

Pamic
100 Years
of Service
1907-2007

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September-October, 2007

PULSE

newsletter

Pennsylvania Association of Mutual Insurance Companies

From the President



On August 22, the annual PAMIC Leadership Conference was held in Camp Hill. This is the annual meeting where the new PAMIC Chairman, Ken Shutts this year, communicates his vision for the coming year and meets with his chosen implementation team – the various committee chairs.

As you have often read in this space, volunteerism is key to an association such as PAMIC. An energized and committed membership drives both our government relations activity and our educational/networking opportunities. The major way PAMIC assures that the members' needs are accurately reflected in all its programs is through this volunteer input in the

form of committee work. PAMIC's committees are the nervous system of the association. PAMIC just couldn't function without them.

Having said that, we must all recognize that service on a committee requires a significant investment of time and effort. That certainly applies to each individual committee member. But it applies equally to the member companies that allow and even encourage their core personnel to do this important work. I think we should all thank everyone who has volunteered to serve on a committee and also every member company they represent.

Very shortly the annual membership manual will be issued. It lists all those who have volunteered to serve on their particular committees. Space here does not permit me to list them all but I do want to introduce you to your PAMIC committee chairs for 2007-2008.

Here they are:

- Financial Management – Karen Mashinski, Millers Mutual Group
- Underwriting/Loss Prevention – Bob Gage, Briar Creek Mutual
- Human Resources – Katherine Swigart, Mutual Benefit Group
- Convention – Kevin Filler, Frederick Mutual
- Government Affairs – Rob Dodds, Lititz Mutual
- Education – Matthew Schnader, Reamstown Mutual
- Claims – Adam Parsons, Penn National Insurance
- IS – Phil Nolt, Goodville Mutual, and John Snyder, Brethren Mutual
- Strategic Planning – Henry R. Gibbel, Lititz Mutual

When you see these people at a PAMIC event, please be sure to thank them for the work they are doing for PAMIC and for our member companies.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Elliott, J.D., CPCU, CLU
President

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ID STATEMENT

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Chairman's Corner

"Our Rich History – A Foundation for Our Future"



Just two short months ago at our annual convention, we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of PAMIC and acknowledged the many contributions made to our Association by those who came before us. In memoriam or in person, we thanked them for their dedication and foresight in making PAMIC a legacy for property/casualty insurers across the Commonwealth for years to come. PAMIC has shown remarkable longevity as we noted only about

one percent (1,219 of 110,000) of existing nationally registered trade associations have been in existence for one-hundred years or more. Looking back, it is clear that one element is owed due credit for PAMIC's success, and it is important and worthy enough to be the subject of this article. Member involvement is the driving force behind the strength and staying power of PAMIC, and member involvement in the various PAMIC committees is vital to that success. For that reason, I would like to feature some of PAMIC's important volunteer committees that serve a critical function for the organization and explain why member participation on those committees, as well as others, can only serve to ensure that our member companies get the most out of their membership in our organization.

The **Government Affairs Committee** is one of the most vital committees to PAMIC due to the powerful advocacy needs of its members. Most trade associations are organized to help formulate one unified voice for expressing the opinions of the industry and to wield influence on those legislative and regulatory issues that affect our industry. PAMIC is no exception. The importance of strong advocacy on behalf of the mutual insurance industry has become increasingly clear over the years as we struggle with more state and federal oversight, as well as continuous legal changes to our business and operating environments. The Government Affairs Committee closely monitors insurance, legislative, regulatory, and judicial developments and assesses their impact on PAMIC membership. The Committee assists in development and maintenance of government affairs communications programs with members and fosters and promotes direct member communication with legislators and regulators. The Committee also is instrumental in ensuring that PAMIC's Mutual Day on Capitol Hill is a success as members meet with various legislators to lobby our issues and build relationships.

This Committee meets quarterly in the Harrisburg area and holds monthly conference calls during times of high legislative activity. Committee members are encouraged to evaluate current "hot" issues and bring membership input on those issues back to the table. Information exchange and proactive involvement will allow companies to anticipate changes, as well as to be poised to influence change if it is unwelcome.

Please consider appointing a company representative to join the Government Affairs Committee. This Committee is vital to PAMIC's success as an advocate and source of information. Service on the Committee brings many benefits to the participating member's companies, as well as providing an invaluable service to the entire organization.

Several years ago, PAMIC began to enlarge its educational offerings in response to member inquiry and interest. The **Underwriting and Loss Prevention Committee** helps provide quality education seminars, roundtables and forums designed to enhance professional skills in underwriting, loss control and related fields. In addition, the Committee disseminates emerging underwriting/loss control techniques, issues and problems. The Committee members design and produce an annual seminar that has been a huge success drawing attendees from across the state. In coordination with the Education Committee, it offers year-round expertise on emerging issues. The Committee also continues to explore new ways to mentor members or create networks for members to examine U/LP issues, including non traditional areas relevant to risk retention group, captives, self-insured, etc. for possible educational events. Additionally, this Committee received valuable input from PAMIC members and functions as a resource for underwriting personnel on a variety of topical issues.

There are other extremely valuable committees within PAMIC that I will hallmark in later articles, but would encourage members to visit www.pamic.org/committees.htm for a full list and description of each committee.

In closing, it seems only appropriate to again thank those volunteers that have formerly served on these committees for their dedication and commitment to PAMIC. PAMIC and its members are grateful to you for sharing your expertise and your time. Companies that have encouraged these volunteer should also be thanked for allowing these employees to represent them well and for bringing a wealth of information back to serve their respective organization. While I realize we are all busy and necessarily focused on the task at hand, I can promise you that participation on these committees is very worthwhile, both professionally and personally. I hope you will consider joining us this year!

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Shutts
President and COO
Penn National Insurance

A Featured Article

“Pennsylvania Bad Faith & the Road Not Taken”

Pennsylvania Bad Faith & the Road Not Taken by Steven C. Elliott

[The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of PAMIC or its member companies. The PAMIC Government Affairs Committee and the PAMIC elected leadership have not yet formulated an association position on this issue. Copyright 2007 by Steven C. Elliott. An earlier version of this article appeared in the September 7 edition of Mealey's Insurance Bad Faith Report.]

On April 10, 2007, Senate Bill 745 was introduced and referred to the Pennsylvania Senate's Judiciary Committee. As introduced by Senator Stewart Greenleaf, that committee's chairman, the bill would amend 42 Pa.C.S. Section 8371, Pennsylvania's Bad Faith Act, by deleting the word “court” in the two places in which it occurs and inserting the words “trier of fact” in place of the deleted words. If the bill is enacted, the Bad Faith Act would read:

“Section 8371. Actions on insurance policies.

In an action arising under an insurance policy, if the trier of fact finds that the insurer has acted in bad faith toward the insured, the trier of fact may take all of the following actions:

Award interest on the amount of the claim from the date the claim was made by the insured in an amount equal to the prime rate of interest plus 3%.

Award punitive damages against the insurer.

Assess court costs and attorney fees against the insurer.”

Thus the bill makes the jury, in cases tried to a jury, the finder of the existence of bad faith and also the imposer of the appropriate statutory penalties. Currently, both tasks are performed by the judge.

If enacted this bill would represent another significant turning point in the development of Pennsylvania insurance bad faith law. In my judgment, it is a wrong turn.

Background

The first turn in the road of Pennsylvania bad faith jurisprudence was the recognition of heightened insurer responsibilities in defending the insured in claims covered by liability insurance policies. The obligation of “good faith” in providing a defense has its roots in the general contractual obligation of “honesty in fact in the conduct or transaction concerned,” as Section 1-201 (19) of the Uniform Commercial Code defines “good faith” in general commercial transactions. In the case of a insurer conducting settlement negotiations in a third party claim and defending its insured in a lawsuit, the potentially catastrophic consequences of unreasonably failing to resolve claims within policy limits was sufficient for most jurisdictions to recognize a “fiduciary” obligation on the insurer's part – something going beyond mere contractual honesty, but an actual obligation to subordinate the insurer's interest to the insured's in negotiation and trial of third party claims under a liability policy.

This development seems sensible. In Pennsylvania actions by the insured (or the insured's assignee, the prevailing plaintiff) in cases of excess verdicts were early recognized. The case law developed then defined the nature of the duty, breach of which is required to show insurer bad faith in third party cases, e.g. Gedeon v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 410 Pa. 55, 188 A.2d 320 (1962) (fiduciary duty of good faith and due care in defending).

The next turn in the road was the attempt to create a bad faith cause of action for allegedly unfair settlement practices in first party policies. First party property insurance disputes do not usually present as compelling a case for redress by a bad faith action. The nature of the contractual obligation is straightforward and does not present the obvious potential for conflict of interest that defending and settling liability claims may seem to pose. Nevertheless, the California courts, the source of most seminal cases in insurance bad faith law, took that turn and created such an independent tort. Gruenberg v. Aetna Ins. Co., 9 Cal. 3d 566, 510 P.2d 1032 (1973). Many plaintiff policyholders maintained that such an independent action was the only meaningful remedy to perceived industry abuse in first party claims. Gruenberg was the case principally relied on by the policyholder in D'Ambrosio v. Pennsylvania Nat'l Mut. Cas. Ins. Co. 494 Pa. 501, 431 A.2d 966 (1981). There the Pennsylvania Supreme Court found the Gruenberg rationale unpersuasive and placed considerable reliance on the adoption of the Unfair Insurance Practices Act, 40 Pa. C. S. Section 1171.1 et seq., which granted the Pennsylvania Insurance Department sweeping powers to police a comprehensive catalogue of unfair practices, including fifteen unfair claims practices. After setting out at length those fifteen prohibited practices, the Supreme Court concluded that “[t]here is no evidence to suggest, and we have no reason to believe, that the system of sanctions established under the Unfair Insurance Practices Act must be supplemented by a judicially created cause of action.” D'Ambrosio, 431 A.2d at 970. The court went on to state, regarding the grafting of punitive damages and damages for emotional distress as deterrents of bad faith, that “[a]n award of punitive damages unquestionably is a deterrent devise [citations omitted], one which is unnecessary in view of the present legislatively-created regulatory scheme. And in the vast majority of cases an award of emotional distress damages would accomplish no more than is already accomplished by the Unfair Insurance Practices Act.” Id. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court had been invited to follow the road to California, and had firmly declined to take that turn. Any new bad faith cause of action for first party policy claims would therefore have to be created by the legislature.

(Article continued on page 5)

Education Update

Register today at www.pamic.org!

Human Resources Symposium

*NOW with Continuing Education Credits for Attorneys, Accountants
and Human Resource Professionals!*

Harrisburg/Hershey Holiday Inn, Grantville, PA
Wednesday, October 17, 2007
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Work/Life Initiatives in a Changing Workforce

Kimberly Nash, SPHR, Alpha Benefits Group

Preparing for a Department of Labor Audit

Anthony Visco, Esq. , Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP

Global Work Force Study Results

Jonathan Willard, Towers Perrin

Executive Coaching

Steven M. Horner, CPCU, CLU, ARM, SPHR, Horner & Associates, LLC

Work Force Development

Eric A. Crouch, Ph.D. , Standing Stone Training Solutions

Pension Protection Act of 2005

Eric Pettis, PA Pension Planners

Salary Planning for 2008

Sally Williams, SPHR, Webber HR Solutions, LLC

Underwriting & Loss Prevention Seminar

Hershey Country Club
Thursday, November 8, 2007
8:50 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Financial Outlook for the Industry

Sean Mooney, PhD, CPCU, Guy Carpenter & Company, Inc.

Executive Panel Discussion

- ❖ Henry R. Gibbel, Lititz Mutual Insurance
- ❖ Robert Lyon, Millers Mutual Group
- ❖ Howard Stevens, Farmers Mutual Insurance Company
- ❖ Kevin Davidson, Munich Re America

Predictive Model Panel

- ❖ Mark Gorman, Tower Group
- ❖ Roosevelt Mosely, Pinnacle Actuarial Resources
- ❖ Chuck Romberger, Pennsylvania Insurance Department
- ❖ Gary Sparber, ChoicePoint Services

Catastrophe Modeling

Carl Henne, Munich Re America

Hot Topics for Underwriters

C. A. "Mike" Michaels, Jr., Lititz Mutual Insurance Company

A Featured Article *continued*

Legislative Activity

In response to the D'Ambrosio decision, the General Assembly did indeed move the state around that corner. Act 6 of 1990 gave Pennsylvania actions for bad faith on first party policies. 42 Pa.C.S. Section 8371. That statute currently provides that the court will determine the existence of bad faith and also, once bad faith is found, whether to impose interest at the prime rate plus 3%, punitive damages, costs, and attorney fees. The legislative history of the provision is virtually nonexistent. The Bad Faith Act was introduced as a floor amendment on third reading of the major motor vehicle insurance reform package that was Act 6. The amendment was adopted by voice vote and there was no debate had on its provisions. See Pa. Legislative Journal, Senate, June 28, 1989, page 918; Pa. Legislative Journal, Senate, June 29, 1989, page 966. The legislative journals disclose extensive floor debate on the motor vehicle provisions, but not on the provision for a bad faith cause of action. Although Act 6 of 1990 was primarily concerned with motor vehicle insurance, the bad faith provision is not limited to auto insurance, but is applicable to all insurance policies.

Right to Jury Trial

Pennsylvania courts have had to determine the meaning of the word “court” in the Bad Faith Act in the context of demands for jury determination of both the fact of bad faith and the proper statutory damages awarded. In 2003 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court considered the statutory meaning of the word and held that there is no right to a jury trial under Section 8371. Mishoe v. Erie Ins. Co., 573 Pa. 267, 824 A.2d 1153 (2003). And there the matter currently stands.

Pennsylvania and the Road Not Taken

Although the Supreme Court decided Mishoe by determining as a matter of statutory construction that the usual statutory meaning of the word “court” should be given effect, in my judgment there are solid policy and prudential reasons for supporting the decision. Amending the Bad Faith Act to permit jury trials takes Pennsylvania fully down that road to California that Pennsylvania has so far declined to travel. When considering the relative merits of trial to the court or to the jury, it is important to bear in mind that we are not arguing the merits of permitting bad faith actions on first party insurance policies. Most people in the insurance community probably maintain that the migration of the bad faith concept from its origins in third party policies, with the insurer’s right to control the insured’s defense, to first party property policy disputes was not necessary to police the behavior of what is after all a closely regulated industry. But once that turn has been made, the provision for bench trial of bad faith claims mitigates the turn’s dangers. Consider the following.

As previously discussed, the Pennsylvania Unfair Insurance Practices Act (40 Pa.C. S. Section 1171.1 et seq.) contains within its provisions fifteen specific claims practices, any one of which, if committed with sufficient frequency as to constitute a business practice, is a violation subjecting an offending company to regulatory action by the insurance commissioner. While Pennsylvania courts have consistently held that the statute does not in and of itself create a private cause of action for alleged violations of its provisions, lower courts have also held that violations of that act can be evidence of bad faith in a private action under Section 8371. Romano v. Nationwide Mutual Fire Ins. Co., 646 A.2d 1228 (Pa.Super. 1994); MGA Ins. Co. v. Bakos, 699 A.2d 751 (Pa.Super. 1997); MacFarland v. US Fidelity and Guar. Co., 818 F. Supp. 108 (E.D. Pa. 1993); Parasco v. Pacific Indemnity Co. 920 F.Supp. 647 (E.D. Pa. 1996). Even with the most carefully spelled out instructions, to expect a jury to distinguish between, on the one hand, a statutory instance that by its terms requires repeated acts to rise to the level of a violation and, on the other, the evidentiary value it may have in finding bad faith in a particular Section 8371 action is to demand far too much of lay jurors.

Assuming that distinction is fully in mind, the properly instructed jury would then have to consider that, even though it has found the existence of bad faith, that finding in and of itself does not require, although it may permit, an award of punitive damages. Holleck v. Erie Ins. Exch. 842 A.2d 409 (Pa.Super. 2004). It seems clear that once the jury has found bad faith, the inevitable punitive damages will follow. Certainly the court could police such awards through application of judgments n.o.v., remittitur, etc., but the most direct and efficient way to assure that punitive damages do not become abusive is to let the decision remain with the court to begin with, as it is today.

Finally, SB 745 assigns the jury responsibility for awarding of interest at the prime rate plus 3% and of costs and attorney fees. Unlike punitive damages, these elements of damages are traditionally the court’s prerogative, and rightly so. Particularly regarding attorney fees, a knowledgeable jurist is in the best position to decide the appropriateness of such an award and its amount based on the complexity of the case, the reasonable hours expended by counsel in light of that complexity, the reasonable hourly rate in view of counsel’s training and experience, the customary range of attorney compensation in comparable cases – all matters that an experienced trial judge now takes in stride but which must be utterly bewildering to a jury, for most of whose members this will be the only jury they will sit on in their lifetimes.

Given the lack of legislative history, we will never know what Section 8371 meant in the minds of each and every legislator voting for it in 1989. But we do know that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has authoritatively interpreted it and in so doing has placed the decision-making authority with the court – the most knowledgeable, experienced and unbiased fact finder in such admittedly complex yet often emotionally charged cases. Inevitably, jury determination of bad faith cases must result in more frequent settlements of more marginal claims, and for greater amounts than the facts would otherwise justify. That shift in settlement practice is simple prudence on the insurer’s part. But the result would surely be higher premiums and possibly fewer carriers from which to choose for all Pennsylvania policyholders.

Member News

Joshua L. Kirsch Joins MDWC&G

Philadelphia, PA – The regional defense litigation law firm **Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin** is pleased to announce that **Joshua L. Kirsch, Esq.**, has joined the firm's Professional Liability Department and will be working in the firm's Philadelphia office. He is admitted to practice in Pennsylvania and New York. Mr. Kirsch graduated *summa cum laude* and valedictorian of his class from Albany Law School of Union University in 2001, where he was a member of the Albany Law Review. He received his undergraduate degree from State University of New York at Albany *summa cum laude* in 1998.

Jacqueline H. Canter, Esq., was the course planner and speaker for a recent Pennsylvania Bar Institute seminar entitled *Communicating With Your Client*, which focused on developing and maintaining a healthy attorney-client relationship through effective communication. This seminar took place in Philadelphia on August 8th and in Pittsburgh on July 25th.

Scranton, PA – **James E. Pocius, Esq.**, of Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin, has been invited to participate in three presentations at the annual National Workers' Compensation and Disability Conference & Expo in Chicago from November 6 to 8, 2007. Mr. Pocius will participate in the conference's Opening Keynote, which is entitled *The Top Challenges: Experts Debate Key Issues in Workers' Compensation and Disability System*. On November 6, Mr. Pocius will also present a breakout seminar entitled *Settling the Catastrophic Workers' Compensation Claim*. On November 7, Mr. Pocius will present a seminar entitled *Medicare and Workers' Compensation: Where Are We Now?*

Lawrenceville, NJ-

ARI Insurance Companies is pleased to announce that

Patrick M. Cusack has joined ARI as Vice President of Claims.

Mr. Cusack will be a member of the Senior Management team at ARI and responsible for all Claims operations, service and staff.

New PAMIC Member

Greater New York Mutual Insurance Company's History is as Long as PAMIC's!

In the year 1907, 150 owners of tenement houses on the East Side of the City of New York formed a trade association to safeguard their interests which they named Greater New York Taxpayers Association. They were for the most part men of modest means, artisans, shopkeepers, small entrepreneurs with a scattering of professional people. The descendants of many of them are prominent today in the real estate industry in this city and nation.

In the ensuing years the Association dealt with many issues but one of the more difficult ones was the reluctance of the old-line insurance companies to provide public liability insurance for the properties of its members. It was a period of increasing immigration into the country, crowded tenements, a surge of litigation, low premiums and an inability on the part of the carriers to cope with the mounting claims. And there finally came a day when no insurance at all was available.

The Greater New York Taxpayers Association was active in pursuing alternatives. A delegation of members sought the aid of the then Superintendent of Insurance of the State in 1912. But government then was less benevolent and paternal than it is today. The delegation was told the Superintendent could do nothing.

In early 1914 a meeting was held in the Stuyvesant Casino and the Association decided to form a Protective and Defense Committee. The Committee obligated itself to defend any claims or law suits asserted against a building registered with it for a relatively small fee, at the beginning \$10, shortly thereafter raised to \$25. The first building was registered with the Committee on June 1, 1914. In effect this was the first policy issued by our Company, Greater New York Mutual Insurance Company, which over the years evolved from the Protective and Defense Committee of the Association.

Today more than 90 years after the issuance of its first policy, Greater New York Insurance Companies consist of **Greater New York Mutual Insurance Company**, Insurance Company of Greater New York and Strathmore Insurance Company, totaling more than a half billion dollars in assets. Greater New York Insurance Companies maintain an A+ (superior) rating from A.M. Best Company.

A.M. Best Company, the premier insurance rating agency, in its most recent report dealing with the operations of the Greater New York Group (2004) affirmed the Group's superior rating of A+. Best stated that this rating reflected the Group's superior capitalization, strong overall earnings and solid marketing position as a leading writer of commercial package business, Residential, light industrial and office building risks in urban areas of the Northeast; that these strengths are derived from the Group's low underwriting leverage, conservative investment and operating principles and solid underwriting performance of its leading line of business, commercial multi-peril. In commenting on the Group's financial performance, Best stated that the Group's return on revenue has outpaced its peers by a wide margin, reflecting its very conservative operating leverage and substantial investment income, since invested assets are predominately in intermediate government bonds. Best commented that the investment philosophy of the Management of the Greater New York Group has remained stable with assets largely invested in government bonds, with an average life of about five years; and that compared with its peers, the Group has historically achieved a higher yield on investments. Best pointed out also that the Greater New York Group maintained strong capitalization with a Best Capital Adequacy Ratio that compares very favorably to its commercial casualty peers and which comfortably supported its rating. The Group's BCAR ratio which deals with the strength of its balance sheet is so high, that in this respect it would qualify for an A++ rating.

Best also notes that the Greater New York Group maintains lower credit risk, because of its higher premium retention rating and the use of high quality reinsurer's; that the Company's capital is only moderately exposed to a shock loss from severe weather problems. Favorable comment is also made by Best on the constant growth in policyholders' surplus.

The journey of the first 90 plus years has been long and arduous but it has proven to be enormously rewarding and successful.

More Member News

A Hearty Welcome to our newest Associate Member: Subrogation Recovery Services.

Subrogation Recovery Service's focus is to optimize client recoveries through their knowledge, experience and developed skills. They are claims people; customer service oriented and most importantly, Professional Recovery Specialists. Subrogation can be an important source of revenue for a company. Studies have shown that multi-tasking claim handlers devote only a small portion of their working time to recovery efforts. Subrogation Recovery Services devotes most of their time to recoveries thus allowing claim handlers to concentrate on claim payout and investigation.

Lisa Fuoco is our PAMIC contact and she may be reached at: (610) 621-4037 or Lisa@subroserv.com.



Congratulations to the following PAMIC MEMBERS:

Deborah A. Betten, CPCU, AIC of **Harford Mutual** won the Distinguished Graduate Award in the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) Program.

George Conrad of the **Mutual Benefit Group** won the Distinguished Graduate Award in the Association in Regulation and Compliance (ARC) Program.

Keith M. Lippmann, ARe and **Jacob D. Porter**, CPCU, AMIM, ARe, both of **Guy Carpenter**, won awards for Academic Excellence in the Marine Insurance Management (AMIM) Program.
Porter received the Distinguished Graduate Award.

Danielle E. Swanger of the **Mutual Benefit Group** won an award for Academic Excellence in the ARC Program .

2007-2008

Upcoming PAMIC EVENTS

Financial Management Seminar

September 25, 2007

Four Points Sheraton
New Cumberland, PA

Human Resources Symposium

October 17, 2007

Holiday Inn
Grantville, PA

Underwriting & Loss Prevention Seminar

November 8, 2007

Hershey Country Club
Hershey, PA

Mutual Insurance Day

February 4 & 5, 2008

The Capitol Complex
Harrisburg, PA

Annual Spring Conference

March 13, 2008

Nittany Lion Inn
State College, PA

**SAVE THE DATE
PAMIC/VAMIC CONVENTION
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort
August 3-5, 2008**



PAMIC 1907-2007

As part of our 100 year celebration, PAMIC will highlight a different time period of our history in each PULSE issue of 2007. The Fifth Period in PAMIC History encompasses the years 1989– 2006. This period in American history would have to be entitled “the Digital Age”. (My husband’s cousin was among the early computer geeks who worked with a very young, shy, Bill Gates. She told him “it was important to stand up straight and look people right in the eye”. He did and helped revolutionize our world both personally and professionally.) Now everything in our lives it seems, has become computerized, bar-coded and compacted. If you are not certain this is true check this out.

The following is a list of signs that technology has taken over your life:

- (1). Your company’s letterhead is more cluttered than Warren Beatty’s address book. It now also has e-mail addresses, a website, direct telephone lines, “800” numbers, fax numbers, cell numbers and covers half the letterhead.
- (2). You haven’t been able to sit through a movie without some device on your body beeping or buzzing.
- (3). You rotate your screen saver more frequently than your automobile tires.
- (4). You understand all the jokes in this message. If so, my friend, technology has indeed taken over your life. For your own good, go lie under a tree and write a haiku. And don’t use a laptop!