

EDITORIAL

the pause that refreshes

Ring out the old, ring in the new. Time to step back from life and gain perspective; another year is over, another year begun.

There are those who would advise against making new year's resolutions. "Bah!" they grump, "what good are resolutions? Make 'em one day, break 'em the next. Why bother?"

Because they feel good, that's why bother. Resolutions made at the beginning of a new year do much to assure us that it is always possible to begin anew, that our lives can—and will—be better.

Tabula rosa, the clean slate—how comforting to imagine that our souls have been cleansed of an entire year's accumulation of grit and grime. How easy it is to shed the shroud of a year gone by, a year that may have held more than its share of goofs, by promising never again to make the same mistakes. We can vow to be happier people, more honest, thinner, harder working—we can even promise to quit smoking—and if we secretly realize that life will go on as before, that nothing will be changed, that we will continue to be the people we have always been—it really doesn't matter.

Hear! Hear! A toast to new year's resolutions!

happy Chanukah!

Jewish families throughout the Back Mountain community will light the last of eight candles in observance of Chanukah tomorrow evening. The celebration of Chanukah, long symbolic to Jews of religious freedom, began this year on Dec. 22.

Traditionally celebrated during December, Chanukah pre-dates the Christian celebration of Christmas by many centuries. Historians note that after the death of Alexander the Great, Jews in Palestine were hindered in their attempts to worship according to their own beliefs. Particularly repressive was Antiochus IV, who sought to force the Jews to give up their religious customs and dietary considerations and forbade observance of the Sabbath. Images of Zeus were set up in the holy temples and worship of the idols was demanded of the Jewish populace.

The tyranny continued until the aged father of Judah Maccabee struck down a renegade Jew and sounded the call to battle. After three years of fierce fighting, the Jews succeeded in defeating the Syrians, cleansing the defiled temples, and re-lighting the eternal lamp. When a very small jar of oil burned in the lamp for eight days, it was taken as a sign of God's favor and is the basis for the eight candles in the Chanukah candlebra.

Known as the Feast of Dedication, Chanukah is historically significant to persons of all faiths because it represents the first successful insurrection against the limitation of religious freedom. To all our Jewish friends, then, we bid a "Happy Chanukah!"

hail the road crews

We think a note of commendation is due to the road crews who have labored long and hard to keep the roads and highways in the Back Mountain community safe for motorists during the past several weeks.

It hasn't been easy for them. Freezing rain and light accumulations of snow have made roadways treacherous and have demanded that crew members maintain a degree of vigilance unusual for this time of year. Despite frequent snowfalls and varied road conditions, the workers have managed to keep most roads open and free of dangerous ice patches.

As bad as the auto accident rate has been in our boroughs and townships, one must concede that it would be far worse were it not for the continued efforts of our road workers.

thissa 'n thatta

by The Gaffer

According to the more or less prestigious Harris Public Opinion Poll, 81 per cent of the people queried didn't shun older people who tell you how great it used to be in the old days; therefore, I am emboldened to inform my readers, if any, that in the good old days, when Ma and Grandma attended to most of the food preservation in this world, they sometimes were unsuccessful in their canning and preserving and had to throw out a certain amount of their products when taste buds and sense of smell informed them that something had gone amiss.

Public Opinion polls have been known to go a little sour on their originators, so it may be that I am boring you a bit with this information. Anyhow, I just brought it up to give you the base of my thinking that the federal and state authorities who get all worked up over cranberries laced with bug poison and tuna fish with a dash of mercury can cause a lot of financial damage to cranberry pickers, tuna fisherman and who can say how far the ripples extend when they give out their dire warnings to the newspapers.

In short, my thesis is that these agencies are absolutely unchecked in their notions and should be. Unsupervised home canning may have brought about a belly-ache or so and in rare cases probably gave the undertakers and tombstone cutters a little business, but, if so, the news didn't get to far afield, causing panic throughout the world and damaging thousands of innocent people, who suffered loss because some bureaucrats wanted to demonstrate that they were "on the job."

Sure they should be on the job. If they weren't, a lot of unscrupulous canners and fishermen would take advantage of the laxness and send out really contaminated food, causing untold damage to the human race. But in two scares I have mentioned, there was no charge that anybody had had deliberately or knowingly sent out cranberries or fish that were below standard.

Also, there was no mention of the fact, if any exists, that anyone was in any way hurt by the cranberries or by the tuna fish. I am not even sure that anybody was endangered in either case. When the cranberry scare came up, I deliberately bought and ate cranberries, figuring that I would either be a martyr or prove to myself that the whole thing was a lot of baloney stirred up by publicity-hungry bureaucrats. May be I didn't get the right cranberries or maybe a little dollop of Old Overholt now and then acts as an antidote, but I didn't hear of anyone else being damaged by eating them.

The tuna fish publicity strikes me in the same way. I looked up "mercury" in the encyclopedia and it confirmed my previous impression that mercury is a comparatively rare and expensive metal, which used in certain ways can be poisonous, but which is a valuable aid to medicine in certain other ways. It is an ingredient in some medicinal medicines and is extremely valuable in treating skin diseases. If any of my readers have heard of blue ointment, I wish to impart the information gained from the Britannica that it is largely composed of mercury.

According to the newsprints, the guideline for mercury in fish is 0.5 part allowed per million of mercury; the ocean contain 0.1 part of mercury per billion parts of water and "the total diet of even the heaviest fish eater would still be far below this guideline." The tuna which caused the uproar wasn't much above this guideline as I recall it and nobody has said that it bothered the fish. There was also an item a while back that some seals from the Pribilof Islands near Alaska had been killed four years ago; their livers had been stored and made into health food tablets and the tablets contained 60 parts of mercury.

The tablets were withdrawn from the market and I couldn't care less because I am firmly of the opinion that desiccated seal liver tablets are something I would never voluntarily eat and I don't know personally anyone who would be much tempted by the delicacy, if such it be.

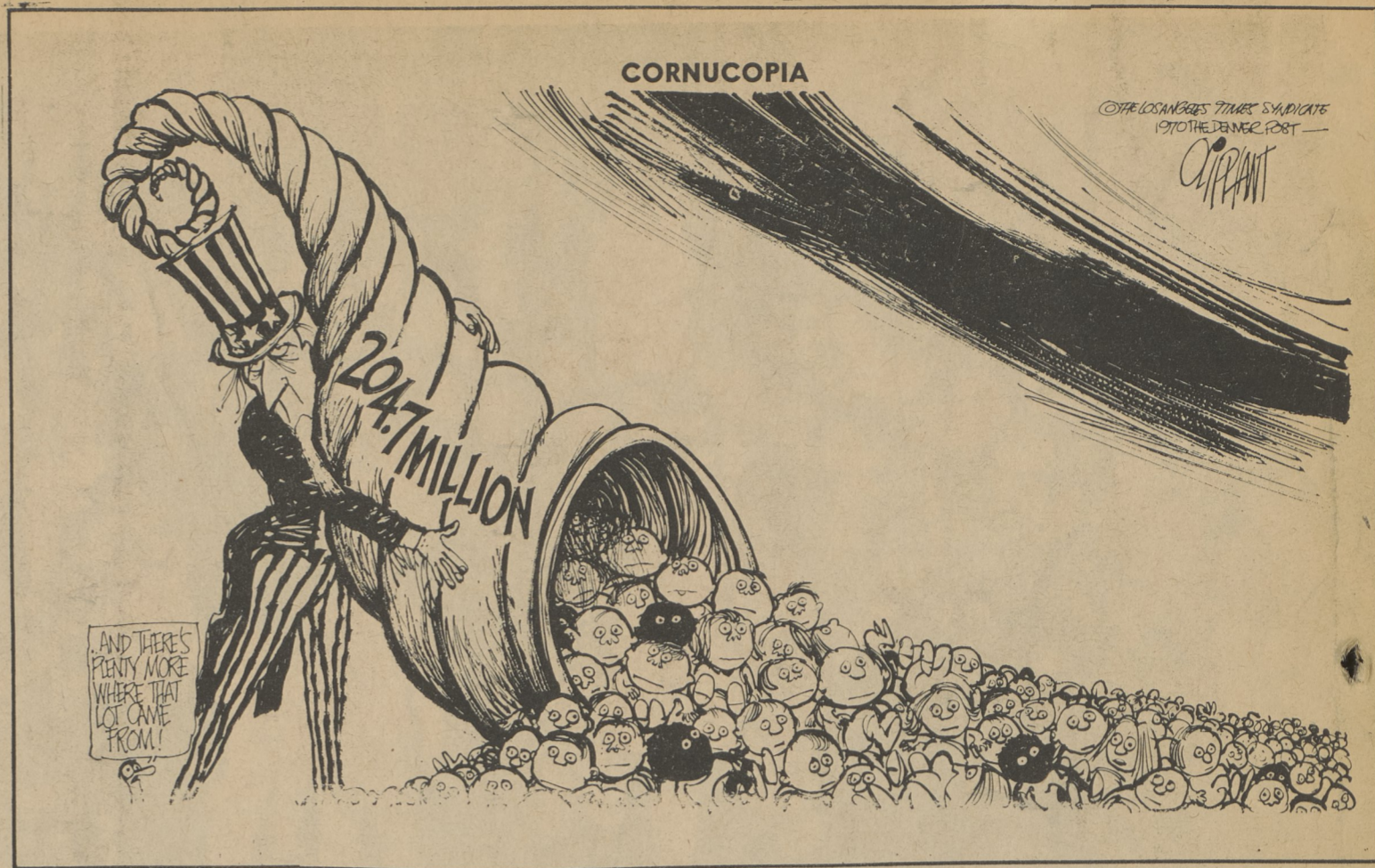
I quote from the same article: "No health hazard apparently exists yet. Federal food-safety officials emphasize that the amount of tuna being found with undue quantities of mercury isn't large enough to constitute such a threat."

Also: "FDA officials are clearly worried that the public will misunderstand the removal of the canned fish and unnecessarily turn the tuna troubles into another 'cranberry crisis'."

The man who stirred this up was an analytical chemist from Binghamton, who later said he found mercury levels in a frozen swordfish steak to be higher than in the tuna; but apparently this contribution to the morale of the nation didn't make the headlines in our local papers.

Anyhow, I still think that the Food and Drug boys would be a little smarter if they see to it that we get reasonably pure food to eat and, as long as the canners are decent about it, keep their own big mouths shut.

It isn't necessary to cause a big financial loss to a lot of people to do it that way.



TRB: from Washington

pause for station identification

In the uproar of Grand Central Station 50 years ago the dean of the University of Pennsylvania called a Red Cap. "Why, Ray," he said, "what are you doing here?"—and did not wait for an answer. It was obvious what the student, Ray Alexander, was doing; he was trying to survive. He had graduated in three years with highest honors but had been denied school membership in any honorary society because he was black.

That was 1920; fifty years ago. The boy wanted to go to Harvard Law School but was strapped. He had married a girl (who also graduated in three years with high honors and later became one of the first black women to get a Ph.D.). Some professors at Harvard gave Alexander enough academic chores to do to keep him alive and he joined the 400 in the freshman law class. It included eight black entrants, highest in history because of the post-war veterans' allowances.

It was a grim business. When a white classmate said "Hello" that about ended the social side. Law clubs barred Negroes, and a new black club was started that only partly filled the vacuum. To survive meant spending virtually all the time in the law library. Alexander won out. Professors encouraged his ambition to practice law back in Philadelphia. Dean Pound and Professor Williston wrote letters of recommendation to the same prestigious law firm.

Alexander got copies of the letters and replies and was told that now all would be well. His future was assured. Meanwhile on the side he was upgraded to Pullman porter and helped A. Philip Randolph organize the \$30-a-month blacks, while between times he passed the Philadelphia bar exams.

Clad in a new, conservative suit and armed with his letters, Alexander nervously went to the law firm. The receptionist stared and doubted that he had a personal appointment to see Mr. Big. "Oh," said Alexander, "I do, and here are my letters from Harvard." She disappeared with the letters without asking him to have a seat. Down the hall a door opened and a woman looked out, stared, and closed the door.

Alexander was still standing when Mister Big came out and greeted him. "So—you are Alexander. How nice to know you." He read the letters silently and remarked, "How nice of the professors to speak so well of you. But I am afraid there has been a mistake. I'm very sorry. We can't use you." Courteously he returned the letters, took Alexander's arm, slowly walked him to the elevator, pushed the button, and said "Goodbye."

Alexander moved to the rear of the elevator and suddenly, impulsively, burst into a flood of tears, something he hadn't done since his mother died. The operator stopped the car and asked apprehensively, "Did something happen to you? Can I do anything?" Today Judge Raymond Pace Alexander is senior Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, No. 4, in Philadelphia and author and public figure. He was one who didn't quit. As Judge Alexander says in a recent issue of the Cornell Law Forum, most top law firms in Philadelphia today have black staff lawyers. Times have changed.

Here at the end of 1970 it is appropriate for a minute to consider that change. Without doubt, racial discord is the greatest problem in the United States. It is so big and pervasive that generally we don't talk about it much. One American in 10 is black. Russia has no such problem; neither has China. America

last great depression in 1921.

Eighty needy families in this area received assistance at Christmas.

THIRTY YEARS AGO

The best business volume in history is predicted by Babson for 1941, whether this country goes to war or not.

No trace has yet been found of the hit-run motorist who two weeks ago struck down John Kuchta at Alderson. The victim is at Nesbitt with a broken pelvis.

Harveys Lake chief Ira Stevenson,

has prosperity unparalleled in the history of civilization but the disparity of the distribution of that wealth and the agonizing racial inequality weaken the whole; we could become like a great tree with a hollow trunk.

Once a year, maybe at Christmas, we ought to stop and think how far we have come instead of how far we must go. Lest it breed complacency, it can be considered along with the 1968 Kerner Commission report, which brought an indictment of "white racism." The Negro can never forget, it said, the implications of the ghetto: "white institutions created it; white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

Nevertheless, once a year, at this time of wreaths and carols, we might take some pride in what we have done. Other nations are proud but they can't even conceive our problems. In justices continue but nobody can study overall statistics without seeing the direction we are going; the pressure is irreversible, short of national disaster. The boy sobbing in the elevator is still with us, but remember, he did not turn to bitterness and bomb-throwing but instead broke paths for others. More break through that path every year and there is no end in sight. So let's, for a minute, consider not how far we must go but how far we have come. Pause, friends, for station identification.

off the cuff: the sad-eyed puppet

by Bruce Hopkins

It was our eighth performance. We had been presenting RAINBOW JUNCTION, a musical children's play, every weekend since Thanksgiving, and we had been getting good sized audiences. And as this was the weekend before Christmas, we figured there would be a number of children in attendance. We were wrong.

I play the crooked man. In RAINBOW JUNCTION I portray the role of a puppet who has only one emotion—sadness. All I do is cry and be sad. I live in a warehouse with three other puppets who also have only one emotion. Mr. Madcap is angry. Simple Sarah is constantly happy. Queen Powder Puff is pompous and vain. As the play progresses, we do all sorts of nasty things in order to force the puppetmaster (Oska Woska) to give us the rest of our feelings. We steal the sun and the moon. We create a street protest. But nothing works. In the end, we discover that the feelings were there inside of us all the time—all we had to do was to find them. (Okay, now listen, you gotta' look at this through the eyes of a child.)

Five minutes before curtain-time of our eighth performance, the audience consisted of four staunch fans all of whom had seen the show before. They were the only ones there. The puppets were a bit discouraged. I tried to cheer them up.

"Don't be discouraged gang. Think of it as a rehearsal with audience."

Simple Sarah looked at me with her big puppet eyes and said something that one would not normally expect a puppet to say.

"Why, Simply Sarah," I remarked with a tone of aghastment, "What kind of language is that for a puppet to use!" Madcap and Queen Powder Puff didn't say anything. They just stood there looking hungover. As a matter of fact, they were hungover. Very hungover.

Five minutes after show time the audience had swelled to a grand total of ten. That included the director and the director's mother. Someone said they guessed we might as well start, and everyone said yeah, we might as well.

"Listen gang, when we're starring on Broadway we can look back on this as one of our struggles," I encouraged. The puppets looked at me as if they were about to cut my strings. Queen Powder Puff suddenly made a mad dash for the powder room. The house

lights dimmed, and we thought about starting the show. Suddenly we heard some rather strange sounds from the ladies' room.

"Richard," cried Queen Powder Puff. Richard is the real-life name of Mr. Madcap who happens to be the real-life husband of Queen Powder Puff. "Richard, can they hold the curtain?"

"Why, dear?" Richard inquired. "Because I'm throwing up, that's why," replied the Queen. At that moment Oska Woska walked out on stage and started the show. Simple Sarah started laughing. And laughing and laughing.

"Are you alright dear?" Richard inquired between convulsions of laughter. We could hear the townspeople singing "I'd rather be me than a piece of a tree," which meant it was almost time for us to enter. Just as Oska Woska hung up the picture of The Evil Gypsy Troll and our entrance music began, Queenie came out of the rest room. "Just don't touch me. If I talk I'm going to throw up."

"Well," I said, "Your vocal numbers should be fascinating." And I made my entrance.

The show seemed sluggish. It took hours to get to my first song, and right in the middle of it Douglas Mount walked into the house. Douglas Mount is one of the editors for the magazine I work for in order to earn a living so that I can portray a puppet on weekends and call myself an actor. I saw Douglas Mount and promptly went flat. He looked as if he thought the audience might have gone out to lunch.

What must have been seven hours later, we had managed to capture the Evin Gypsy Troll, found our feelings, and joined the other puppets for a rousing finale in which we celebrate the fact that now we belong to them.

Douglas Mount met me outside after I had removed my make-up and had become a person again. He asked if I'd like a drink. I said he'd better believe it. We walked away from Rainbow Junction mostly in silence. I wasn't particularly sad. I was actually kind of warm I knew it was all a part of the growing process for an actor. There are those standing-ovation-periods of total satisfaction. There are those moments of complete discouragement and humiliation. And I knew that tomorrow was coming. I knew tomorrow was going to be a better show. Perhaps one of our best performances. Because that's the way it works. And it did. And it was.

THE DALLAS POST

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only yesterday

FORTY YEARS AGO

Inland utilities, owner of Dallas, Shavertown, and Tunkhannock Water Companies, is in the hands of equity receivers, climaxing a year of financial disaster. Liabilities exceed 3 million. The company took over the local companies over a year ago, and has made extensive surveys and improvements.

An editorial says 1930 has been hard. Business has been slack, money hard to collect, credits curtailed, spending less, more people out of work than at any time since the

last great depression in 1921.

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Harveys Lake chief Ira Stevenson,

following a lead to a Bennett Street home in Luzerne, has recovered many antiques stolen from lake cottages six years ago, including two heirloom woven wood bedsprings belonging to Rose Troxell. Thirty-five cottages were robbed, and the old traction company depot at Harveys Lake was furnished with the loot.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

Remodeling of the American Legion Home on Huntsville Road, started in September, is practically complete. The chrome

and leatherette bar stools, knotty pine panelling, asphalt tile floors, and modern decor in the dining room make an attractive picture. (The building was destroyed by fire the following spring.)

Kingston Township proposes to give several hundred acres of scrub land on the extremity of Bunker Hill, to Luzerne. School children, much nearer Luzerne schools than Kingston Township schools, have to be served by a bus running through Luzerne. The move would save Kingston Township school board \$1,500 annually.