

# Fair faces money crisis as dirt work erodes its funds

By ERIC FOSTER  
Post Staff

For Ed Kelly, president of the Luzerne County Fair Association, the phrase "dirt cheap" must hold some bitter irony.

The 1991 Luzerne County Fair set an attendance record with 50,000 people crowding through the gates from September 4 to 8, topping the old record of 30,000.

Despite the smashing success of the fair, the Fair Association faces potential bankruptcy. All because of some dirt that was moved.

In preparing for this year's fair, parking lots were leveled, and an extra entrance was added to the rear area of the fairgrounds for livestock to be brought in.

To do the work, equipment was rented from the Congressional Equipment Center at a reduced rate. The project was expected to last three weeks and was budgeted for \$20,000, said Kelly. But in order to meet regulations from the Department of Environmental Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency, the equipment had to be kept another three weeks, for an additional \$34,000.

"Dirt was on the top, we moved it to the bottom, but then we had to move it up because they were considered wetlands," said Kelly.

The fair was then hit with a second set of regulations, which will mean more bills to meet them.

In order to meet requirements for the Erosion and Sediment Control Program administered by the Luzerne County Conservation District, another \$30,000 to \$40,000 worth of work would have to be done.

The work primarily involves constructing swales, conduits to carry away runoff water to prevent soil erosion.

"Where we stand now, with all work that has to be done, the fair will bankrupt the fair unless we can get a grant or unless we can get an extension," said Kelly. "We're at the point where we thought the project would be \$10,000 and it's \$30,000 to \$40,000."

Pasonick Engineering donated the time to design the erosion control plan to the fair, Kelly said.

The \$10,000 has already been spent on the work, which has stopped because after all of its expenses have been paid, the fair only has \$6,000 in the bank, according to Kelly. And approximately \$4,000 is still owed to the Congressional Equipment Center.

Kelly said that by leveling the parking lots, the Fair Association planned to have them used for

soccer fields. Other improvements to the fairgrounds this year included the construction of the Red Ambrose Exhibitors Building, at a total cost of \$65,000, which will be paid off in two years, and the addition of concrete floors in the Arts and Crafts and Horticulture buildings at a cost of \$10,000.

Today, piles of rocks dot the fairgrounds, the swales in the parking lot area and near the lower entrance to the fair grounds being only partially completed.

## The lowdown on the dirt regulations

Pete Mengak, a resource conservationist for the Luzerne County Conservation District, says that money matters are not his concern.

"This site has been an ongoing thing since May 6, 1991. The site is in continuous violation," said Mengak, who added that the site has been inspected seven times this year.

Mengak said that the violation is important because documentation shows that sediment from the fairgrounds has been washed into an unnamed stream which empties into the Huntsville Reservoir, which supplies public drinking water. The amount of sediment which has run into the reservoir has not been measured, said Mengak.

"This is a repeat offender," said Mengak. "They've been made aware of these regulations before."

Mengak said that the fair also did earth moving work on the grounds in 1987 without taking proper erosion control measures.

"The first thing you have to keep in mind is that any and all earth moving activities require the design and implementation of a soil erosion control plan," said Mengak.

The state Department of Environmental Resources (DER) has delegated authority to review erosion control plans and inspect sites to county conservation districts throughout the state, according to Mengak.

In Luzerne County, however, the authority to issue formal citations remains with DER's Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation, and formal citations have not been issued yet, said Mengak. If formal citations are issued, the state's Clean Streams Law provides for fines that could run as high as \$10,000 per day for each violation.

## Hasay disagrees with the violations

"I'm, quite frankly, angry," said state Representative George Hasay. "I've walked the entire area and

there's no environmental pollution. There's no major soil erosion. I think it's an overreaction on the part of the Luzerne County Conservation District."

"It seems the soil erosion people are making the Fair Association do the whole thing very quickly," Hasay added. "I think the Conservation District could ask the Fair Association to do it in gradual steps."

Hasay said that he and state Senator Charles Lemmond were investigating what could be done on the state level to help the fair.

"I'd hate to see the Back Mountain lose the fairgrounds," said Hasay. "This is what happens when an agency becomes so independent they have no boss. This is a government agency at its worst."

Hasay said that in meeting with officials from the Department of Environmental Resources and Environmental Protection Agency, they've taken a more moderate view.

This year the fair paid out \$24,000 in premiums, or prize money, to winners of various contests, according to Ed Kelly. The state will refund that money to the fair in January.

"That will be money we can use to settle some of our expenses," he said.

"There's no positive answers at this point," said Hasay, who added that a meeting has been set up with the Fair Association and the Luzerne County Commissioners for Friday, November 15, to see if the county may be able to help the fair financially. He has also contacted U.S. Representative Paul Kanjorski's office to see if payments to the Congressional Equipment Center can be deferred until the association can afford them.

Kelly said that the fair also was investigating getting grants, or low interest loans to pay for the work to meet the soil erosion regulations.

## Penn State lists movie schedule

Penn State Wilkes-Barre offers a wide range of free cultural events throughout the year which are open to the community.

The International Film Series consists of many classic films made both in the United States and Europe. Some of the films coming up are: Nov. 14, 8 1/2 (Italy); Dec. 5, Torch Song Trilogy (USA); Jan. 23, The Man Who Fell to Earth (UK); and Jan. 30, The Brother From Another Planet (USA). The films are shown at 7 p.m. in the Bierly Auditorium in the Science Building.

# Veterans Day '91



## Showing respect

Above: Veterans from the Daddow-Isaacs American Legion Post 672, the Disabled American Veterans, and Viet Nam Veterans of America salute as sirens went off at 11 a.m. during the Veterans Day observation in Dallas Borough.

## Two generations of veterans

At right: Viet Nam veteran John Charney of Dallas Township and his daughter, Capt. Tina Charney-Kravits, who served in Operation Desert Storm with the Air Force, lower the flag to half-mast during the ceremony. (Post photos/Grace R. Dove)

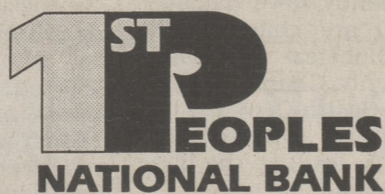
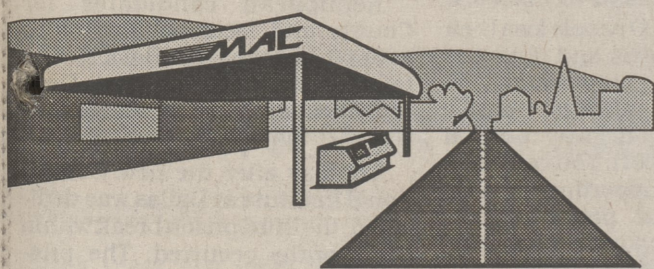


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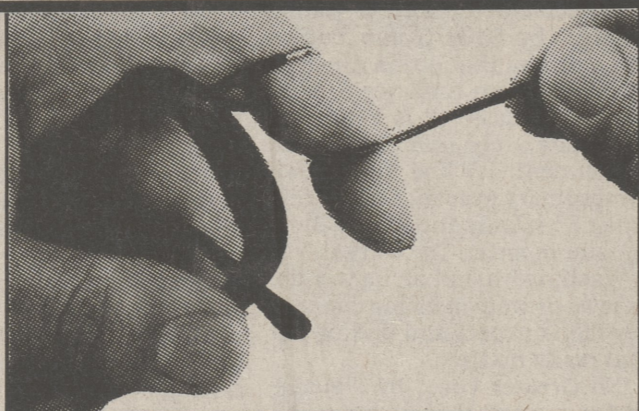
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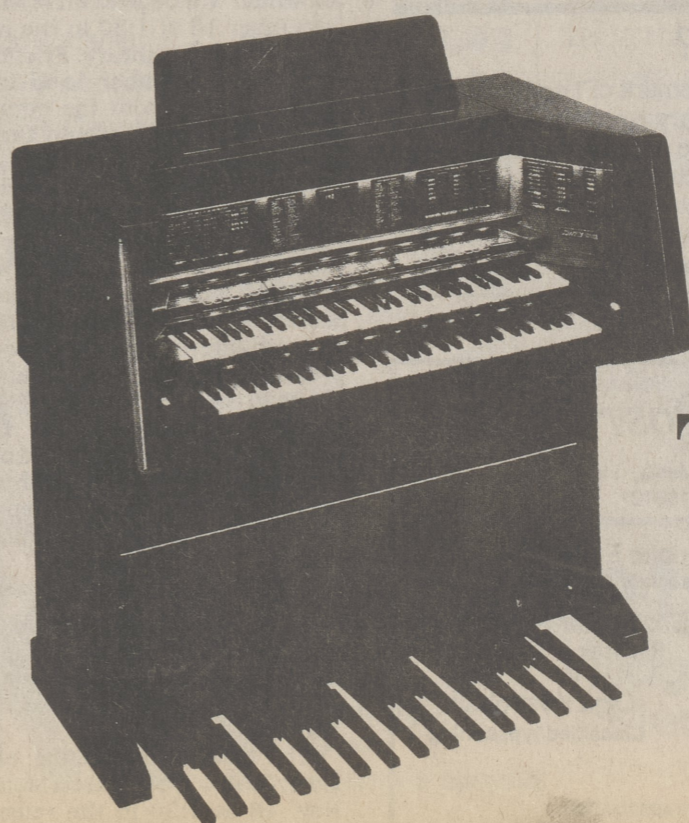
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