

## County Clerk Loretta Bowman Seeks Sixth Term

Loretta Bowman, the experienced candidate for County Clerk, brought Clark County's hub office into the 21st century 15 years ago when she began adding modern office technology and knowhow to the busiest single office in the state, and today she is seeking a sixth term to continue making these kinds of improvements that will save taxpayer money.

The Clerk's Office is no longer the simple repository for the sleepy history of a sleepy little town. It is the nerve center of a major metropolitan area comparable to the hub of any great corporation and it takes executive knowhow as well as superior office skills to manage it, and do the many varied jobs the Clerk is mandated by state law to do.

Bowman, who began her career as chief deputy to another long time county clerk, began in 1978 to add modern technology including a computerized tracking system that now handles 30,700 court cases a year. Under her executive leadership the Clerk's Office has grown to meet the demands of 60,000 couples who want a marriage license each year, 7500 child support payments totaling in excess of \$7 million a year, and another 9000 couples a year who want to be married by a civil marriage commissioner.

Bowman says she believes the voters will want to retain the experience she brings to the office as chief of what many believe is the engine of all county government.

Under her leadership deputy clerks fan out daily across the county to serve as record keepers and transcribers of thousands of meetings each year, ranging from sessions of the Board of County Commissioners, to committee and staff sessions where minutes must be meticulously kept. The office now has a microfilm system that is considered state of the art. It not only preserves the record but provides private citizens, attorneys and other professionals access to all public documents in minutes.

Clerks transcribe the minutes of every publicly noted meeting, as well as thousands of committee and staff working sessions each year throughout the county departments. They also publish and post many hundreds of meeting notices each year in conformance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law, and provide detailed minutes, summaries, and decisions on paper for any citizen to review, or copy them for a fee for any researcher requiring them.

Walk into the Clerk's Office in the County Courthouse any day at 4:30 when the time for last minute filing of documents draws near and you may think you have inadvertently discovered the ticket office for a grand sports event like the Super Bowl. Somehow, with good cheer, the highly trained staff manages to serve nearly everybody's needs before the doors are locked for the day.

"I believe my knowledge of that system and the many varied tasks of the Clerk's Office can save previous taxpayer dollars that would be lost if this office did not function smoothly to furnish the services so many of our residents depend upon," Bowman says. "Sometimes the average person is amazed to find out just how much more we do than just maintain court records."

Just maintaining court records, of course, is a challenge in a county that is one of the fastest growing in the nation. With population and economic growth, unfortunately, comes growth in the number of court cases, civil, criminal probate, guardianship, juvenile.

Under Bowman's executive leadership the Clerk's Office added an automated case tracking system in 1978, and she has been working to complete and enhance the existing system. To give you an idea of how much business the Clerk's Office handles in just this one area, the fees handled by the Clerk's Office in connection with court cases filed each year is in excess of \$4.8 million each year.

One of the most important tasks of the Clerk's Office is to collect and disburse child support

payments. The program is federally mandated. That means failure to do so in a manner that meets federal standards could result in penalties or loss of the return of local tax dollars from the federal government.

But more importantly, failure to do an adequate job, says Bowman, would reflect back to those other areas of government where dealing with the results of nonparental support of children is the primary job. Just think how many more tax dollars would be spent trying to deal with juvenile crime, family subsistence, family breakup, and all the other resulting social tragedy that would come without a strong, adequate system of collection of child support, Bowman says. She is striving to improve upon it with the state of the art microfilming and computer tracking system.

Currently the office processes 7500 checks per month, and handles in excess of \$7 million per year in child support payments.

The County Clerk's Office may appear to deal only in numbers, certificates and cold documents, but it is really in the people business, as much, if not more than many other local government entities.

## Preliminary Thoughts On The Peres-Hassan Meeting

By Phil Baum and Raphael Danziger

*(Editor's note: Phil Baum is associate executive director and Raphael Danziger is a policy analyst for the American Jewish Congress.)*

Although it is far too early to assess the full significance of the meeting in Morocco between Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Morocco's King Hassan, after consultation with leading authorities we are prepared to venture the following comments:

1. The most striking aspect of this initiative, thus far, is the absence of vehement, concerted Arab denunciation or threat of reprisal. President Mubarak of Egypt has warmly praised Hassan, King Hussein of Jordan and other conservative Arab rulers remain non-committal, and except for Syria's breakoff of diplomatic ties with Morocco, the radical Arab states have thus far contented themselves with pro-forma denunciations despite Syria's call to follow its example.

For one thing, he could not risk the loss of Arab support for Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara which has been the centerpiece of his policy since the mid-1970s and which is critically important to the domestic stability of his regime.

If, as now seems possible, Hassan gets away with this move without major Arab retribution, this fact, added to Hussein's recent unchallenged expulsion and repudiation of the PLO and the surprising willingness of such noted Palestinian figures as Gaza's former mayor A-Shawwa publicly to endorse Hussein's move, encourages the hope that significant Arab and Palestinian elements are becoming increasingly emboldened. It may be that the most important inference to be drawn from this whole Moroccan episode is that the time is approaching when these Arab factors will be able to free themselves from the constraints and discipline imposed by the PLO. It would be wrong to make too much of these slender indications; on the other hand, they should not be summarily dismissed.

2. Whereas Prime Minister Peres' motives for going to Morocco seem clear enough -- to implement his oft-repeated desire to promote the peace process and, incidentally, to repair the damage done to his image by recent domestic scandals -- Hassan's reasons for meeting with Peres at this time are more obscure. Surely Morocco's relations with the United States, which have been strained since its conclusion of a union treaty with Qaddafi's Libya in 1984, were an important factor in the King's decision. President Reagan has requested Congress to increase U.S. aid to Morocco in FY 1987 to \$154 million from \$138 million in FY 1986, and Hassan must have been aware that in these days of Gramm-Rudman, a positive gesture on his part

Want to get married? The Clerk's Office has the job of issuing licenses in this 24-hour town out of a 24-hour a day office that is open on weekends and holidays. For 60,000 couples a year the first day of the rest of their lives begins in the Clark County Nevada Clerk's Office and its marriage bureau when they obtain a marriage license.

The Clerk also maintains an office of Civil Marriage where commissioners work the same hours as the license bureau, and perform weddings. In 1985 they performed 9000 ceremonies.

In addition the Clerk's Office has the legal duty to qualify ministers to perform weddings in accordance with the Nevada State statutes.

The Clerk's Office is about people serving people, about a growing mountain of information that can keep government running smoothly, or derail the best made plans of an attorney, a defendant or plaintiff, a mother and child, or two people trying to make it to the church on time. It takes leadership, executive ability, and proven knowledge of the modern automated office to bring all that off with quiet, friendly efficiency. Loretta Bowman has been doing it for 20 years.

was essential even to preserve the current level of U.S. aid, let alone induce Congress to accede to the President's request for an increase. Given the sad shape of Morocco's economy and its massive foreign debt of \$14 billion, U.S. aid has to be a major consideration in Morocco's foreign policy.

Still, at other times, this would have seemed an extravagantly risky maneuver to adopt, in the mere hope it would stimulate enhanced American financial support. It would seem reasonable to assume, therefore, that other considerations must have been at work as well. Thus, the timing of the meeting, otherwise puzzling, doubtless was related to the impending rotation of the prime ministership in Israel, an event which has caused consternation among conservative Arab leaders who view a Likud-led government as far less amenable to an agreement on the West Bank than is the current Labor-led government.

And finally, ever since last February's occupation of Iraq's southern tip by Iranian troops, Arab leaders have come to view Iranian fundamentalist expansion into the Arab world as the gravest threat to their survival, leading some of them to the conclusion that the Arab-Israeli conflict must be put aside, at least temporarily, so that they will be able to focus their attention and energies on the Iranian threat. King Hassan, in particular, has been deeply frustrated by the collapse of the Hussein initiative last February and has apparently felt a need to break the deadlock. His failure to convene an Arab summit to deal with the issue seems to have led him to the conclusion that he would have to go it alone.

3. The open question remains whether Hassan's move is the prelude to genuine progress in the peace process between Israel and Jordan. It is improbable that Hassan would have gone through the trouble of a meeting with Peres for the mere sake of a symbolic move with no prospect of a substantive follow-up. King Hussein has not yet mustered sufficient support in the West Bank to risk a unilateral move toward Israel which may account for his circumspect response to the Peres-Hassan meeting. Nonetheless, since the meeting is clearly to his advantage in that it sets the precedent of an Arab League member negotiating directly with Israel with no PLO participation, Hussein may well have encouraged Hassan to embark upon this initiative. Certainly the meeting in Morocco has made Hussein's life a lot easier and probably a lot safer.

4. No one believes that this meeting will lead directly to a West Bank settlement and a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. But the very fact of an open meeting between an Israeli prime minister and a major Arab leader (Hassan, as we have said, was chairman of the Arab League, and Morocco, with nearly 25 million inhabitants, is the most populous Arab country after Egypt) is an important milestone in Israel's quest to break out of its regional isolation.