

Holiday decoration contest...See P. 3

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TWENTY CENTS

Who will succeed Frank O'Connell?

by Tom Mooney

It's definite that Frank O'Connell of Kingston will be running for the State Senate next year. What's not so definite, though, is the name of the Republican who'll be trying to become O'Connell's replacement in the State House.

So far only one candidate—Bill Dierolf, Dallas, school board member—has officially declared. But others are "unofficially" in the running, and nobody knows for sure just how many prospective candidates there are. Some names, though, have emerged.

Tom Reese, who just won reelection as Dallas borough tax collector, says that he's "just interested," but his interest seems very strong. "It's too early as yet to make a decision," says Reese. "You have to consider who the other candidates are, consider your finances, and take the pulse of the people."

Reese warms up, however, when the question of what he would do in state office arises. "The issues of the state are the issues of the country: robs, taxes. We've got to streamline state government, for one thing. Maybe we need an austerity program."

He quotes O'Connell's campaign literature on the need to reduce state spending and adds, "The silent majority has to come out and declare itself. Too high a percentage of voters are government workers, welfare recipients, people who need the government. I'd try to appeal to the others."

One other name sometimes mentioned is Frank O'Connell's own assistant, Bob Grose. But Grose is trying to squelch stories that he is a candidate.

"I'm definitely not going to run," he says. "I'm going to stay with O'Connell, since I'm in a good position here in Kingston as it is." Ostensibly on the sidelines, Grose doesn't see any front runners at this point, though he alludes to "candidates from Dallas, West Pittston, and Forty Fort."

Bill Dierolf, Dallas area school board president, is at the moment the only officially declared candidate for O'Connell's seat among the Republicans. He expresses concern over the inequities of the property tax and says, "What we need is a tax that

is basically a wage rather than a property tax for support of the schools. A minimum amount of income would be exempted, but the wage-earner would pay on anything more than that amount."

It is in an area like the Back Mountain, he believes, that the basic weakness of the property tax is seen. "Too much of the burden of property tax is falling on people rather than industries here. And look at all the things our schools do not have. You can't just keep on increasing the millage for property owners. A new tax system is needed."

Ray Cresci, public relations director at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and recently re-elected West Pittston council member, says that he hasn't made up his mind yet but expects to reach a decision by Christmas. "The main factor in my decision is family considerations," he maintains. "I have to think about how working in Harrisburg will affect my family."

"Then too, there's the question of having to give up my present job at the General. Would it be worth it?"

The state's ongoing budget problem will be the big issue most likely in any campaign, as Cresci sees it. "We have to straighten that out," he says. "It's absolute top priority. Highways will require a lot of attention too. After that there can be any number of issues, including local ones. And I've got some very strong views on abortion."

Cresci hopes for county Republican support should he run, but says that he would run without it should it be withheld. "I don't know what the County's official position is on the election just yet," he claims. He foresees "lots of candidates" appearing in time, including Forty Fort Mayor Jim McCulloch, former president of the Forty Fort Borough Council Bob Taylor, and County Republican Chairman Emerson "Pee Wee" Harris.

Jim McCulloch is "still up in the air at present," but says that if he does run he would propose to be "a 100 per cent representative, like Frank O'Connell." Continues McCulloch, "I'll make my decision by the end of the year. First I want to see how much backing I can get. I'm pretty well known in Forty Fort, but I'll have to

assure myself of support in other towns as well."

McCulloch believes that it's too early to take a stand on any specific issues. "The main thing I want to point out," he says, "is that I'd follow in Frank O'Connell's footsteps. The job of representative is a full-time job; you can't do it on a part-time basis. I'd be on call 24 hours a day. But I'd have to get my feet on the ground first before going into specific issues."

McCulloch, like Cresci, believes that Bob Taylor may prove a serious candidate. Taylor, however, was not available. Another often-mentioned name is that of Republican Chairman Harris, who also could not be reached.

Said one of the unofficial candidates, though, "The county chairman's job will be a really big one itself, next year when we're trying to get a Republican governor elected, and Harris may not be interested in being a representative."



SANTA HELPS—Santa helps the Back Mountain Jaycees in their collection of toys at Whitesell Brothers for the "Toys for Tots" campaign this year. Harold "Sonny"

Smith and Craig Tupper, Back Mountain Jaycees, are aided by Santa as they start their collection campaign. (Photo by Charlot M. Denmon) See P. 5

Is Back Mt. getting its money's worth from USPS?

Will burgeoning postal costs make Christmas cards a tradition of the past? How do local postal costs relate to the U.S. Postal Service's rate increase and office closing proposals? Are Back Mt. residents getting their money's worth in postal service?

The U.S. Postal Service is receiving increased national attention these days as a subsidy bill, House Bill 7700, is being considered and the closing of small post offices often suggested.

Jack Berkey, Wilkes-Barre postmaster and sectional center manager, explained that there are 153 post offices under his jurisdiction ranging from Wilkes-Barre, the largest with an annual revenue of \$7 million to Nuaagola, with a little over \$6,000 in annual revenue.

Wage costs in many of the local offices exceed the annual revenue produced by those offices. Berkey explained that all salaries are under Civil Service with the starting salaries established by the Postal Service. They wages are divided into classifications-administrative and carrier-clerical, the latter negotiated through a union.

Postmasters' salaries are determined by "city" and "non-city" offices beginning with Level I, with grades one to three. The first seven levels include smallest offices, designated CAGL with salaries ranging from \$11,890 to \$14,935. Offices designated CAG are slightly larger without city delivery and salaries range from \$12,128 to \$15,236. Grade 12 through Grade 17, with salaries ranging from \$15,275 to \$19,412.

In offices having city delivery, salaries range from \$17,200 to \$24,100 and \$19,150 to \$26,800. In addition these salaries as with the others are increased annually by increments, the latter two having the increases based on merit evaluation and the administrators may or may not get it as it becomes increasingly difficult the longer tenure of service.

Berkey stated that the Postal Service published salaries of the personnel about a year ago and also releases recommending the closing of certain offices. However, members of Congress granted the service a subsidy in order to operate and a

moratorium was declared on such action.

Berkey also said that he had no official knowledge of any of the offices closing, only what he read in the papers.

When asked about operating in the black, the postmaster said that in order to provide postal services to customers as provided under the law, costs exceed the annual revenue. He pointed out such things as cost of deliveries with the largest fleet of vehicles in the country increase due to higher oil and maintenance costs. He also explained that delivery in rural areas cost more than in house-to-house delivery in a city.

If and when, Congress no longer grants a subsidy to the postal service, according to Berkey, the service will want to operate in the black. In order to cut costs to do this, there is a study now underway to determine the possibility of curtailing delivery one day a week—what day is not certain. The Postal Service will likely measure public opinion before making any decision on such a move. At the present time, Saturday is the most talked about possibility.

Certain customers generate a lot of revenue in one post office but another post office maybe charged with the delivery, Berkey explained. Wilkes-Barre processes the mail for other areas, so is charged with additional responsibility.

Notwithstanding increased costs due to inflation, deliveries and union-

set wage scales, there is a considerable difference between area postmasters' salaries and revenue generated by their offices.

In the Back Mountain and surrounding area, the latest report available, in July, 1977, showed postmasters' salaries and the revenue for each office as follows:

Dallas, the postmaster's salary is \$19,954 and the office produced \$680,877 revenue; Falls, \$16,854 in salary, \$18,644 in revenue; Harveys Lake, \$18,848 in salary, \$24,346 in revenue; Hunlock Creek \$18,848 in salary, and \$40,195 in 1976 revenue; Noxen \$15,844 in salary and \$12,618 in revenue; Shawnaese, \$15,507 in salary, and \$9,897 in revenue; Sweet Valley \$14,935 in salary, \$18,850 in revenue; Lehman \$14,935 in salary, \$14,397 in revenue.

Wilkes-Barre post office and has no postmaster locally. However, it showed a revenue of \$120,373, on the report received in July of this year.

The lowest salaried postmasters are those which have no city delivery. Postmasters who supervise offices where there is at least one rural route delivery are rated at a higher salary and those with jurisdiction over carrier delivery are the highest salaried.

Dallas post office is at level 18 of the range of 20 levels for the postmaster salaries.

Plymouth is at level 20 because of
(Continued on P. 4)

Post Office ready for mail deluge Christmas

Plans for the handling of Christmas mail have been finalized and the Dallas Post Office is ready to handle the heavy volume of mail without any difficulty, Postmaster Bernard C. Gawlas announced today.

A large supply of the Christmas stamps have arrived and are available for sale. The 1977 Mint Set and the new issue of "Stamps and Stories" are also available.

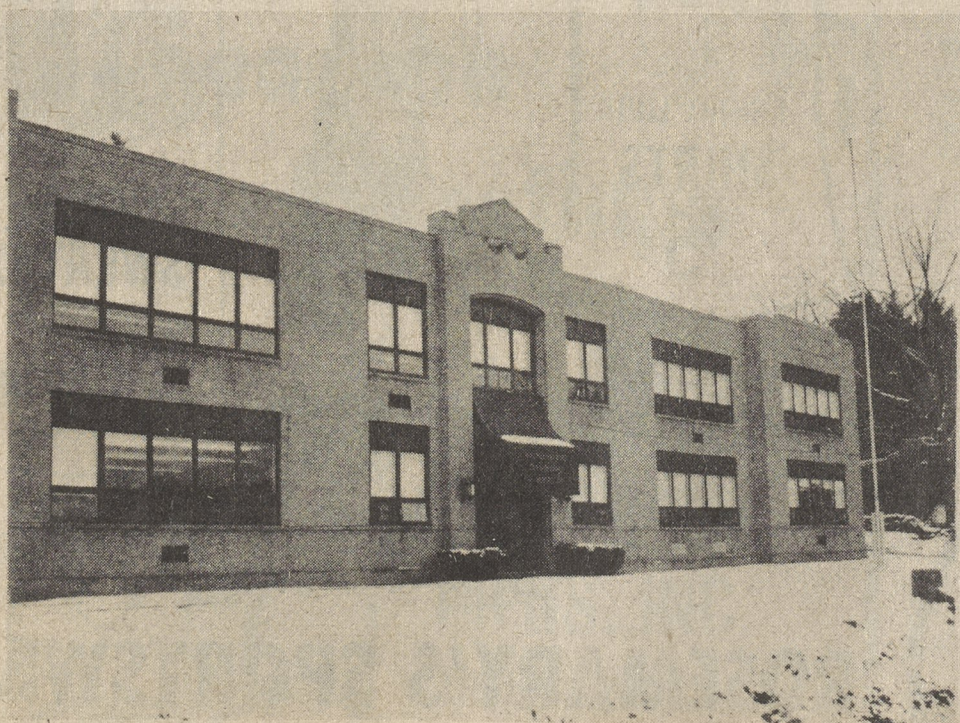
Postal customers are urged to mail their Christmas packages now so that they will not be delayed during the heavy period of mailing prior to Christmas. All customers are urged to use complete addresses which must include house numbers and street names, or rural route numbers and

box numbers.

During the winter months, customers must have approaches to their mail boxes clear of ice and snow so that the carrier can approach the box and leave without having to back up, the Postmaster said. Customers who fail to keep their boxes open will not receive mail until the boxes are clear.

Rural customers can purchase stamps from their carrier, and all mail left for the carriers to pick up must have the stamps affixed.

The postmasters at Harveys Lake, Noxen, Sweet Valley and Tunkhannock joined with Postmaster Gawlas in the appeal to have all mail boxes kept open during the winter months.



RENOVATIONS COMPLETE—The Westmoreland Elementary School renovations are complete and the dedication will be Monday, Dec. 5, at 8 p.m. This is the school as it is today.

An Invitation

The Dallas board of school directors has announced plans to host the public at a rededication and "open house" ceremony at the Westmoreland Elementary School on Monday, Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m.

The administration and staff of the district extended a "cordial invitation" to all members of the community to attend the program and tour the new facilities.

In conjunction with the "open house," the school board announced that it will hold its reorganizational meeting during the ceremonies.

At this meeting, Mrs. Patricia Gregory, Ernest Ashbridge, and Basil Russin will be sworn in as elected members of the board. The new officers for the 1977-78 school year will be elected and installed during the meeting. Ashbridge and Mrs. Gregory are incumbents while Russin was elected Nov. 8 to his first term.