.

"We're out of sight, out of sound," said Shirley Phelps-Roper, Phelps' daughter and an attorney who represented herself at the motions hearing. "I don't know how you intrude upon seclusion when you're 1,000 feet away."

Bennett denied the church's argument that the invasion of privacy claim should be dismissed, and he also refused to toss the emotional distress claim.

Snyder's lawyers introduced pictures of signs carried by Westboro members, with messages such as "God Hates You" and "You're Going to Hell." Snyder argues the signs inflicted emotional distress; the church unsuccessfully tried to argue they were referring to the American public, not the dead Marine personally.

"It is one thing to protest a war. It is another thing to carry placards celebrating the death of a soldier," Bennett said.

Church members said they would argue their protests are covered by free-speech protections but acknowledged in court Monday that they had a hard time finding experts to take their side for next week's trial.

"This is a nation that laughs and mocks and scorns," Phelps-Roper said. "This nation doesn't want us to say that God is punishing her for her sins."

A jury trial begins Oct. 22 and is expected to last two weeks.

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Defamation claim waived against fundamentalist church

Associated Press - October 15, 2007 5:45 PM ET

BALTIMORE (AP) - A fundamentalist church that pickets at soldiers' funerals has been cleared of defamation in a lawsuit filed by the father of a fallen Marine.

U.S. District Court Judge Richard Bennett ruled today that the church did not defame Albert Snyder of Pennsylvania, father of Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder.

Snyder is still suing the church for invasion of privacy and emotional distress.

On its Web site, members of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, said that Albert Snyder taught his son adultery and idolatry because Albert Snyder is divorced. Bennett ruled that those accusations may have harmed a person's reputation in the 16th century but not today.

Other parts of Albert Snyder's lawsuit are still pending. The trial is to begin next week and will last two weeks.

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Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

By: KRISTEN WYATT (Mon, Oct/15/2007)

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Article's URL:

<http://www.phillyburbs.com/pb-dyn/news/103-10152007-1424110.html>



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

Defamation Claim Waived Against Westboro Baptist Church

Monday, October 15, 2007 - WBAL Radio as reported by Scott Wykoff and The Associated Press

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Other parts of Albert Snyder's lawsuit are still pending, including invasion of privacy. The trial is to begin next week.

WBAL Radio
<http://wbal.com/>



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station



Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

Family Of Soldier From Westminster Sues Funeral Protesters

Monday, October 15, 2007 - WBAL Radio as reported by John Patti and The Associated Press

A Kansas group that has drawn criticism for protesting at soldiers' funerals could face its toughest legal challenge yet today when the family of a soldier from Westminster sues for defamation.

The Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka is being sued by Albert Snyder of Pennsylvania, father of a Marine who died last year. Church members protested at Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder's funeral and posted pictures of the protest on their Web site.

The church has asked unsuccessfully for Snyder's lawsuit to be dismissed.

Westboro Baptist's protests have inspired more than a dozen states to ban or limit protests at soldiers' funerals.

Church members believe that soldier deaths are God's punishment for the nation accepting homosexuals.

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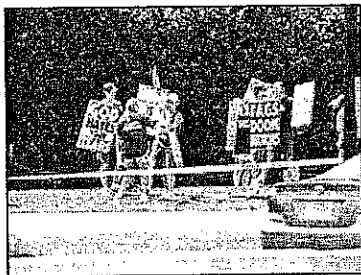


Maryland's NEWS - TALK- SPORTS Station

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Funeral Protesters Face Defamation Lawsuit



Church members believe that soldier deaths are God's punishment for the nation accepting homosexuals. (Photo: WBOC)

10/15/2007 8:02 AM ET

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Funeral Protest Lawsuit

Last Update: 10/15 4:52 pm

A York County man has lost part of a lawsuit against a Kansas group that protests at soldiers funerals.

Albert Snyder of Springettsbury Township had sued the Westboro Baptist Church for defamation of his son, Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder.

The group had said Snyder taught his son adultery because Mr. Snyder was divorced.

A judge ruled that the church did not defame his son.

Other parts of Albert Snyder's lawsuit are still pending, including invasion of privacy.

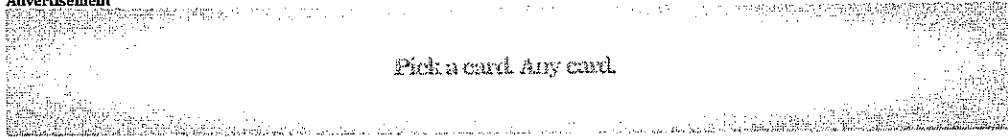
The trial is expected to begin next week.

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WJZ Baltimore, Maryland News Weather: Defamation Claim Waived Against Church

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Oct 15, 2007 3:51 pm US/Eastern

Defamation Claim Waived Against Church

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Defamation Claim Dismissed Against Funeral-Protesting Church

By KRISTEN WYATT

10-15-2007

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The church attempted to argue Monday that it did not invade the Snyder family's privacy during the

Marine's March 2006 funeral in Westminster. The church picketed several hundred feet away, out of view of the family.

Snyder's lawyers argued that just the knowledge Westboro was picketing outside interrupted the family's grieving.

Church members, who believe military deaths in Iraq are God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality, argued that they were too far away to disturb the funeral. Just because Albert Snyder saw the protest on television later, that did not disturb the funeral when it happened, they argued.

"We're out of sight, out of sound," said Shirley Phelps-Roper, Phelps' daughter and an attorney who represented herself at the motions hearing. "I don't know how you intrude upon seclusion when you're 1,000 feet away."

Bennett denied the church's argument that the invasion of privacy claim should be dismissed, and he also refused to toss the emotional distress claim.

Snyder's lawyers introduced pictures of signs carried by Westboro members, with messages such as "God Hates You" and "You're Going to Hell." Snyder argues the signs inflicted emotional distress; the church unsuccessfully tried to argue they were referring to the American public, not the dead Marine personally.

"It is one thing to protest a war. It is another thing to carry placards celebrating the death of a soldier," Bennett said.

Church members said they would argue their protests are covered by free-speech protections but acknowledged in court Monday that they had a hard time finding experts to take their side for next week's trial.

"This is a nation that laughs and mocks and scorns," Phelps-Roper said. "This nation doesn't want us to say that God is punishing her for her sins."

A jury trial begins Oct. 22 and is expected to last two weeks.

WBALTV.com

Funeral-Protesting Church Lawsuit Dismissed

Judge Says Religious Opinions Unlikely To Be Taken Seriously

A fundamentalist church that pickets at soldiers' funerals was cleared of defamation charges Monday in a first-in-the-nation lawsuit filed by the family of a fallen serviceman.

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the father of a fallen Marine.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., argued that Web postings by church members defamed his family. The church claimed that Snyder's son, 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who was killed in Iraq, was taught idolatry and adultery by his parents because they divorced.

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett dismissed that claim in pretrial motions, saying that adultery -- defined as having sex outside marriage -- was not defamatory.

"You think in 2007, that being accused of having sex with someone not your spouse, including premarital sex, you think that amounts to subjecting someone to public scorn?" Bennett asked the plaintiffs before dismissing the claim.

Bennett said the church's other claims, such as a statement that Albert Snyder raised his son "for the devil," was a religious opinion and unlikely to be taken seriously.

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Federal judge dismisses defamation claim against Westboro Baptist

By The Associated Press
10.16.07

BALTIMORE — A fundamentalist church that pickets at soldiers' funerals was cleared of defamation charges yesterday in a first-in-the-nation lawsuit filed by the family of a fallen serviceman.

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired more than three dozen state statutes and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the father of a fallen Marine.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., argued that Web postings by church members defamed his family. The church claimed that Snyder's son, 20-year-old Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who was killed in Iraq, was taught idolatry and adultery by his parents because they divorced.

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Snyder's lawyers argued that just the knowledge Westboro was picketing outside interrupted the family's grieving.

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Snyder's lawyers introduced pictures of signs carried by Westboro members, with messages such as "God Hates You" and "You're Going to Hell." Snyder argues the signs inflicted emotional distress; the church unsuccessfully tried to argue they were referring to the American public, not the dead Marine personally.

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Tuesday, October 16, 2007

Federal judge approves limited lawsuit against military funeral protesters

Caitlin Price at 4:16 PM ET



[JURIST] The **US District Court for the District of Maryland** [official website] ruled Tuesday that three of the five counts of a suit filed by the father of a fallen Marine against the renegade **Westboro Baptist Church**

[WARNING: readers may find material at this church website offensive; BBC report] may proceed to trial. Albert Snyder **sued Westboro** [JURIST report] in 2006 after the church led a protest at the funeral of his son, **Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder** [case website] in Westminster, Maryland. Judge Richard

D. Bennett dismissed claims of invasion of privacy and defamation arising from comments posted about Snyder on the Westboro website, calling them protected speech. The remainder of the suit set to begin next Monday will consider Westboro's liability for intentional infliction of emotional distress and violation of the expectation of privacy at the funeral. The *Baltimore Sun* has **more**.

Westboro and its leader Rev. Fred Phelps have staged several protests at military funerals in recent years, saying US soldiers have been killed because America tolerates homosexuals. While a spokesman for Westboro said that they are "exercising [their] First Amendment rights," the lawyer for Albert Snyder said that there is no right to interrupt a private funeral. In 2006, President Bush **signed into law** [JURIST report] the **Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act** [HR 5037 summary; PDF text], prohibiting any demonstration within 300 feet of the entrance of a national cemetery and within 150 feet of an entrance into the cemetery for one hour before and after a military funeral.

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Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

Associated Press - October 16, 2007 9:34 AM ET

BALTIMORE (AP) - A Topeka church that pickets soldiers' funerals is cleared of defamation charges in a lawsuit filed by the family of a Pennsylvania soldier who was killed in Iraq.

But a federal judge in Baltimore ruled yesterday that the suit against Westboro Baptist church may proceed on claims of invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

A jury trial begins Monday and is expected to last two weeks.

The church claimed that Albert Snyder's 20-year-old son, Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder, was taught idolatry and adultery by his parents because they divorced.

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett dismissed that claim, saying that adultery was not defamatory.

The church argued unsuccessfully that it did not invade the Snyder family's privacy during the March 2006 funeral because members picketed several hundred feet away.

Church members believe military deaths are God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality.

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Judge: Church didn't defame dad

A federal judge ruled in favor of Westboro Baptist Church in one part of a lawsuit against them.

Daily Record/Sunday News

York Daily Record/Sunday News

Article Last Updated: 10/16/2007 09:06:29 AM EDT

At bottom: • [TRIAL SCHEDULED](#)

Oct 16, 2007 — Westboro Baptist Church did not defame the father of a Marine when it wrote on its Web site that he taught his son about adultery and idolatry, a federal judge ruled Monday.

On the Web site, members of the Topeka, Kan., church said Spring Garden Township resident Albert Snyder taught his son, Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, those lessons by being divorced.

In his ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Bennett said those accusations might have harmed a person's reputation in the 16th century but not in 2007.

The fundamentalist church, which pickets soldiers' funerals, was cleared of defamation in the lawsuit filed by Albert Snyder, but still faces other allegations, including invasion of privacy, at a trial set to begin next week.

Westboro Baptist Church members said they would argue their protests are covered by free-speech protections but acknowledged in court Monday that they had a hard time finding experts to take their side for next week's trial.

Allegations against the church stem from their protests at the March 2006 memorial service for Matthew Snyder, who was killed March 3, 2006, after he was ejected from a Humvee in Iraq.

Albert Snyder accused the church of defaming his family on its Web site and invading the family's privacy by attending his son's funeral without an invitation.

York attorney Sean Summers, one of the attorneys representing Albert Snyder, said the judge dismissed the defamation claim because it didn't appear that the rants on the church's Web site made anyone change their opinion of Albert Snyder.

Summers said his client had a small victory in court Monday when Bennett ruled Westboro could not use the First Amendment as a defense.

"This is not over - not by a long shot," Summer said Monday evening. "Our remaining counts will be out in front of a jury next week."

The Associated Press and Daily Record/Sunday News staff writer Michele Canty contributed to this report.

TRIAL SCHEDULED

U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett scheduled the jury selection on the trial to begin 9 a.m. Oct. 22 in federal court in Baltimore. Attorneys for both sides are hoping to also start their opening arguments the same day. It is scheduled to last two weeks, according to court documents.

[top](#)

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Defamation claim waived against fundamentalist church

Last Update: 10/16 6:40 am

BALTIMORE (AP) - A fundamentalist church that pickets at soldiers' funerals has been cleared of defamation in a lawsuit filed by the father of a fallen Marine.

U.S. District Court Judge Richard Bennett ruled today that the church did not defame Albert Snyder of Pennsylvania, father of Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder.

Snyder is still suing the church for invasion of privacy and emotional distress.

On its Web site, members of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, said that Albert Snyder taught his son adultery and idolatry because Albert Snyder is divorced. Bennett ruled that those accusations may have harmed a person's reputation in the 16th century but not today.

Other parts of Albert Snyder's lawsuit are still pending. The trial is to begin next week and will last two weeks.

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Associated Press

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Local

Judge dismisses defamation claim against gay-bashing church

Mike Silvestri, The Examiner

2007-10-16 07:00:00.0

Current rank: # 5,711 of 6,643

BALTIMORE -

A gay-bashing, fringe church has been cleared of defamation claims stemming from church members' saying the father of a fallen Marine had "raised him for the devil."

Ruling Monday in the case involving the fundamentalist Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett said: "These comments — as extreme as they may be — they are taken in terms of religious expression. This is not the type of language that one is going to assume is meant as a statement of fact."

Albert Snyder, father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who was killed serving in Iraq early last year, filed suit in June 2006 against the church, its founder, Fred Phelps, and his two daughters, Rebekah Phelps-Davis and Shirley Phelps-Roper.

The suit came after the church members picketed Snyder's funeral in Westminster in March 2006, saying soldiers' deaths in Iraq are God's vengeance for America's tolerance of homosexuality.

"It is my religious opinion, and there is a basis for that religious opinion, so that becomes a question of who decides if that is fact," Phelps-Roper said.

Phelps-Roper wrote on the church's Web site that Albert Snyder, of York, Pa., "raised Matthew for the devil, taught Matthew to defy his creator and commit adultery, and taught him to be an idolater."

Snyder's attorney, Sean Summers, called the adultery claim false and defamatory.

"The 'commit adultery' one seems pretty clear-cut," Summers said. "You either did or didn't, and they either published or not."

Because some of the protesters' signs could have targeted Snyder, not passersby, Bennett allowed the suit to continue to a jury trial to decide on claims including intentional infliction of emotional distress and invasion of privacy.

At the funeral, church members held signs that read, "God hates you" and "You're going to Hell."

"Certainly a group is free to display any message to a nation, regardless of how hurtful," Bennett said.

"But some of the messages conveyed on that day in question could have been directed against Albert Snyder, his son and his family."

msilvestri@baltimoreexaminer.com

Examiner

Lawsuit Brought Against Antigay Westboro Baptist Church

The Advocate, CA - Oct 16, 2007

The first individual lawsuit brought against the Kansas-based **Westboro Baptist Church**, established by the notoriously antigay preacher Fred Phelps, ...

« [View all web results for Westboro Baptist Church](#)



Federal judge approves limited lawsuit against military funeral ...

JURIST - Oct 16, 2007

... against the renegade **Westboro Baptist Church** [WARNING: readers may find material at this church website offensive; BBC report] may proceed to trial.

...

49 News Now - A look at news and weather

49abcnews.com, KS - Oct 16, 2007

He claimed members of the **Westboro Baptist Church** defamed the Marine and his family at the funeral. The judge disagreed. Another part of the lawsuit, ...

Globe West listings

Boston Globe, United States - Oct 16, 2007

11 at **Westboro Gallery**, 8 West Main St. Hours: Wednesday-Saturday, 11 am-5 pm; Sunday, 11 am-2 pm 508-870-0110, westborogallery.com. ...

MARYLAND: Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

Delmarva Daily Times, MD - Oct 16, 2007

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the ...

MARYLAND: Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

Salisbury Daily Times, MD - Oct 16, 2007

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the ...

Restricted trial against Phelps' anti-gay group gets go-ahead

PinkNews.co.uk, UK - Oct 16, 2007

At times incensed over what he described as long-winded theological speeches given by a member of the **Westboro Baptist Church**, US District Judge Richard ...

Federal judge dismisses defamation claim against Westboro Baptist

First Amendment Center, TN - Oct 16, 2007

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., church that has inspired more than three dozen state statutes and a federal law about funeral protests, ...

Defamation claim dismissed against Westboro Baptist Church

49abcnews.com, KS - Oct 16, 2007

But a federal judge in Baltimore ruled Monday that the suit against **Westboro Baptist Church** may proceed on claims of invasion of privacy and intentional ...

Westboro Church Cleared of Defamation Charges after Baltimore ...

WIBW, KS - Oct 16, 2007

But a federal judge in Baltimore ruled Monday that the suit against **Westboro Baptist church** may proceed on claims of invasion of privacy and intentional ...

Westboro Baptist in court over funeral protest

Kansas City Star, MO - Oct 16, 2007

The judge, however, is letting the man pursue claims that **Westboro** invaded his privacy and caused emotional distress. The **church's** defense made me chuckle: ...

Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

KBSD, KS - Oct 16, 2007

But a federal judge in Baltimore ruled yesterday that the suit against **Westboro Baptist church** may proceed on claims of invasion of privacy and intentional ...

Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-protesting church

NTV, NE - Oct 16, 2007

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Suit OK'd against anti-gay group

Baltimore Sun, United States - Oct 16, 2007

At times incensed over what he described as long-winded theological speeches given by a member of **Westboro Baptist Church**, US District Judge Richard D. ...

Defamation claim waived against fundamentalist church

CBS 21, PA - Oct 16, 2007

Snyder is still suing the **church** for invasion of privacy and emotional distress. On its Web site, members of **Westboro Baptist Church** in Topeka, Kansas, ...

Judge: Church didn't defame dad

York Daily Record, PA - Oct 16, 2007

A federal judge ruled in favor of **Westboro Baptist Church** in one part of a lawsuit against them. Oct 16, 2007 — **Westboro Baptist Church** did not defame the ...

PAT ROBERTSON: DIVIDING JERUSALEM RISKS GOD'S WRATH VIRGINIA BEACH ...

KXMC, ND - Oct 16, 2007

Albert Snyder of York, Pennsylvania, argued that Web postings by the **Westboro Baptist Church** of Topeka defamed his family. The **church** had claimed that ...

PAT ROBERTSON: DIVIDING JERUSALEM RISKS GOD'S WRATH VIRGINIA BEACH ...

Reiten Television KXMB Bismarck, ND - Oct 16, 2007

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Suit OK'd against anti-gay group

Baltimore Sun, United States - Oct 16, 2007

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Briefly . . . NATION/WORLD

Philadelphia Daily News, PA - Oct 16, 2007

BALTIMORE - **Westboro Baptist**, a Topeka, Kan., fundamentalist **church** that pickets at soldiers' funerals, was cleared of defamation charges yesterday in a ...

Judge allows part of suit against Phelps church

Kansas.com, KS - Oct 15, 2007

BY MATTHEW DOLAN BALTIMORE - The first individual lawsuit brought against Fred Phelps' **Westboro Baptist Church** for its protests at military funeral ...

» Judge dismisses defamation claim against gay-bashing church «

Examiner.com - Oct 15, 2007

Ruling Monday in the case involving the fundamentalist **Westboro Baptist Church** of Topeka, Kan., US District Judge Richard Bennett said: "These comments — as ...

Judge dismisses claim against Westboro church

Topeka Capital Journal (subscription), KS - Oct 15, 2007

based **Westboro Baptist Church** has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the father of a fallen ...

Defamation claim waived against fundamentalist church

ABC2 News, MD - Oct 15, 2007

Snyder is still suing the **church** for invasion of privacy and emotional distress. On its Web site, members of **Westboro Baptist Church** in Topeka, Kansas, ...

Funeral-Prottesting Church Lawsuit Dismissed

WBAL, MD - Oct 15, 2007

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., **church** that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the ...

Church that pickets soldiers' funerals cleared of defamation

Baltimore Sun, United States - Oct 15, 2007

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Defamation claim dismissed against Westboro Baptist

Kansas.com, KS - Oct 15, 2007

Westboro Baptist, a Topeka, Kan., **church** that has inspired several state laws and a federal law about funeral protests, was sued for defamation by the ...

Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-prottesting church

Wilkes Barre Times-Leader, PA - Oct 15, 2007

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Defamation claim dismissed against funeral-prottesting church

phillyBurbs.com, PA - Oct 15, 2007

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Baltimore Examiner, MD - Oct 15, 2007

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Philadelphia Inquirer, PA - Oct 15, 2007

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Funeral Protest Lawsuit

CBS 21, PA - Oct 15, 2007

Albert Snyder of Springettsbury Township had sued the **Westboro Baptist Church** for defamation of his son, Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder. ...

Defamation Claim Waived Against Church

WJZ, MD - Oct 15, 2007

On its Web site, members of **Westboro Baptist Church** in Topeka, Kansas said that Albert Snyder taught his son adultery and idolatry because Albert Snyder is ...

Funeral Protesters Face Defamation Lawsuit

WJZ, MD - Oct 15, 2007

The **Westboro Baptist Church** in Topeka is being sued by Albert Snyder of Pennsylvania, father of a Marine who died last year. **Church** members protested at ...

Funeral Protesters Face Defamation Lawsuit

WBOC TV 16, MD - Oct 15, 2007

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Funeral protesters face defamation lawsuit

CBS 21, PA - Oct 15, 2007

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ATTACHMENT C
Sample Blogging on the
Lawsuit

Sample of blogging on the lawsuit (recent)

From <http://www.soldiersperspective.us/2007/10/16/westboro-setbacks/> on 10/16/07

Westboro Setbacks

October 16th, 2007 by Patriot

I hope the jury in the civil trial hands down a multimillion dollar verdict against the "church". From the [Baltimore Sun](#):

BY MATTHEW DOLAN

The Baltimore Sun


BALTIMORE - The first individual lawsuit brought against Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church for its protests at military funeral ceremonies will go to trial next week in Baltimore.

A father claims protesters from the Kansas-based anti-gay group destroyed his only chance to bury in peace the son he lost in Iraq. The picketers, who had carried signs with messages such as "Thank God for dead soldiers," countered that they were only trying to oppose gays in the military.


After the two sides presented legal arguments in a Baltimore courtroom Monday, a federal judge offered a split decision, ruling that a more limited lawsuit brought by Albert Snyder, the father of the slain Marine targeted by Phelps' church, can proceed to trial next week.

[Read the rest.](#)

4 Responses to "Westboro Setbacks"

1. *Isaac*  Says:
[October 16th, 2007 at 10:49 pm](#)

As a Christian, I am sorry that we have such people among us. I apologize for them. They ought to know that fighting for freedom is part of being a Christian and they are trying to tear the military down.

2. *sue*  Says:
[October 17th, 2007 at 1:01 am](#)

UGH!!! There are no words for Phelps and his ilk. I can only hope that the jury is as outraged as they morally should be when they deliberate. I'm not for those ridiculously large lawsuit awards, but, if some moron spilling her hot coffee on herself cause she's an idiot is worth \$84 million, in a perfect world this would be a multi trillion dollar lawsuit for the pain and suffering these cretins cause our military families. And I'm sure that the Snyder family doesn't even care what the award is, it can never bring Matthew back, but rather to finally send a message to slime like Phelps and make a point.

Let us pray for a very very sympathetic jury. The crime is most heinous.

3. *Tracy* Says:
October 17th, 2007 at 10:12 am

Thank you for putting "church" in quotes b/c they are no church and they don't represent the God I believe in, that's for sure.

4. *Tracy* Says:
October 17th, 2007 at 10:13 am

that should say "not a church". Wow, I need to proof-read.

From <http://godalone.wordpress.com/2007/10/16/the-phelps-circus-needs-to-go/> on 10/16/07

The infamous Westboro "Baptist" "Church" has been served with a defamation lawsuit.

Fred Phelps' Topeka-based "church," known for its outrageous and un-Biblical stance against a myriad of issues, is being sued for protesting at Army 1st Lieutenant Forrest P. Ewens' funeral.

Phelps-Roper (Fred's daughter/lawyer) stated, "Our job is to put this cup of his wrath and fury to the lips of this nation and make them drink it."

Where in the Bible did they get this brand new directive?

Our job as believers is to let God be God and focus on loving one another as Christ commanded. Nothing about picketing a soldier's funeral exhibits God's love; it only reeks of hypocrisy, hate and complete cluelessness to the very heart of God.

While most people are smart enough to know that Phelps' ragtag group is so completely off kilter, their behavior cannot but taint the secular world's impression of Christianity as a whole.

I don't really care what they believe, but I hope this lawsuit puts an end to their activism so they cannot continue to hurt people anymore.

Thanks to the Pondering Pastor for the heads up.

From <http://ponderingpastor.wordpress.com/2007/10/16/westboro-on-trial/> on 10/16/07

Westboro Baptist Church on Trial

Yesterday in Baltimore, legal arguments were presented before a judge in the civil case against Westboro Baptist Church. Here are the relevant points from the coverage by **The Baltimore Sun**.

1. U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett dismissed two of the five counts against the church and three of its leaders, saying in part that their statements, no matter how incendiary, amounted to protected speech.
2. At the civil trial set to begin Monday in federal court, the jury will be able to consider whether Westboro Baptist Church is liable for an intentional infliction of emotional distress based on the message from its members' signs.
3. The judge also will allow jurors to decide whether the Snyder family's expectation of privacy at Matthew Snyder's funeral was violated by the church members' protest outside St. John Roman Catholic Church in Westminster.

Reading between the lines, it sounds like the judge was pretty frustrated in the hearing.

- At times incensed over what he described as long-winded theological speeches given by a member of Westboro Baptist Church,
- Comments posted on the church's Web site that Snyder raised his son "for the devil" and taught his son how to "defy his Creator, to divorce and to commit adultery" did not defame the father because it was "not the kind of information that a reasonable person is going to assume was presented to be considered fact," Bennett said.
- Members of the jury, Bennett said, will need to decide whether the Westboro members were simply protesting a war or "celebrating the death of a soldier" in an extreme and outrageous way that entitles Snyder to compensation. "The signs did not say 'Get out of Iraq,'" the judge added.

Pondering Pastor

ATTACHMENT D
Demographics on WBAL,
Baltimore Sun & Baltimore
Examiner



AM 1090 Maryland's NEWS • TALK • SPORTS Station



Promote your business.
Increase your sales.

- [Click here for banner ad specifications](#)
- [Contact us for Internet advertising opportunities](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

- [What size banners do you accept?](#)
- [Can you provide me with Creative Services?](#)
- [Can I use my own advertising agency?](#)
- [Can I advertise on WBAL.com even if I'm not a radio advertiser?](#)
- [What does it cost to advertise on WBAL.com?](#)
- [Is demographic information available?](#)
- [How long is the minimum campaign?](#)

Q. Can you provide me with Creative Services?

A. We have advertisers who simply do not have the ability to create or understand how to maximize the capabilities of new media. WBAL.com offers many advertising packages that include different levels of web marketing and content presence on our site often within a day. Good creative content is a key component to ensuring your success. Rest easy, we've got your back.

Q. Can I use my own advertising agency?

A. Of course, and we often do. We would be happy to provide the various specifications to your agency and with most plans, they can change the content as many times as they wish during the length of a campaign.

Q. Can I advertise on WBAL.com even if I'm not a radio advertiser?

A. Absolutely. Our web presence is a terrific way to monitor the depth and volume of the WBAL regional marketplace. A solid radio campaign reinforced with content site rotations is a terrific mix, but we believe advertising on one is a sure thing over the other!

Q. What does it cost to advertise on WBAL.com?

A. We have a variety of banner plans based upon tailoring to your particular needs. Some are based upon frequency while others are based upon banner size. We also offer various different sponsorship packages for certain content areas on our site.

Q. Is demographic information available?

A. WBAL.com has as many as 6,000,000 page views in any given month. We can provide you with complete statistics when we meet, but suffice it to say that the same loyal WBAL radio listeners comprise the core of our WBAL.com audience.

Q. How long is the minimum campaign?

A. We believe 6 months of breaking news stories and various creative impressions is the optimum way to test our site.

E



AM 1090 Maryland's NEWS • TALK • SPORTS Station



**Promote your business.
Increase your sales.**

**● Contact us for Internet
advertising opportunities**

**Experience the branding power of WBAL.com's
4,000,000 pages visited each month**

According to the Arbitron ratings service, WBAL Radio is consistently one of Maryland's most listened-to radio stations. The station's news/talk format is a source of information and entertainment. WBAL Radio also employs the staff of any radio station in the state, providing in-depth reports on local issues. WBAL Radio is also the voice of the Baltimore Orioles.

Now you can promote your business to a diverse group of business professionals and consumers.

Advertising Success:

Understand the Basics:



A timeless collection of cast stone paving.

- Get more exposure for your business and its website
- Manage your campaign optimization tools
- Advertise specials, even sensitive promotions
- Build a strong client base
- Activate your campaign with or without your own website

**View Other
WBAL.com Banners** ●

ABOUT WBAL

WBAL Radio (1090 AM) is Maryland's dominant and most powerful radio station. Since 1925, generations of Marylanders have turned to WBAL Radio for news, weather, thought-provoking discussions and sports. As Maryland's only 50,000-watt AM station, WBAL's signal travels substantially further than any other station in the state and beyond.

The station's news/talk format is both a source of information and entertainment. WBAL Radio also employs the largest news staff of any radio station in the state, providing in-depth reports on local and regional issues. WBAL Radio is also the flagship radio station for Baltimore Ravens football.

According to the Arbitron ratings service, WBAL Radio is consistently one of Maryland's most listened-to radio stations.

WBAL Radio is owned by the Hearst Corporation and is managed by Hearst-Argyle Television, Inc. HTV owns and/or manages a large group of television stations and several radio stations, in geographically diverse U.S. markets. Hearst-Argyle trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "HTV."

Shari Elliker to Host Weeday Talkshow on WBAL Radio

Tuesday, September 04, 2007

After an extensive search, WBAL Radio announces it has selected Shari Elliker to be the permanent host of the station's late morning talk show. The Shari Elliker Show can be heard weekdays from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

WBAL Radio Earns Eleven Murrow Awards, Most for Any Radio or TV Station in the Country

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

WBAL Radio has earned eleven regional Edward R. Murrow awards from the Radio-Television News Directors Association. The eleven awards were the most for any station – radio or television – in the country. The awards recognize journalistic excellence in the mid-Atlantic region, including Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia and Delaware.

WBAL Radio News Wins Four National Headliner Awards

Thursday, March 08, 2007

WBAL Radio News, Maryland's most honored and respected team of journalists, has won four National Headliner Awards. The four awards, represent 22% of all the awards given to radio stations nationally.

Shari Elliker to Host Weeday Talkshow on WBAL Radio

Tuesday, September 04, 2007

After an extensive search, WBAL Radio announces it has selected Shari Elliker to be the permanent host of the station's late morning talk show. The Shari Elliker Show can be heard weekdays from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

"I am delighted to be a full-fledged member of the WBAL family", said Shari. "Having been associated with a number of WBAL's daily programs in past years, it has been like a second home for me. I look forward to continuing and building on the great friendship and loyalty of BAL listeners. I love to talk about the things that people are really discussing, or secretly thinking, but don't want to admit it."

According to WBAL Vice President/Station Manager Jeff Beauchamp, "Shari is a unique talent. She looks at the interesting things which happen in our lives, while bringing a terrific sense of humor to her approach. She entertains her audience while exploring topics that aren't often the standard fare of talk radio. Shari's show will be more like a feature or lifestyle section of a magazine or newspaper."

Shari has been working in radio, television and theater for over 15 years. Her television acting credits include: Homicide, America's Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries. Shari's voice can be heard on hundreds of commercials and narrations for local and national clients including Microsoft, Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and Lifetime Television.

Shari spent 7 years as a company member of various political satire troupes, including "Gross National Product", performing in dozens of stage and television productions in Washington, Baltimore and New York.

Shari has also worked as a television traffic reporter in Washington D.C. and has an extensive radio background, including co-hosting of a morning radio show. Shari has won two AIR Awards (Achievement in Radio).

WBAL Radio (AM 1090) is Baltimore's 50,000-watt news, talk and sports leader. For more information on The Shari Elliker Show and WBAL Radio go to wbal.com

www.baltimoresun.com/about/bal-about-baltsun,0,2763999.htmlstory

baltimoresun.com

About The Baltimore Sun

The Baltimore Sun Company's history is among the longest and most distinguished in American journalism.

Founded by Arunah Shepherdson Abell, a journeyman printer from Rhode Island who believed in the concept of a people's paper devoted to the news that most directly affected the lives of its readers, The Sun first appeared on Wednesday, May 17, 1837. That issue

- [Contact information](#)
- [Speakers' Bureau](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Executive bios](#)
- [Journalism prizes](#)
- [Community programs](#)
- [Current openings](#)

consisted of four tabloid-size pages, sold for a penny, and was in marked contrast to the six-cent "literary" dailies then in fashion all along the East Coast.

Since that time, The Sun has experienced dramatic growth and change that is not adequately reflected in a chronicle of the mere passage of years. Indeed, this growth can be measured in a variety of ways:

It can be measured in terms of the talented people whom The Sun has been able to attract and the growth in their numbers over the years. Only a handful of people were involved in publishing the first edition of The Sun in 1837; in fact, it is likely that Arunah Abell set type himself. Today, approximately 1,500 full- and part-time employees work for The Sun, making The Baltimore Sun Company not only one of Maryland's most prestigious employers, but also one of its largest.

The Company's growth also can be measured in terms of the brick and mortar and steel which have been used to construct the ever-larger facilities into which the Company has had to move. The first issue of The Sun was printed in a small, antiquated building at 21 Light Street. The large, modern plant at Calvert and Centre streets into which The Sun moved in 1950 is the fifth home of The Baltimore Sun Company.

Of the first four, the only one that had not been outgrown by the time it was replaced was the celebrated Sun Iron Building, a five-story structure built in 1851 with design and construction concepts that made it the forerunner of the contemporary skyscraper. Located at the corner of Baltimore and South streets, the Iron Building was destroyed in the historic fire of 1904 that razed 20 blocks of the downtown area. In 1906, the Company moved into a building it constructed at the intersection of Charles and Baltimore streets. It was from this building that The Baltimore Sun moved to its present location in 1950. In 1979, ground was broken for a new addition to the Calvert Street plant to house modern pressroom facilities. The new facility commenced operations in 1981. By 1985, this new facility was already nearing its capacity due to the rate of growth in advertising and circulation.



In April 1988, the Company purchased 60 acres of land at Port Covington as the site of Sun Park, a satellite printing and packaging facility, which houses state-of-the-art, computerized presses and packaging equipment and represents an investment of \$180 million. It is there that the paper is published today.

Most important, our development can be measured in terms of traditions, innovations, and accomplishments. From the very beginning, The Baltimore Sun Company has been devoted to Arunah Abell's belief in bringing its readers the news that matters most to them. The lead story in the first issue of The Sun dealt with actions of the Baltimore City Council, which affected the lives of the citizens but which not one of the other half-dozen papers in the city bothered to report.

Today, that same emphasis on what is taking place in Baltimore, its surrounding counties, and throughout Maryland makes The Sun's local news coverage among the most complete in the country.

Because of Baltimore's proximity to Washington, D.C., events in the nation's capital have always been regarded with particular interest; and on June 13, 1837, less than a month after it was founded, The Sun carried its first account by a Washington correspondent writing specifically for Sun readers. Through the years, that coverage was expanded and a formal Washington Bureau was established.

The same tradition of printing news affecting Baltimoreans was applied to the paper's coverage abroad, prompting it then - as now - to augment other reports with its own initiative. Thus, at the end of its first decade, The Sun was the first source to inform President Polk of the surrender of the city of Vera Cruz, assuring a United States victory in the Mexican War. In 1924, The Baltimore Sun Company opened its first overseas bureau in London. Today, the Company has multiple offices overseas, a network that brings distinguished foreign reporting directly to hometown readers.

Wherever Sun reporters may be, whatever story they may be covering, they are there to maintain a tradition of excellence and accuracy that was fostered by three generations of Abells and has been maintained since 1910, when control of the Company was acquired by a group of Baltimore businessmen including H. Crawford Black. His son, Van Lear, was named Chairman of the Board of Directors in 1914, a position held until his death in 1930.

Van Lear Black was succeeded by his brother, Harry C. Black. Upon Harry's death in 1956, he in turn was succeeded by his nephew - and Van Lear's son - Gary Black Sr. Upon his retirement in December, 1984, Gary Black Sr. was succeeded by William E. McGuirk Jr., who remained the Chairman of the Board of directors until October 1986, when the company was acquired by the Times Mirror Company, a nationwide information and media company. In June 2000, Times Mirror merged with Tribune Company, making The Sun a subsidiary of Tribune, a major-market, multimedia leader with operations in television and radio broadcasting, publishing and interactive media.

To further the tradition of getting the news early and correctly, The Baltimore Sun Company has a long history of innovation. The Company was a pioneer in the use of the telegraph, the high speed press, and the underwater cable. It used the development of the railroad to speed the news to Baltimore and distribute the papers carrying that news. Where railroads failed to reach, the Company set up a sort of "pony express" system. And it led the way in the kind of cooperative news reporting ventures that eventually gave rise to the wire services.

Nor has this pioneering spirit been confined to the past. In 1975, The Sun developed and installed the most sophisticated electronic system of writing and editing news in the country. This system utilized five computers and 76 video typewriter terminals. In 1976, The Company installed a similar electronic system in the classified advertising telephone room and completed the far-reaching conversion of its

production operations from "hot-metal" and linotype machines to "cold-type" and computers.

In 1978, the Company committed itself to the purchase of technically advanced off-set presses and mailroom equipment to further expand production capabilities beginning in 1981. By 1983, the classified and editorial systems installed in the 1970s had fallen behind the rapid advancement of computer technology, necessitating the purchase and installation of a state-of-the-art classified system in 1984 and a new, expanded editorial system in 1985. With the support of Times Mirror and now Tribune, the Company has continued to pursue projects that will keep The Sun on the leading edge of technology. And, in September 1996, the Company introduced its internet site, baltimoresun.com, which contains the full daily newspaper content as well as extensive original programming.

The Sun's satellite facility at Sun Park houses Goss Colorliner presses - highly sophisticated, computerized presses that offer unprecedented flexibility in color placement, paging and speed - and SLS-1000 automated inserting equipment in the packaging area to keep pace with the speed of the Colorliner process. In addition, robotics are employed to automate the process of delivering newsprint to the presses in the form of Automated Guided Vehicles - "intelligent" electronic forklifts that are programmed from a central control station.

The accomplishments of The Baltimore Sun Company through the years are reflected in the esteem with which it is held in the newspaper business, in its circulation and advertising acceptance, in its community leadership, in the Pulitzer prizes and numerous other awards it and its reporters have earned, and in the distinguished directory of bylines that have appeared in its pages: H.L. Mencken, John Haslup Adams, Frank Kent, Gerald Johnson, Hamilton Owens, Thomas O'Neill, Gerald Griffing, Mark Watson, Lee McCardell, Philip Potter, Price Day, Alice Steinbach, William Manchester, Jon Franklin and many, many more.

Over the years, The Baltimore Sun Company has put at the heart of its mission a responsibility and duty toward its advertisers and readers.

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Baltimore Sun:

Fast facts: August 2007 site traffic

Total Page views: 26.4 million*

Unique users: 2 million*

Gender

Male	50.5%
Female	49.5%

Age

18 to 34	30.4%
35 to 54	53.9%
55+	15.7%

County of Residence

Anne Arundel, MD	13%
Baltimore City, MD	24.6%
Baltimore, MD	35.4%
Carroll, MD	3.8%
Harford, MD	6.8%
Howard, MD	13.7%

Household Income

\$50,000 or more	81%
\$75,000 or more	61.2%
\$100,000 or more	38.2%

Education

Some College	51.4%
College Degree +	48.6%

Marital Status

Married	57%
Not Married	43%

Kids

Households with Kids	45.6%
None	54.4%

Note: Stats based on websites visited the past 7 days

Source: The 2007 Scarborough Report

CIRCULATION

Audience
Map
CIRCULATION

Editorial
Rates
Specifications

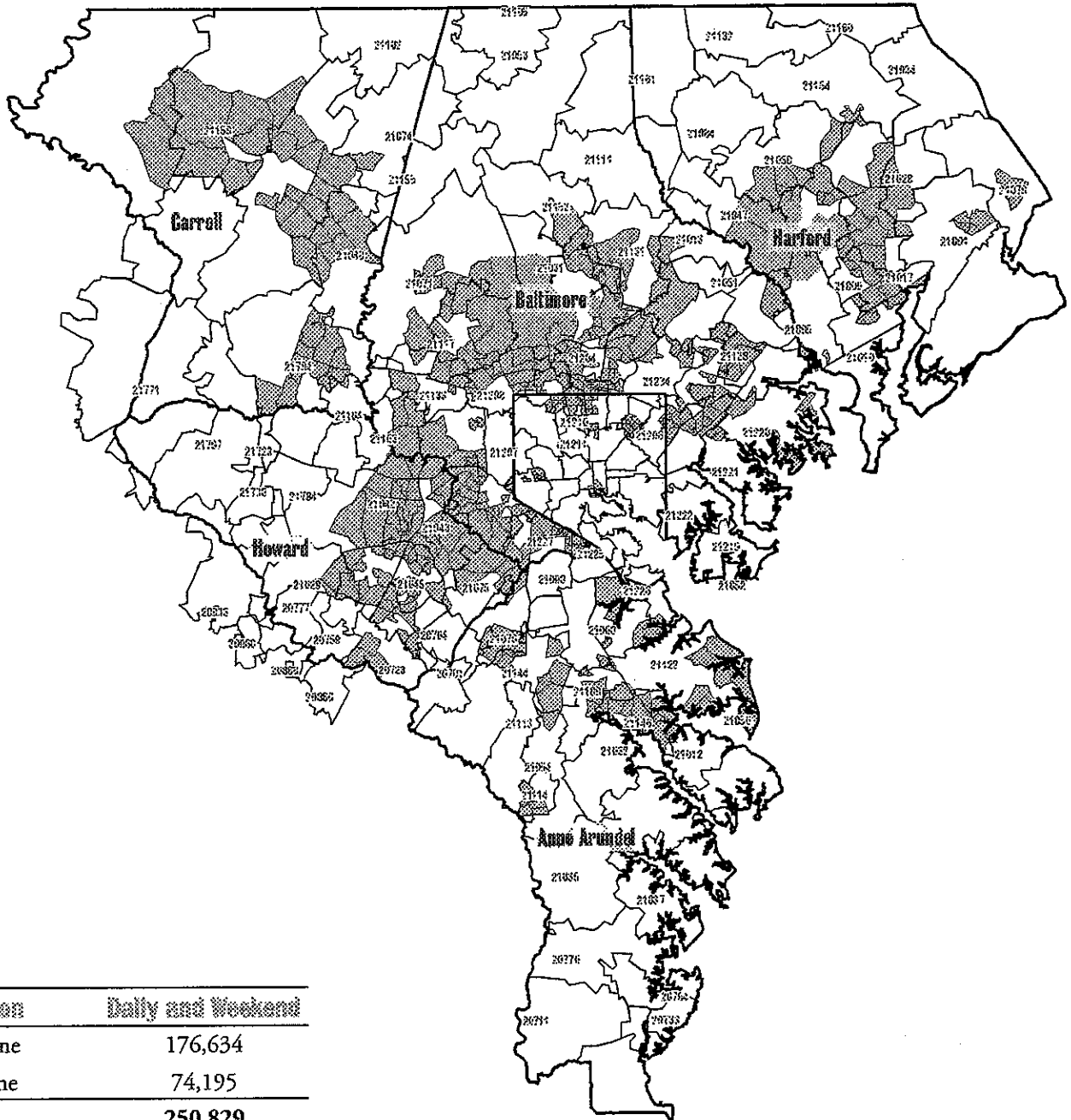
Baltimore Daily and Weekend Examiner Circulation by Zip Code

Zip Code	City	Daily (M-F) and Weekend (Sat)			
		HH	HD	SC	Total
Carroll County					
21048	Finksburg	4,008	1,835	-	1,835
21157	Westminster	13,686	4,637	200	4,837
21158	Westminster	7,208	3,341	200	3,541
21784	Stokesville	13,532	6,887	-	6,887
Carroll County Total		38,434	16,700	400	17,100
Harford County					
21001	Aberdeen	8,184	1,189	100	1,289
21009	Abingdon	10,060	9,540	300	4,840
21014	Bel Air	13,617	8,154	250	8,404
21015	Bel Air	10,302	4,941	300	5,241
21047	Fallston	3,878	2,551	25	2,576
21050	Forest Hill	6,542	2,893	50	2,943
21078	Havre De Grace	6,085	1,476	50	1,526
21085	Joppa	6,072	1,166	30	1,216
Harford County Total		64,740	26,912	1,125	28,037
Baltimore County					
21030	Cockeysville	11,220	3,374	200	3,574
21057	Glen Arm	1,547	1,765	-	1,765
21087	Kingsville	2,082	1,080	-	1,080
21093	Lutherville Timonium	15,297	9,382	200	9,582
21117	Owings Mills	19,213	9,152	200	9,352
21128	Perry Hall	3,538	1,383	-	1,383
21131	Phoenix	2,595	698	-	698
21133	Randallstown	11,286	545	250	795
21136	Reisterstown	13,017	3,283	200	3,483
21152	Sparks Glencoe	2,305	1,914	-	1,914
21163	Woodstock	2,082	1,268	-	1,268
21204	Towson	7,379	3,758	-	3,758
21208	Pikesville	14,194	6,641	250	6,891
21220	Middle River	14,709	2,011	150	2,161
21221	Essex	17,683	671	250	921
21227	Halethorpe	12,785	6,457	175	6,632
21228	Catonsville	18,644	12,569	225	12,794
21229	Catonsville	18,871	2,938	100	3,038
21234	Parkville	28,447	3,337	-	3,337
21236	Nottingham	18,426	3,783	-	3,783
21237	Rosedale	11,230	5,419	-	5,419
21239	Baltimore	12,002	819	75	894
21244	Windsor Mill	13,155	4,309	100	4,409
21286	Towson	8,864	4,752	125	4,877
Baltimore County Total		280,371	91,908	2,500	94,408
Baltimore City					
21202	Baltimore	7,784	-	5,000	5,000
21206	Baltimore	20,011	4,770	1,000	6,770
21209	Baltimore	10,675	3,940	1,000	4,940
21210	Baltimore	5,541	3,741	-	3,741
21212	Baltimore	13,805	5,793	-	5,793
21218	Baltimore	19,413	674	800	1,474
21224	Canton	19,738	3,836	300	4,136
21230	Federal Hill	13,442	5,035	200	5,235
Baltimore City Total		110,411	28,789	8,300	37,089
NORTH ZONE TOTAL		493,956	164,309	12,325	176,634
Howard County					
20723	Laurel	9,281	2,190	25	2,215
21029	Charlesville	2,346	663	100	763
21042	Ellicott City	13,053	10,252	125	10,377
21043	Ellicott City	13,863	6,783	200	6,983
21044	Columbia	17,302	9,138	300	9,438
21045	Columbia	14,243	8,936	400	9,336
21046	Columbia	5,999	2,945	200	3,145
21075	Elkridge	8,403	2,803	25	2,828
21104	Marriottsville	1,537	1,032	25	1,057
Howard County Total		86,629	44,748	1,400	46,148
Anne Arundel County					
20794	Jessup	3,013	1,248	46	1,294
21060	Glen Burnie	10,947	3,446	115	3,561
21061	Glen Burnie	19,393	685	24	709
21076	Hanover	3,296	3,074	115	3,189
21108	Millersville	6,748	2,294	102	2,396
21114	Crofton	8,591	3,323	102	3,425
21122	Pasadena	21,354	2,892	100	2,992
21144	Severna	11,306	22,978	115	3,093
21146	Severna Park	9,314	7,421	267	7,688
Anne Arundel County Total		93,962	27,061	986	28,047
SOUTH ZONE TOTAL		180,591	71,809	2,386	74,195
COMBINED TOTAL		674,547	236,118	14,711	250,829

Note: HH=Households, HD=Home Delivery, SC=Single Copy

Baltimore

Census Block Group Distribution -- Daily and Weekend



North zone includes Carroll, Harford, and Baltimore counties.
South zone includes Howard and Anne Arundel counties.