

## THE DALLAS POST

## EDITORIALS

## Lake-Lehman raises were inappropriate

In a time of tight budgets and raging battles over teachers' salaries, the Lake-Lehman School Board raised eyebrows when it approved raises for administrators by as much as 10.3 percent. That decision may come back to haunt the board when it's time to negotiate a new contract with the teachers' union.

To her credit — but hers alone — superintendent of schools Nancy Davis turned down an increase in her salary. She didn't say why, but it's safe to assume that she had the good sense to know that taking a double-digit raise at a time when people are fortunate to hold onto a job would set a bad example for every other employee of the district. Unfortunately, no one else was paying attention and nine administrators took raises between 6.3 and 10.3 percent, while one accepted a more reasonable 3.7 percent increase.

The school board had originally budgeted exactly half as much money for administrators' raises as was actually handed out; the difference would have been even greater had Mrs. Davis's salary taken a boost. The excess will be found by dipping into the district's reserve, or rainy day, funds.

It will be interesting to see how the board reacts if the teachers ask for hefty increases when their contract next comes up for renewal. While it can be argued that the total increased spending on administrators this year will be relatively small — about \$36,000 in all — it will be difficult to convince many observers that raises two to three times the rate of inflation were justified.

## Children have right to a safe, secure life

If you missed Barbara Walters' segment on 20-20, the ABC news program last week, you missed an enlightening piece of journalism on an important contemporary topic.

Ms. Walters took a hard look at the case before a Florida court in which a 12-year-old boy is suing to be separated from his natural parents. His goal is to become eligible for adoption by his present foster parents, with whom he feels happy and secure for the first time in his life.

The headlines have given the impression that this case is about a child's right to sue his parents, and in a limited way that is true. But Gregory K's (His full name has not been released) case is about much more; ultimately it is about our society's definition of the values that are such a popular subject in political circles these days.

Gregory K. and his two brothers have been placed in foster care several times by their mother when she found it too expensive or inconvenient to care for them. At one point, Gregory spent nearly two years at a camp for foster children with no contact — not a phone call or a card — from his mother the entire time. His 10-year-old brother has been so traumatized by this treatment that he shows obvious signs of emotional disturbance, while an eight-year-old brother has seen his mother being beaten by a live-in boyfriend against whom she has yet to file charges.

But through a combination of his own determination and some luck, Gregory has found a new life with loving foster parents who would adopt him if they could do so. On screen, the youngster displayed remarkable composure and a keen understanding of what was good for him. The boy's father, who is divorced from Gregory's mother, has stepped aside from the suit, declaring that his son is better off where he is now than back with his natural parents.

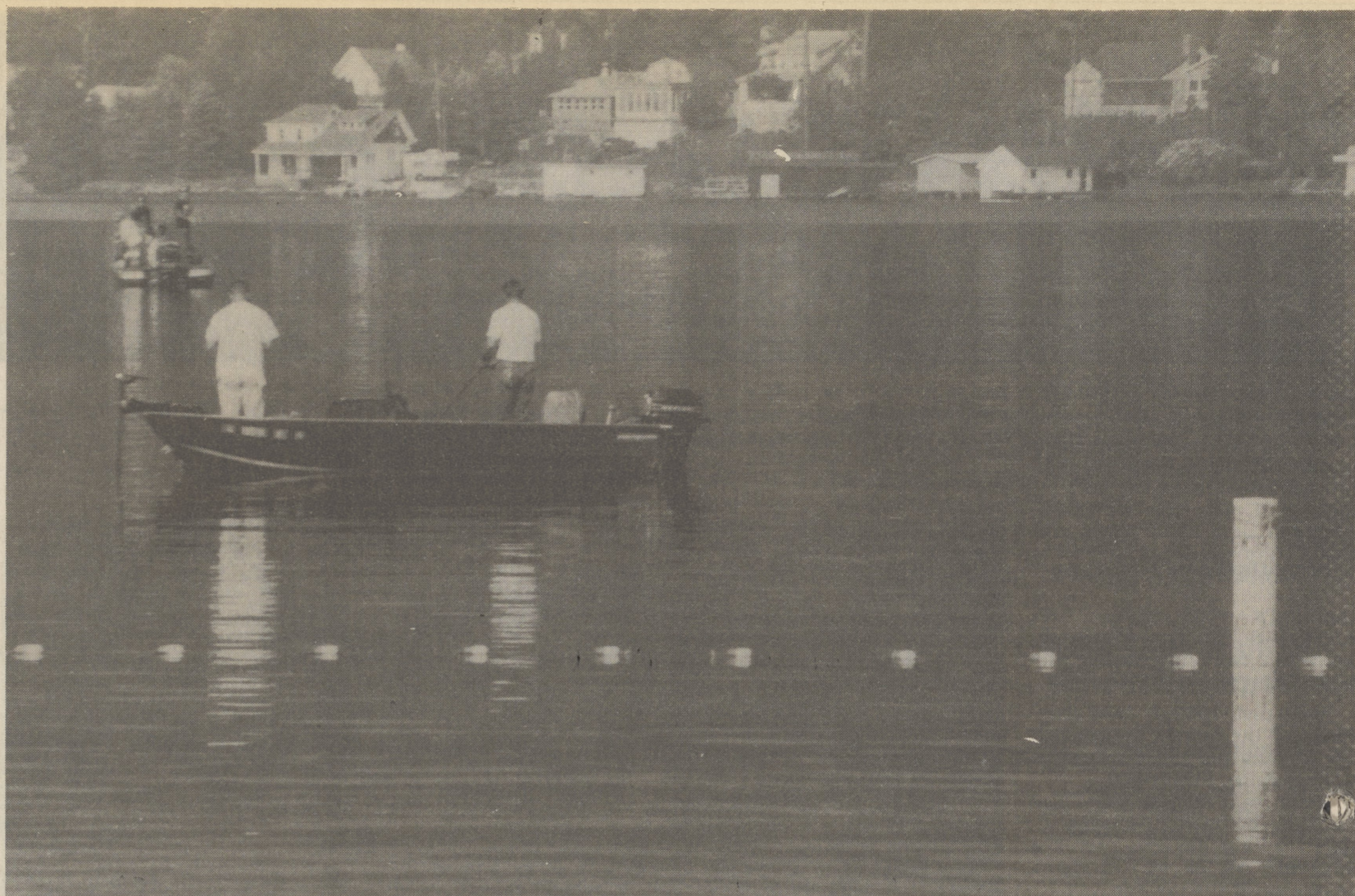
Many people find abhorrent the idea of anyone but a child's natural parents having custody. They believe in some sort of mystical connection between parent and child that, when broken, results in more damage than does the perverted relationship.

Others think that minors simply have no rights, and that granting some will be the end of society as we know it. They foresee a flood of lawsuits by children contending that their parents don't give them a large enough allowance, or have unfairly grounded them for misbehavior. Such a result is highly unlikely; only the most extreme cases of parental abuse or neglect will reach the courts. In Gregory K's case, the state of Florida had begun action separately to remove the mother's claim after repeatedly trying without success to get her to accept responsibility for her children.

And what of this? Many of the same people who decry granting limited rights to children support stern consequences when a minor is convicted of committing a crime. Juveniles, not their parents, are frequently charged as adults and face adult sentencing.

Children are being abused, maimed and murdered at an alarming rate in America — and this region is ample testimony to that fact. The time has come for the state to step in more quickly and forcefully to protect defenseless youngsters. Parents who abuse their children or allow them to be abused by others, or who refuse to take responsibility for the young persons they brought into the world ought to get a couple of chances to mend their ways and then be subject to losing them. In the worst cases, they also should be prevented from bringing more children into the world.

We must stop wishing and hoping that people will change their ways and start taking action to protect and nourish all of our children. Only when we do can we lay claim to true family values.



Waiting for a strike at Harveys Lake

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

## Library news

## "How to.." books help Shavertown man build deck

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is happy to announce a new member added to the list of our "How to.." make things with the help of library books. Robert Nattress of Shavertown has added a deck on his home and used several of our books to give him ideas and plans on how to do the job. His deck is made in an octagonal motif and needless to say, he is quite proud of it. He claims it took him about two months to complete and he did have some help from his wife, Lynn, and his son, Chris. We have many books to help with projects and other activities that are constantly

being used by our patrons.

Someone asked the librarian what kind of bait she used when she went fishing. The answer, of course, is bookworms. The library has many books on all kinds of fishing and also a great many videos on trout and bass fishing and fly-tying for patrons to borrow.

New books at the library: "Joy in Mudville; the Big Book of Baseball Humor" edited by Dick Schaap and Mort Gerberg is a treasury of baseball humor assembled with love and laughs by commentator/author Schaap and cartoonist/author Gerberg. It is a dream lineup of stories, essays, cartoons, songs and photographs, a book baseball lovers will be cheering for

this season and for many seasons to come. How about the horse who played in the big leagues; the one who played in fiction or the one who played in fact? They're all here.

"Contents Under Pressure" by Edna Buchanan is a novel of suspense from one of America's most exotic and dangerous cities — Miami, Florida. The author combines the best ingredients of suspense writing — seat-of-the-pants action, an intelligent and beautiful protagonist and a complicated murder — and heats them up under a Miami sun for a thrillingly combustible outcome. This is an immensely satisfying read, makes you crave for more.

"The Volcano Lover" by Susan Sontag is a story that takes place in Naples, 1772, the second city of Europe, gorgeous, turbulent and presided over by its renowned volcano, Vesuvius, constantly threatening eruptions that simultaneously fascinate and terrify.

The Cavaliere is a collector of antiques, of art, of people, with a connoisseur's avid but dispassionate temperament. Then his wife dies and he knows deep feeling for the first time.

"Nobody's Angel" by Karen Robards is the story of Susanna Redmon, plain eldest daughter of the preacher in Carolina Cold. Her herbal healing skills made her

## J.W.J.

## Congressman offers more simplistic election year rhetoric

By JOHN W. JOHNSON

Notwithstanding his upcoming trial to answer charges of bribery and influence peddling against him, Congressman Joseph McDade continues to demonstrate his consummate skill as a politician with perhaps his best yet series of constituent questions.

Without doubt, this latest series of questions is the best yet in simplistic formulation and demagogic construction, touching virtually all of the current hot buttons. The questions, with this writer's responses, follow:

1. Do you support the idea of requiring employers to provide workers with minimum health insurance benefits?

— Yes, Joe...and I also support the idea of baseball and apple pie...who doesn't support the idea of minimum health benefits? The question is: who pays for these universal benefits, and how to we insure access to everyone once, in fact, the cost question is addressed? Now that, along with an answer, would have been a much better question, Joe.

2. Do you support a 100 percent

tax deduction for health insurance costs incurred by farmers, small business people and other self-employed individuals?

— Again, Joe, and assuming you expect a "yes" answer to your first question, this second question is a demagogic one because you haven't indicated how this health care is going to be afforded by anyone to be deducted in the first place.

3. Which best reflects your views: a) A middle-income tax cut should be passed this year.

b) Changes in tax rates at this time would hinder economic growth.

c) Undecided. — I'm undecided because there is insufficient information in the so-called views upon which to make an intelligent decision.

4. Do you support a \$5,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers to stimulate the housing market and increase the affordability of homes?

— With nationwide depression of the real estate market, young home buyers would most certainly benefit from such a proposal...as would the market.

5. Do you support tax incentives

for development of alternative energy sources?

— Without question...then perhaps we wouldn't be sending our young men and women off to die in the desert toward the alleged protection of Middle Eastern oil fields.

6. Do you support full tax deductibility of Individual Retirement Accounts for all taxpayers?

— Yes. 7. Would you support efforts to expand the availability and reduce costs of private long-term care insurance for services like nursing homes, by providing tax advantages for insurers and senior citizens?

— Nice idea, Joe, but one which ignores those nagging questions about the billions of dollars we already spend on Medicare, without addressing the question of its (or that of Social Security) lack of "means tested" availability.

8. Are current dairy price supports for farmers:

a) Inadequate  
b) Too generous  
c) About right  
— American taxpayers currently spend about \$10 billion a year on

agricultural subsidies. About \$650 million of that is spent in subsidies for the dairy industry...all theoretically designed to insure the reasonably priced and universally available supply of an essential foodstuff.

The problem is that such subsidies are no longer necessary to insure the continuation of the family farm. Fact is that the wealthiest 25 percent of farmers now receive 60 percent of the subsidy. Fact is, taxpayers spend more than \$1 billion per year just to store foodstuffs bought by subsidy that will never be consumed.

What we need, Joe, is to eliminate agricultural subsidies...and if we really want to help the small farmer, then let's try to find a way for the farm family to pass along the farm without inheritance taxes making it more attractive for heirs to sell the farm to real estate developers.

Editor's Note: John W. Johnson lives in Honesdale, part of Representative McDade's district. Responses to the rest of Congressman's questions appear in next week's column.

## The economic viewpoint

## Back Mountain needs a plan if it is to reach its goals

By HOWARD J. GROSSMAN

The Back Mountain is only a heartbeat away from being the finest geography in Northeastern Pennsylvania. It has become an outstanding place to live, the growth area of Luzerne County, a community of involvement through the work of the Back Mountain Citizens Council, and the prospect of continuing to be a powerful force in the important decisions made daily throughout the County.

It is, however, a heartbeat away from an even more dynamic future due to the absence of an areawide plan to guide the area's growth well into the 21st Century.

The Back Mountain Citizens Council has encouraged areawide planning as well as other measures designed to promote areawide cooperation. While a number of municipalities have attempted planning or even have an up to date plan, the ability of the area to

solve current and future problems normal to municipalities of the size and type in the Back Mountain require an areawide approach.

While discussions have been held on the need for areawide planning and a number of individuals have shown some interest in the topic, no affirmative action has occurred to enable strong consideration of this tool to help guide the area's future. Despite the absence of an areawide plan, much optimism prevails in the Back Mountain with regard to its future.

The future, however, can be more secure and the area better equipped if a decision were made today by all the local governments in the Back Mountain to join together to develop an areawide plan. In the context of planning, a heartbeat away means a resolution on the part of each local government to agree to entering into an areawide planning program, one which would still

permit each local government to control its own land use and zoning decisions.

Thus, an areawide plan will not change the local prerogative toward decision making but will make that decision making more effective with more information being available and with the guidance of how that decision might impact surrounding communities.

A heartbeat away means that local governments need to focus attention on the immediacy of planning needs, but at the same time recognize that a plan is long range in nature and can only be as effective as those individuals and citizens who will be the leaders and voters of the future as well as those in position of authority and management today.

Much has already been written about what constitutes a comprehensive plan. The plan for the Back Mountain should be strategic, have a shared vision of

what is to be accomplished, and help to energize cooperative approaches to areawide problem solving.

This is true whether the issue is water or environment or economic development. In fact, one of the great issues of the Back Mountain is to broaden the land use landscape to enable economic growth to take place which can help alleviate the burden which currently exists with respect to revenue needs to support such services as education.

An areawide plan can be the key instrument for progress and promote responsible actions which will benefit all of the generations to come who will decide that the Back Mountain is the area within which they want to reside.

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## THE DALLAS POST

Published Weekly by Bartsen Media, Inc.  
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Telephone: 717-675-5211

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