

# Cries Of "Pro-German" Interrupted A Staid County Teachers' Institute

Tim McCarthy Recounts The Story And Its Sequel Of World War Days

One of the outstanding events in Luzerne County annals of education is the County Teachers' Institute, conducted at the time this article deals with, by the late Superintendent Frank P. Hopper. It was one of the largest gatherings and the dynamic force of Prof. Hopper made it the mecca for not only the 1800 teachers, but legions of their friends.

Frank P. Hopper had been at the helm for nearly a score of years, establishing an excellent name for the calibre of his speakers, and for the variety of the evening entertainments.

Many outside of the realm, which would include school directors, press men and politicians, were anxious to have a contact with Prof. Hopper and sought a means of getting a few "Annie Oakleys" for admission to one or more of the sessions which jammed Irem Temple. Mr. Hopper had the happy faculty of remembering his friends. Little wonder then, that he was never defeated for reelection to the lucrative post in the County, the third largest in the State.

This was a period of war while today we are engaged in a period "short of war". It is meet to recall a particular institute session in the Fall of 1917 when the country was actually in the throes of the thrust and everybody's actions and speech were watched with scrutiny, to determine how good a patriot you or I could be.

After noon-day luncheon our group wended its way to the Temple for the afternoon discourse of mid-week. The Hopper Institute was in full bloom with favorable comment from the press as to the prominence and ability of the visiting speakers.

Nearly all of the speakers were imported from some state or section within the Union and had some kind of National or at least sectional fame, skilled in his particular branch of learning, whether it be geography, economics, civics, travel, etc.

One of the invited guests, we shall call him Prof. Alexander Halleck had just begun his lecture on Civil Government after a suitable introduction by Prof. Hopper, who was quite pleased with the manner in which his annual program was being received; at least it was on par with any others in his prolific career.

Prof. Halleck described the vast amount of money that was being expended on armaments for men to "kill each other". He cited that we had over two million men under arms at the time, with more on the way in the process of training, and that was correct. Then he proceeded to delve into the reasons for our entry into the war and the disintegration of civilization and questioned the wisdom of all of the turmoil. All the while the teachers were absorbing the information with complacency and of course there was the usual quota who did not pay much attention to what any speaker was trying to portray to the audience. That little group fall in our category of those who were there "because they were there".

In the rear of the building stood a stocky built, intelligent appearing man, later proven to be a physician and also a County school director, Dr. Wilbur J. Davis, middle age, with prominent handle-bar mustache and a careful listener to what was being said. He was not a city man but he was not a "country doctor" either, in the sense that he had no interest in County and National affairs.

Dr. Davis was a family man, with a daughter at the institute at that time and vitally interested in what his country was doing. He was drinking in all of the stuff disseminated by Prof. Halleck and turning it over in his mind.

Finally, and quick as a flash, Dr. Davis concluded that he had withstood the attacks or biting criticism against our foreign, or was it our domestic policy, long enough and entered the situation by a terse interruption of the speech, from the rear of the hall.

He challenged the speaker to prove his assertions and shouted, "I am inclined to believe you are a Propagandist and a Pro-German judging by your remarks".

Everyone stood aghast, in awe, at the audacity of anybody daring to interrupt a Hopper Institute speaker. "The very idea," said one school marm. "Who is that man?" asked another as Prof. Hopper and likewise Prof. Halleck grew red in the face. As far as known, it was the first incident of its kind in the reign of Prof. Hopper and he took charge of the debacle as best he could. The Superintendent had hired the speaker but he himself was also hired by the vote of the inquisitor, Dr. Davis, which placed Mr. Hopper in a rather neutral but delicate situation.

"This is no soap box affair," yelled an irate old timer among the teachers.

These are samples of the cross questioning that went on from the first blast of Dr. Davis. He was not a heckler, he was too intelligent for that. Meanwhile Prof. Halleck softened his tempo and began to answer Dr. Davis who by now was infuriated, with the applause being "with" his adversary. Of course few of the teaching body were aware that the interrogator was a physician and also a school director. Prof. Hopper knew all school directors in his sphere and some say he could name by sight each and every school director on his roster.

The set-to continued with Prof. Hopper exercising due discretion in enabling the two men to understand each other. Distance separated them, one on the huge platform and one in the rear of the hall.

The intervention of Prof. Hopper served to allay some of the bitterness engendered in the questioning and answering. Prof. Halleck endeavored to substantiate his position by volunteering to offer for examination his record of patriotism as compared with that of Dr. Davis. Such a boast naturally won some favor from the audience.

The teachers obviously were not going to turn their back on a Hopper speaker, no matter who he might be. This patriotic challenge was to be kind of a vindication for the purport of his remarks and again he was applauded. A daughter of Dr. Davis was in the audience, a beginning teacher. She fainted at the bitter argumentation going on but was quickly revived. Perhaps she was more embarrassed or mortified than ill.

A few people felt for Dr. Davis, but good order had now been restored and the speaker continued with the remainder of his speech.

Next morning the Wilkes-Barre Record reported the affair and said at the conclusion that Dr. Davis contacted Prof. Halleck in the evening to apologize for his interruption. Relatives, in fact the daughter of Dr. Davis, who is now deceased, but the children are still living, refute this phase of the Record's report, claiming their father did not call up for any apology.

Now we come to a portion of the embroglio that the public of Luzerne county never heard about.

It was revealed that two men of unknown identity approached Dr. Davis after the incident in the Temple and encouraged him in the stand he had taken. It was only made known lately that such a thing happened. These men said at the time, "We have been following that fellow around the circuit waiting for the proper time to bring him in". These supposedly unknown men later proved to be Secret Service agents or F. B. I. as they are now called. They had been apprised of the Pro-German slant given by Dr. Halleck to his speeches just as Dr. Davis construed them to be.

That ended the Wilkes-Barre flare up, but more follows.

Three months afterwards, while we were still at war the F. B. I. or Secret Service men made a visit to the Dr. Davis home in Newport and informed the family of their presence and identity. Also of their findings. They said that finally in a public statement Dr. Alexander Halleck went off on a tangent, stuck his chin out too far in his preparedness criticism and his arrest was caused, and later a prison sentence. He had made one too many false or inopportune statements about the Government's war policy.

Some years later Dr. Davis' friends realized that he was on the right track when he livened up the County Institute by his challenge to Prof. Halleck. His concern for his country was uppermost in his mind and he figured that the speaker was inculcating in the minds of the youth of our country a doctrine inimical to the general welfare.

In the light of present day affairs, it would be interesting to ascertain how far public speakers may go in their public utterances before

## 5 Bodies Found—11-Year-Old Mystery Solved



On Dec. 12, 1930, David Lee, his wife and three children were reported missing. A nation-wide search for the family was instituted, but to no avail, until workmen drained a pond near Springfield, Mass., and found the answer to the eleven-year-old mystery. Submerged in the pond was found a battered automobile containing the skeletons of the missing family. Police are shown retrieving the car.

## Arnold Praises Convention Aims

Local Post Will Send Delegation To Altoona

National defense and the critical condition of international affairs will hold a vital place on the convention agenda and undoubtedly will make the Twenty-third Annual Convention of the Pennsylvania Department, American Legion, to be held in Altoona, August 14, 15, and 16, one of the most important meetings ever held by the State Legion, said Commander H. B. Arnold of Post Daddow Isaacs.

Five resolutions aimed at sabotage and anti-American activities have been proposed by the Executive Committee, said Commander Arnold.

He said that, according to word received from Commander William Cole of Charles R. Rowan Post, No. 228, Convention Host, Altoona is making arrangements to entertain one of the largest crowds in the history of that convention city and world-famous railroad center.

With Americanism and the Legion's own long-supported National Defense Program dominant in the Nation, interest in the Altoona Convention is expected to be so keen this year that plans are being made and rapidly being pushed toward completion to provide accommodation far in excess of 50,000 Legionnaires at the Convention, Commander Arnold said.

Commander Cole extended an invitation to members of Daddow Isaacs Post to attend the convention sessions at Altoona, and gave assurance that adequate provision will be made to take care of all who attend.

"Altoona's Jaffa Mosque, where some of the convention sessions will be held, has one of the largest auditoriums in the State," said Altoona Commander in his communication to the Local Post, "and everything is being planned on a grand scale for what Altoona expects to be the most enthusiastic and active convention on record in that department."

"It is certain that there is much to be accomplished, and it is equally

they will be labeled with the stigma of Pro-German, such as Dr. Davis referred to Prof. Halleck at the County Institute which resulted in a few tense moments for well nigh two thousand people.

Editor's Note. Dr. Davis, who died 15 years ago, was the father-in-law of Fred Pritchard, Luzerne druggist, and was also a father-in-law of the late County Controller Leonard Morgan.

certain that, along with the Convention work to be done, the Altoona Post and the State Committee have planned a program that will suit every Legionnaire and make the 1941 State Legion Convention at Altoona as momentous as this year may prove to be in national as well as Legion history."

Commander Arnold said indications point to a large delegation attending from Back Mountain Region.

## Noxen Tabernacle

Evangelistic meetings will be held in the Tabernacle at Noxen Tuesday, May 6, through Sunday, May 11, at 7:45 every evening. The Lancaster brothers will conduct the service. The public is cordially invited.

## Lead Tournament

Mrs. Nicholas Cave of Huntsville Road and her partner, Cal McHose are leading in the Sandy Beach Bridge Tournament being conducted at the lake.

## Huntsville Chosen For Tri-County Convention

Tri-County Missionary Convention of the Disciples of Christ will be held Friday, May 9, in the Huntsville Christian Church. Columbia, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties will be represented. Huntsville Ladies' Aid Society will serve the noon luncheon. Afternoon session will be in charge of Mrs. David Reese of Kingston.

## Mrs. Murray Dies At Parents' Home

Young Matron Had Been Ill 5 Months

Mrs. Edith Meyers Murray, 35, wife of Roswell T. Murray of Pioneer avenue, Dallas, died Friday night at 6 at the home of her parents, Dr. and Mrs. W. E. Meyers, Tilbury Terrace, West Nanticoke, following a five month's illness of a heart ailment. Until December, when she was stricken seriously ill, Mr. and Mrs. Murray made their home at Lehman Heights and prior to that time lived for two years in the William's apartments at Fernbrook.

Mrs. Murray was born at Stairville, Salem Township, and was educated in the schools at Nanticoke. After graduation she assisted her father in his dental office for a number of years. She was a young woman of gracious personality and was well known throughout Nanticoke where during young womanhood she was active in the First Presbyterian church and Young Woman's Missionary Society. Although not physically strong, she had a deep appreciation of nature and the out-of-doors and was an ardent lover of birds.

She was married March 14, 1936 and for a time lived at Tilbury Terrace, West Nanticoke, later moving to Dallas. Besides her parents, she leaves three sisters, Mrs. Lloyd Colvin, New York City; Mrs. William Walker, Plains; and Mrs. Albert Davis, Tilbury Terrace.

Funeral services were conducted by Rev. Joseph G. Kane, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Nanticoke, from the home of her parents. Interment was in the Stairville Cemetery. Profusion of floral tributes and the huge number of friends who attended the services spoke highly of the esteem in which the young woman was held both in her home and adopted community. Pall bearers were: Clyde Garrison, Grant Barral, Harry Myers, cousins of the deceased, and George Turn, Ray W. Turner and Oliver Williams.

## Lehman Will Have All Steel Busses

Seven Are Awarded Three-Year Contracts

First school district back of the mountain to require all-steel-bodied busses for the transportation of pupils under the provisions of a recent act of the Pennsylvania Legislature is Lehman Township.

When school opens next fall seven new busses will be in service. Five of them will be of 48-passenger capacity and two will be 60-passenger capacity. Orders for the busses have all been placed by the drivers who were recently awarded three-year contracts by the Board of Directors at its April 8th meeting. Included among them are White, International, Chevrolet and Dodge makes.

Those awarded transportation contracts are: Elmer Hoover, Lansford Sutton, Carl Brandon, Albert Ide, Loren Keller, Russell Ide and Jack Graham. Graham and Russell Ide will have routes requiring 60-passenger busses. Loren Keller and Albert Ide are new contractors as the result of the recent competitive bidding replacing Raymond Seafoss, Oliver Whitesell and R. L. Dingle. The latter two did not bid.

## MEEKER

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Brown of Thompson, Pa. and Miss Thelma Summers of Wilkes-Barre spent the week end with Stephen Wolfe on their way back from Florida.

Mrs. Edith King and Kenneth and granddaughter, Virginia, called on friends at Larksville Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Franklin and daughter, Mrs. William Thomas and children of Wilkes-Barre spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Charles VanBuskirk.

Mr. and Mrs. James Davenport entertained for a few days this week Mrs. Clara Thompson and daughter, Helen of Highland, N. Y.

# "ATTEN-SHUN!"



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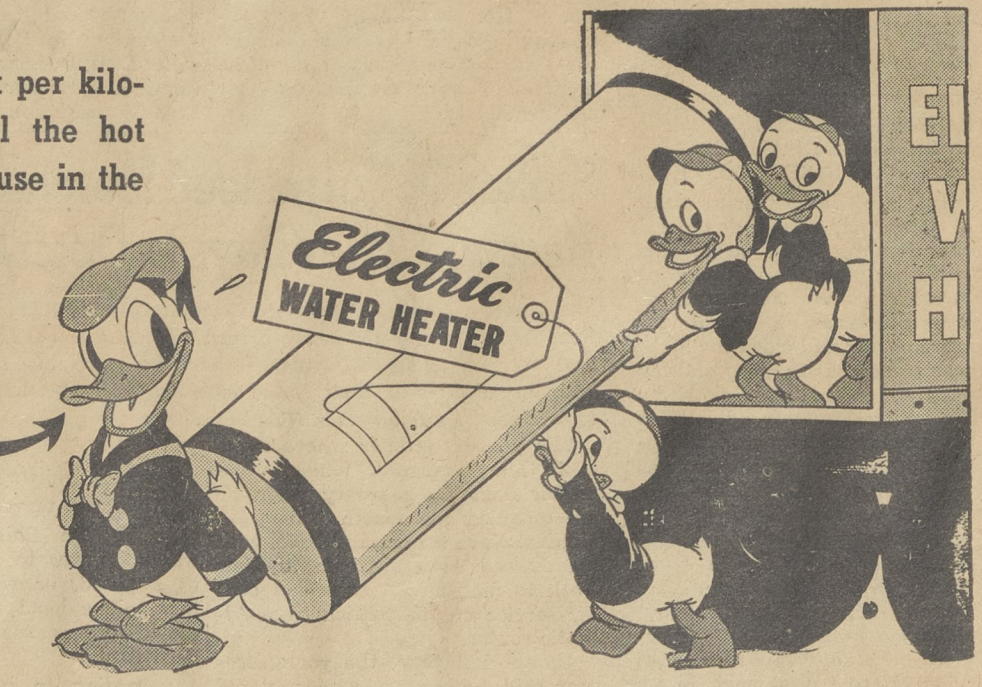
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