

THE DALLAS POST

EDITORIALS

Dallas Borough takes two steps forward

Credit is due to the Dallas Borough Council for two recent initiatives.

First, the approaching demolition of the former Hearthstone Pub. This newspaper began three years ago to question why action was not being taken to remove this dangerous eyesore. The council at that time had attempted to have the building torn down, but suffered too long with an ineffective solicitor who continually promised action but failed to deliver. With a new council and solicitor, real movement has occurred, culminating in a state grant that is expected to arrive any day now. It's good to see that the building will be removed; it would be even better if the owner of the property — and not the taxpayers of the Commonwealth — was paying the bill.

Dallas Borough also should be commended for the recently signed contract with its police chief and officers, which provided meaningful raises for both. That's not an accolade for throwing money around needlessly, but for rewarding valuable public service employees. It's difficult for small communities to hire and retain good people, and the borough has wisely decided that law enforcement is a place to make an extra effort to do so.



End of summer at Huntsville Reservoir

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

A. Case for conservation

Bikers, walkers save energy, but get little support and face risks

By ALENE N. CASE

Did you know that one-tenth of all the oil used in the entire world each day is used by American workers simply going to and from their place of employment? If one percent of those drivers left the car in the driveway one day each week, we could save 96 million gallons of gas each year. My husband recently calculated that he saves a whole pint of gas by riding his bicycle two miles to buy his morning newspaper. Multiply that by the number of people in the US who use a car to do short errands and we could probably reduce our dependence on foreign oil to practically zero.

So, why don't more people walk or ride bicycles? Partly, it's habit — we're so accustomed to hopping into the car that we don't even consider any other options. We also think it's quicker. Yes, driving is faster than walking, but you certainly don't burn off as many calories. And, biking can be just as fast as driving. My son can bike to downtown Wilkes-Barre in the same amount of time that he can drive over the same route. In fact, one study showed that people who commuted by bicycle arrived at work on time more often than their car-using colleagues. In some cities such as Los Angeles, the average speed on the freeway is down to 18 miles per hour. At that speed, biking begins to look more attractive!

We could always try to blame the weather. Surely it is too cold or rainy too much of the time around here for the use of alternate transport. But then, how did Seattle, WA, Madison WI and Montreal, Quebec become three of the top 10 cities in North America for bicycling? (By the way, Orlando FL was listed as one of the three worst in spite of its sunny climate!)

No, our problem is much deeper — it is downright dangerous to walk or bike on most roads and streets in the Wyoming Valley. There are several reasons for this situation. The most obvious problem is a lack of taught from infancy that the road is not a place to play. They should always be accompanied by an adult until they can cross the road safely. If children see adults jay-walking, they will tend to do likewise no matter what they have been told. Parents should not let children use their bicycles on the street until those children can follow all the rules of the road consistently. That means stopping at all stop signs, using hand signals to indicate a turn, staying close to the white lines on the side of the road, looking behind themselves without losing control of the bicycle, etc. It also means teaching them how to get into a line of traffic at a stoplight so that they can turn left or go straight ahead without getting run over by a car. When they can handle all that (usually about age 10 or 12), make sure they have proper reflectors and helmets and of proper education. This applies to learning to be a pedestrian, a biker, or a driver. Drivers should be taught to expect to share the

roadway unless it is a limited-access highway where other modes of transportation are forbidden. One of the quickest ways to make me angry is to honk your horn at me while I wait for a pedestrian to clear the crosswalk before making a turn. Please consider the rights of others and, when in doubt, apply the Golden Rule.

Drivers also seem to think that speed limits were set for their benefit and that if they can go 45mph in a 25mph zone without running into another car or getting caught by the police then it must be OK. With the exception of areas with heavy traffic or dangerous curves, in-town speed limits are set for the safety of non-drivers! Please slow down so that parents can safely push a stroller, children can safely walk to school, and bicycle riders can safely arrive at their destinations.

If drivers are going to respect the rights of pedestrians and bikers, we must also learn to follow the rules of the road. Children should keep a close eye on them.

Even if we all enrolled in safety courses tomorrow, our roads would still be dangerous. Engineering is the other half of the equation. It is high time that walkers and bikers were taken into account when streets are built or roads are widened. It seems that the first casualty of road "improvement" is the sidewalk and the second is the shoulder. The next person who designs a street around here should be required to push a baby carriage up Center Street to the Kingston Township Park. Then, I'll bet the plans would suddenly include a sidewalk and/or wide shoulder! (Also consider the effect of a 2-4 inch drop-off when a road is resurfaced and the shoulder is not included. Try maintaining your balance if you have to get off the road on a bike.)

It is especially important to provide safe areas on bridges for the use of cyclists and pedestrians. Many cities build separate bridges across busy highways specifically for this purpose. Other cities have areas of the downtown closed to vehicular traffic during the day so that shoppers can move about more easily. The shoulders that we do have must be kept clean so that bicycles will not lose traction on the small stones.

There are other ways to encourage biking. One of the simplest is to provide bike racks or lockers at workplaces, schools, grocery stores, and in other parking areas. Some city buses have bike racks on the rear so that one can combine the two modes of transportation. Another option is to provide covered bicycle parking at frequently-used bus stops. No one should have to tie a bike to a phone pole or tree.

There are many other ways to make a neighborhood bicycle and pedestrian friendly. It is not my intent to catalog them all. I only hope to increase your awareness of the situation so that you can try in some small (or big) way to help solve the problem.

Letters

School children need to be protected from liberal ideas

Editor:

I strongly disagree with J.W.J. that there is no room for censorship (as she apparently defines it) in a free country, and submit that one such room is the elementary classroom. I would certainly agree that *Of Mice and Men*, though offensive in places, has a role in the senior high. On the other hand, I might argue whether *Heather Has Two Mommies*, a popular children's book designed at explaining or legitimizing the homosexual lifestyle to grade school children,

has a place in our elementary schools.

Obviously, there is a distinction between censorship, the legal prohibition of free expression, and indoctrination, the decision as to what should and should not be taught to children.

I respectfully doubt that it is my freedom of speech that motivates the People for the American Way. Rather, I suspect it is the fear of the liberal secularist that other ideas and values, perhaps those of Evangelical Christians or of others

they often label as "intolerant", might be permitted access to the hallowed halls of public academe.

Just as the entertainment industry reacted to the Vice President's criticism of the glamorization of single pregnancy in defensive ridicule, fighting to retain its stranglehold on the media rather than welcoming it as legitimate comment or as one man's opinion, so this organization and others of the liberal mindset will react whenever their power over the minds of our youth is

challenged by ideas different than their own.

If it is so obvious, as your columnist admits, that parents have the right to decide what their children will use in public schools, then why do we not welcome the increase in parental involvement and community interest in our schools instead of fearing it as a precursor to bookburning?

Lee S. Piatt
Lehman Township
Editor's Note: J.W.J. is a he, not a she.

Publisher's notebook

What a difference a few decades can make

It was the summer of 1958. Dwight Eisenhower was midway through his second term as President, the world was at peace and the American economy was steaming ahead full tilt, in no small measure because it was the only one intact after World War II.

My parents took me and my brother on a week-long trip through upstate New York, including a stop at Howe Caverns. After descending into the bowels of the earth and touring the caves, we made the obligatory stop at the gift shop, where children always seem to find at least one item they can't live without.

I retain one distinct memory of that day; of examining a toy Indian tepee made of tin, brightly-painted on the outside, but on the inside was the label of a Budweiser beer can. On the bottom was stamped, "Made in Japan."

And I recall sneering in the way we did then about the junk that Japan was turning out. Why, they didn't even bother to scrape the label off the can before turning it into a cheap trinket to be sold to gullible Americans! And the Europeans weren't regarded much better, highlighted by Italy with its revolving door government and tax dodging population, each person it seemed always ready to cut corners for his own advantage.

What a difference a few decades make. Now Japan and Europe are admired for the high quality of their manufactured goods and the life enjoyed by the majority of their people, with benefits such as family leave and health care long ago taken care of. But here it's a different story, as soaring budget deficits, ineffective government and careless workers imperil the greatest economic engine of modern times. Who's to blame? Anyone but ourselves, it seems, judging from most people's response to the question. And, what's the solution? Anything that won't impinge on my independence or pocketbook.

How did the nations that were destroyed by World War II rebound to become such powerful competitors in world markets? Some say it was mostly our own doing, as the Marshall Plan pumped billions of dollars into a depleted Europe, while U.S. governance steered Japan in a positive direction. Others argue that if our former enemies could and would pay for their own defense, they wouldn't have the money now used to subsidize industry or provide services. Both are probably a little bit correct, but neither can possibly tell the whole story because, without a willing population, no free nation can long stay the course.

And what about us? Are we capable of shouldering some of the blame for our own failings, or will we continue to duck responsibility? Not just the President, or Congress, or greedy S&L owners, but all of us who practice or accept shoddy work, who cheat just a little on our taxes, who think our own interest is somehow disconnected from that of our neighbors whether

they are rich or poor, white or brown.

In one recent example, tens of thousands of homes were destroyed by hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, a good percentage because they were improperly built by contractors who raised their profits by using substandard building methods. As a result, their owners are homeless and jobless, insurance companies will dole out billions of dollars and all American taxpayers will contribute a little more to restoring the economies of South Florida and Kauai.

But all 11 homes in Andrew's path built by Habitat for Humanity survived pretty much intact. These weren't palaces; they were modest homes built largely by semi-skilled volunteers. But they were constructed to widely-accepted codes that all new construction is supposed to meet.

The financial implications of mass irresponsibility are visible all around, from failed banks and bankrupt companies to massive federal budget deficits. For whatever reason, in the last 15 or 20 years too many of us have adopted "live for today" as our slogan and said to hell with tomorrow. But tomorrow is approaching like a locomotive steaming down the track, and tied to it are not only our own hopes and dreams but those of our children and grandchildren. We can apply the brakes, and it's still not too late for a moderate pull to prevent a collision, but the longer we wait the harder will be the task, until finally it won't be possible to stop in time.

There are hopeful signs. Outstanding credit owed by individuals is declining after a decade of rapid growth. Retail sales are stagnant — that hurts stores and the newspapers they advertise in for now — but may mean more people are living within their means. Political figures talk about government efficiency and personal responsibility, although serious plans to deal with the deficit are sorely lacking and dishing out pork has remained standard fare.

It will take much more. For one thing, taxes will have to rise, not fall, if we are to attack the deficit while maintaining programs. That prospect raises howls of protest from some corners, but the bare facts are that Americans pay the lowest taxes in the developed world, and get what we pay for in many cases.

Most important, we need leaders who will put the true interests of the nation ahead of their own political goals, and voters who will cast off wayward dreams of having it all and paying for none. Which comes first? I'm not sure, but I am certain that if we are to leave for our children anything approaching the promise we began with, some sacrifices are in order. Americans have done it before, we can do it again, if we do it together.

Ron Bartizek

Wyoming community week announced for Oct. 11-17

The Wyoming County Community Awareness Program Committee announces Community Awareness Week from October 11-17. During this time activities will enhance the community's awareness of issues related to family, children, and the quality of life in Wyoming County.

Activities include eight appearances by prominent drug prevention educator Jeff Thaxton and

performances by magician Jeff O'Leary, focusing of the family as the agent of making our community drug free. O'Leary will include an evening performance on October 14 at 7:15 p.m. at Tunkhannock High School. Families are encouraged to attend together for this "Night of Magic With Your Family." Prizes for adults and students will be given to those who attend.

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