

# EDITORIAL

## Just the Beginning

There is a bittersweet quality about this year's Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction which is evoked by memories of what once was but is no more, and by dreams of what may be.

There is little doubt that the auction will seek new accommodations next year. Sprawling and bursting over the auction grounds with all the vitality of the successful endeavor it has become, the auction would have sought new grounds even had the death of Myra Risley not forced the issue. Now Lehman Avenue and Risley's Barn, for the past 25 years transformed each summer into everybody's idea of Hometown U.S.A., will become, well, just Lehman Avenue and Risley's Barn.

We will miss the people who for years were the auction. Bill Moss, chugging around town in his decrepit Falcon, sorting and cataloging and stacking used goods in every particle of barn space; Howard Risley and Harry Ohlman, outfitted in raccoon and straw hats, cleverly inveigling auction-goers to up their bids; Herman Thomas, reliably spending a bundle on whatever outrageous item was offered across the block to open each auction. The auction thrives in part because these men, and many of their hard-working associates, cared enough about our community to put it across.

Next year will be a crucial one for our beloved library auction. Old-timers may well be tempted to think they've done their part, given enough; newcomers may not be sufficiently enticed by the concept of community service to give as unstintingly of themselves as the auction demands. We do not think this will happen, but there can be no harm in being forewarned.

An end and a beginning, memories and dreams—the 25th Annual Library Auction is all of this and more.

## Nonpublic Schools

Coming as it did on the heels of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's decision to outlaw the state's income tax, another court decision, this one by the United States Supreme Court, declaring state aid to private schools unconstitutional will no doubt have serious fiscal consequences in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Even before the Supreme Court decision Gov. Shapp warned of the financial collapse of Pennsylvania's public school system. In light of this he has outlined a plan for a federal assistance to public schools set up along the lines of the present highway trust fund.

In the meantime it is being predicted that without state aid to parochial schools many of these schools will be forced to close, thus putting an extra burden on Pennsylvania's public education system. Whether this will prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back is pure speculation at the moment, but alternate plans for state aid to parochial schools are already being discussed.

As pointed out in Chief Justice Burger's opinion, the 1968 Pennsylvania Nonpublic Education Act was passed in response to a cost crisis in the state's nonpublic schools. It was argued then, as well as now, that nonpublic schools had to have state aid to prevent the overburdening of public schools.

We agree with the Supreme Court decision that, despite the fact that public assistance is limited to courses "presented in the public schools," that the "very restrictions and surveillance necessary" to insure that courses are taught in a "strictly nonideological" manner "give rise to (excessive) entanglements." We also agree that "in a community where such a large number of pupils are served by church-related schools, it can be assumed that state assistance will entail considerable political activity."

We, unfortunately, have quick answers to the fiscal problems this decision will most likely cause, but we realize that expediency must, although at times painfully, suffer at the hands of principle.

## Changes

by Eric Mayer

Summer's officially here

Summer's officially here, having oozed in a couple of weeks ago in a wave of humidity. The nights, already starting to nibble back into the evenings, have lost their stars to a perpetual overcast that seems less an intrusion of cloud than a thickening of the air itself.

Amid the dark heaps of bushes in the backyard, shifting constellations of fireflies blink coolly. Distant lightning beats a slow electric staccato behind the mountains, heralding silent storms that never arrive. The only time it rains is after the charcoal's been lit.

The last rain knocked the petals off the peonies and tiger lilies have taken their place. If the bulbs of those ubiquitous flowers are really edible there's many a feast to be found beside our country roads.

Though most of the roses have gone the way of the peonies, there's one bush in full bloom beside the house. Somehow its contrived to climb up into the limbs of the larch tree and thrives, oblivious to the fact that the transitory stream which nurtured its spring has pulled its usual summer disappearance. All that's left is a shallow puddle, where toads occasionally pass sweltering afternoons, drinking (as toads do) through their wrinkled skin.

There seems to be a high toad population here. Last summer one lived under the boxes that are piled on the porch. It was his custom to emerge on rainy nights to sit on the lawn while spending less agreeable times in the corner of a small glass cabinet whose door had been left ajar. The toad did have an irksome and potentially dangerous (for him) habit of sitting on the doormat, and once managed to get caught, quite pathetically between the screen and the door. More than once he essayed a foray into the kitchen, only to be escorted politely but firmly out. Medieval housewives used to keep a toad or two in the pantry to deal with roaches, but the practice is generally frowned upon today.

The toads should be good for the garden though, since they can reputedly devour as many as 10,000 insects during the course of a summer. Unfortunately I've yet to meet a

toad that's a match for a rabbit.

As a matter of fact, I'd be surprised to meet a fence that's a match for one. We have very eccentric rabbits here. They've apparently developed quite a taste for the lime that's supposed to keep them at bay, and gourmets that they are, they pass up such staples as parsley, lettuce and carrots, for exotic delicacies like dill, sunflower stalks and onion tops.

Diminutive as it is, the most arduous task connected with the garden is worrying about it. Is it getting enough rain? Is it going to fall prey to cotton tailed predators?

The soil is excellent and outside of an occasional weeding or watering the plants

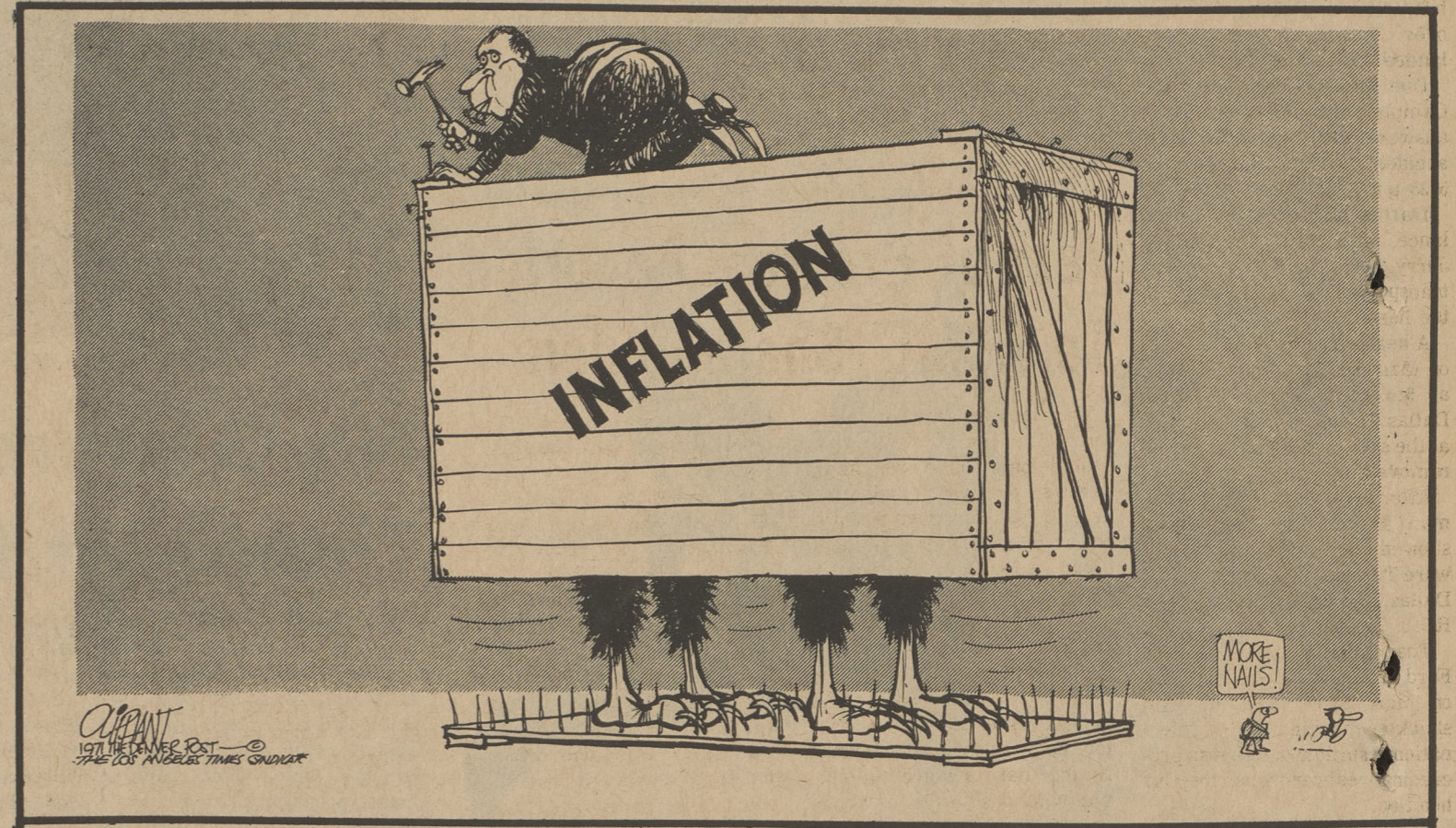
require no coaxing. The tomatoes, planted with a bit of epsom salts and checked daily for sucker growths, may turn out to be the stars of the show, although the potatoes are looking monstrous in what is supposedly fine potato growing soil.

The woods, from which the rabbit menace emanates so stealthily, edges the plot on three sides, creating too much shadow for the cantaloupes that Kathy and I planted—rather extravagantly considering their chances for success. The back corner of the plot is given over to pumpkins. Originally I had visions of the vines crawling heroically out into the forests, but it appears now that they're headed for the egg plants. I'll have to

remember to isolate the renegade things next year. I'll also have to remember that packet of lettuce seed goes further than one might think. Presently I am growing what can only be described as a lettuce bush.

Anyway, I hope to prove to myself, that vegetables aren't created in cans; that they can spring miraculously from the earth, even if in ridiculously crooked and cramped rows. I might also know by then whether the beans from the unmarked bag; the ones that are sagging over onto their sides at the moment, are in need of poles or just feeble.

In the meantime, since it is after all summer, its very important for nothing to become too important.



## Hix

by Mrs. T.M.B. Hicks

It was the slickest piece of salesmanship Hix has encountered for some years, and Hix, who now numbers herself among the credulous elderly, swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker.

Hix is perfectly willing to lick her own wounds, though the cost of the lesson ran pretty high, considering that sewer levies are coming up and the food markets slap on ten cents more per loaf of bread every time a carload of watermelons gets sidetracked somewhere in the south when the railroads go on strike.

Hix, in the days of her connection with The Dallas Post, carried on a running feud with furnace companies, those gloomsters that scared the daylight out of elderly women by means of slick salesmen who gained access to the cellar, and came back upstairs wiping their brows and saying, "Ma'am, it's lucky your furnace hasn't blown up. You gotta do something right away, sign on the dotted line."

Not to mention fly-by-night aluminum siding merchants who painted dismal pictures of a house falling down around an elderly resident's ears. Out-of-town concerns harvest a fortune from the Back Mountain.

Nobody needs to bite on a proposition. If a nitwitted resident does not make exhaustive inquiries before making with the checkbook, that is her tough luck and she has nobody to blame but herself. And maybe her diminished bank balance may serve as a warning to some other old lady.

The spic and span low-bodied truck executed a U-turn on Pioneer Avenue, and a courteous young man jumped out, encountering Hix on her way back from the mailbox.

"Remember me?" he inquired, "I helped my uncle do a roofing job for you once several years ago."

"Sorry, but I don't remember your name. What are you doing in that beautiful truck with all the gadgets in it?"

We admired the gadgets, two tanks and a long reel of heavy duty hose, plus sectional ladders.

"I always notice roofs," the young man went on, "and I see you've got five or six curled shingles. Have you had any water damage?"

"Nope, no water damage. What do you want to do, cement them down?"

"Well, they really ought to be taken care of, a stitch in time, etc. etc. If you catch it now, it'll be good for years."

I surveyed the roof. It was a long way up, and I wondered idly how he had spotted four or five curled shingles. Hix is not tuned in to shingles unless they sail off in a high wind. But a man who had worked on roofs would naturally have telescopic vision. It's like an editor's spotting a glaring error in a headline on the front page. Nobody else notices it, but to one who has been accustomed to reading proof, it sticks out like a sore thumb.

"We could fix that for you in less than an hour."

"Fix it how?"

Cement down the shingles to keep them in place. And probably that chimney needs some cement around it. Whole thing won't take more than an hour, maybe less."

It sounded like a small charge operation, one well within the monthly budget. One moment the little man was going up the

ladder from the roof of the front porch, the next he was leaping along the roof, hose in hand.

"Wonder what kind of shoes he's wearing?" I asked myself, remembering an ominous clattering years ago when Johnny Tibus was pointing up the chimney. His makeshift platform came loose, and there was Johnnie, clinging to the chimney and perfectly safe, but marooned. His platform, in bits and pieces in the side yard, had made a three-point landing, and his pointed trowel had divided a ripe tomato into perfect halves.

I carry insurance, as every householder does, but no amount of insurance can compensate for a dead body in the driveway.

"He's wearing thick sponge rubber soles," the courteous salesman reassured me.

I went on about my business, and next time I looked, the roof had changed its spots. From stem to stern it was a dazzling aluminum and the workman was still spraying, calling for cement around the chimney.

I have always considered a red shingled roof hideous, so this did not upset me to any great extent. On the other hand, if I had my druthers, I druther have a variegated blue and green shingle roof, suggesting shadows and sunshine. Still and all, it looked as if the coat of aluminum paint might reflect the summer sunshine away from the attic. I revised my mental calculation of cost, upward. With that whole roof sprayed, it was going to run to a bit more than I had figured. What happened to the four or five curled shingles, I didn't know. Probably buried under the aluminum.

But the chimney could certainly use a spot of assistance. "Awfully bad around the chimney," was the word from the roof.

"Well," said the courteous young man, "You can figure it'll be good and tight for the next fifteen years."

"In the next fifteen years," I replied, "I won't give a whoop whether the roof is tight or whether it leaks like a sieve. I won't be around to notice."

The apparatus in the truck kept pumping away and the peony plants in the flowerbed took on a freckled appearance. Silver freckles.

The truck cooled itself off and the little man came down off the roof, folding his ladder behind him.

"Well, give me the bad news," I invited, checkbook in hand. "I always like to pay on the spot for these small jobs."

The C.Y.M. said he'd do a spot of figuring. He beamed when he reached the bottom of the column. "Three-seventy", he concluded.

"Three-seventy? That can't be right, you've used a lot of stuff."

"Three hundred and seventy. It works out to a few cents more, but we'll forget the odd change."

Now nobody needs to tell me I shouldn't have made out a check, I should have waited for a bill. After I had sat down and engaged in a little commonsense reflection, I phoned First National. "Kill check No. 253 when it comes through the mill. I've been took. The next move is up to that firm down in New Jersey."

"Sorry, it's already been cashed."

## Good for 15 Years

## Insights and Illusions

by Bruce Hopkins

I called the New York Telephone Co. business office the other day, and I got a recording telling me that the number I was calling had been temporarily disconnected. When I finally got through, the operator told me she would connect me with a representative and I was immediately disconnected. On the third try, I was connected with a representative to help me initiate service at my new apartment. She sounded exactly like Lily Tomlin, and I kept trying not to laugh. I gave her my name.

"Is that b-a-s-in-Betty-r-a-s-in-Robert-u-c-e-h-o-p-a-s-in-Peter-k-i-n-a-s-in-Nancy-s?" she asked.

"Yes, I think so." But I wasn't sure. All those names had made me momentarily forget my own.

"Is this to be a listed number, Miss Hoskins?"

"Hopkins," I enunciated carefully, "Not Hoskins."

"That's, H-o-p-a-s-in-Peter-k-i-n-a-s-in-Nancy-s?"

"Right."

"Now, ma'am," she said, "I need your—"

"Excuse me," I interrupted, "but it's sir, not ma'am, ma'am."

"Oh, yes—heh, heh, it's Mister Hopkins."

"Yeah, but call me Bruce." I said four pitches lower.

"Alright, sir, now have you had service with our company before?" She asked that as if there were a thousand other companies I could have had service with. I replied that I had: with Bell in Pennsylvania. She then asked what city.

"Horsham," I told her.

"Sir, would you spell that please?" I think she thought she was getting her first obscene phone call of the day. But I cleared it up: "h-o-r-a-s-in-razza-ma-tazz-s-h-a-m-a-s-in-Mercutio." I explained that I'd had the phone disconnected when I left there in June, 1970.

"And what was the number at that phone sir?"

That threw me. I have enough trouble remembering my trouser size let alone having to recall a phone number I had over a year ago—and never called myself on.

"You see, sir, if you are able to recall the number, I won't have to charge you the \$40 deposit on the phone. Would you like to think about it or find it and call me back?" she queried nasally. Wonderful—a take-home exam. I told her I'd do my best to find it. She then inquired as to what type of phone I had in this Horsham place, and I replied that it was one of those jobs with the dial in the receiver.

When I was in Horsham I was going through my decadent period when I thought that a trimline phone represented some sort of status symbol.

"Would you like another trimline model?" she asked hopefully.

"No, I'd like a plain black phone. There is one already in the apartment—"

"Sir, you should be aware that having had our service previously entitles you to the privilege of selecting a trimline model or a color phone if you so desire." She made it sound as if I didn't have to pay for the privilege. But I knew better.

"No, thanks. I'd like plain black. It doesn't show the dirt."

The representative sighed in defeat, and then proceeded to itemize the charges. My charge would be based on 75 message units per month. When you live in New York City, you are charged a certain number of message units based upon how far away you call within the city, and how long you talk. In other words, you are charged individually for local calls. For example, if I call from my exchange to a 224-exchange, I am charged an initial fee of two message units for an initial period of five minutes. If I talk longer than that, I am charged one message unit for each additional three minutes or fraction. So if I talk for five and a half minutes, I am charged three message units. If I call a 598-exchange, however, I am charged six message units for an initial period of four minutes. If I talk longer than that, I am charged one

message unit for each additional minute or fraction thereof. So that if I talk for four minutes, five seconds to a 598-exchange, I am charged seven message units. All of this is easy to follow if I consult the six-page, fine-print-chart in the front of my phone book, keep a record of every exchange I dial and the amount of time I talk, figure out the initial period charge and the additional period charge, add it all up, then compute five-and-a-half cents for each message unit over the 75 units I am allotted per month, and see if it agrees with the phone bill. If it doesn't, I will be so confused and mentally fatigued that I won't really care whether I'm being cheated or not, and I'll pay the bill. Besides, the whole thing is done by computer, and everyone knows computers, and they don't know anything except what they're told to know. (It's kind of like high school.)

I did manage to find the phone number where I lived in Horsham (it didn't ring any bells when I looked at it), and so I should have a phone within the next few days provided I can get the business office instead of the recording telling me the business office telephone has been disconnected. And I wonder if I'm being charged two message units to listen to a recorder? If I am, I'd better start listening to it for the full five minutes. Nobody's cheatin' me, I'll tell ya'.

## THE DALLAS POST

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