

THE DALLAS POST

EDITORIALS

Officials, public can work together to improve services

This is the time of year when school boards and municipal governments reorganize, electing new officers and making committee assignments. It's also a good time to note the important contribution those who serve on public bodies make to their communities.

Most of us think that we've done our civic duty by going to the polls and pulling a lever once every year or two. Others follow events more closely and attend a meeting now and then, or participate in public life when a topic closely affects them. An example was found in the Dallas School District last year, when the prospect of a new teachers' contract attracted crowds to otherwise sparsely-attended meetings.

But those who serve in elected and appointed office go much further. They watch over the mundane details of our public institutions as well as the exciting ones. And when things heat up, they are thrust into the eye of the storm where common ground is usually rare and disputes are seldom resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Too often, their job is a lonely one as few people seem to notice or care about much beyond their tax rate. That's a shame given the wealth of knowledge and expertise possessed by the people who reside in the Back Mountain.

This year, we hope public officials will try harder to involve citizens in their institutions, and that conscientious individuals will respond. That could be done by inviting residents to serve on committees alongside officials. The roads committee, for example, might ask someone with a background in engineering or construction to join. There are plenty of other examples in which the community would benefit from a wider perspective while fostering a sense of responsibility and accomplishment in the citizenry.

American democracy has endured for more than 200 years because it has been effective at the grassroots. More participation at the local level can assure the continuation of that record of achievement.

Believe it or not, our taxes are too low

Americans are taxed too little and spend too much on health care. That sounds like part of Bill Clinton's campaign platform, but it's not. Instead, it's the complaint of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a group with 24 industrialized countries as its membership.

In a recently released report, the OECD chastised the United States for too long ignoring its budget deficit, which now distorts economies around the globe. The organization said that the U.S. needs to tax and "invest" more while getting health care costs under control. It noted that among its members, only Turkey had lower overall tax rates — federal, state and local — than the United States.

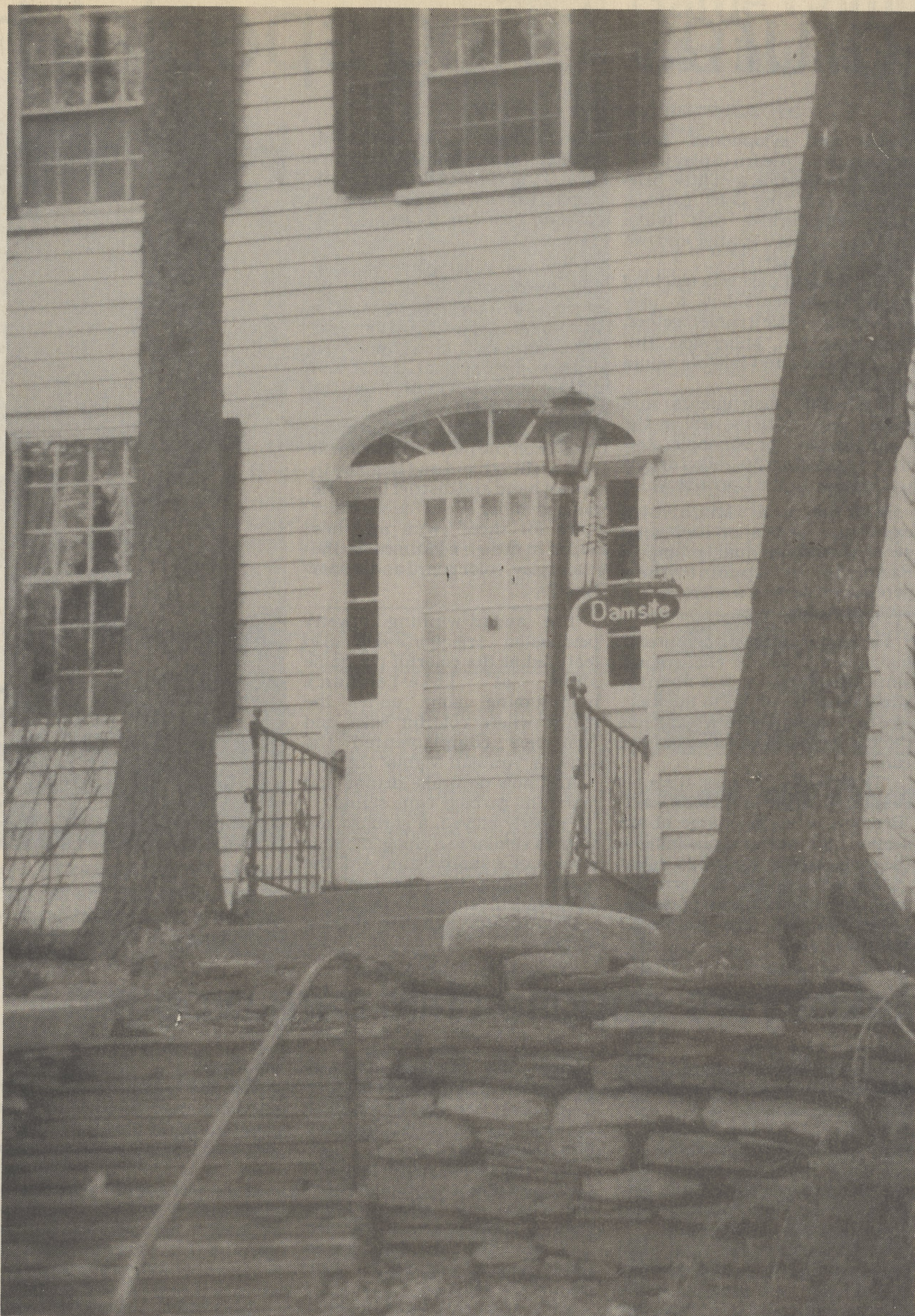
We can imagine the reaction from the "no new taxes" crowd; those who scream bloody murder every time the mill rate goes up. They see taxes as an evil, and government spending as a waste.

Except when it's their benefit that might be cut, or their subsidy that's scheduled for elimination. Take Social Security as one example. Whether or not it was established as a supplement, it has become the primary source of retirement income for most Americans. But mention that high-income retirees should pay more tax on their benefits, or perhaps get less, and all hell breaks loose. The first point they raise is that they paid for it, so they should get it, no means testing allowed. But if retirees got only the amount they paid in, even with interest many people's benefits would run out after a few years, and they would be left with nothing.

Meanwhile the clock is ticking, and the bill we're handing future generations is growing. We ignore the deficit monster at our peril, and it's only a matter of time before a solution is forced upon us by other nations more solvent and responsible than we have been. If that happens, the consequences will be far more painful than those imposed by a correction of our own making.

Do you agree? Disagree?

Editorials are the opinion of the management of The Dallas Post. We welcome your opinion on contemporary issues in the form of letters to the editor. If you don't write, the community may never hear a contrasting point of view. Send letters to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612. Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number so that we may verify authenticity. We do not publish anonymous letters, but will consider withholding the name in exceptional circumstances. We reserve the right to edit for length and grammar.



Mixed metaphor in Huntsville

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

A. Case for Conservation

Only active people can make a difference

By ALENE N. CASE

Soon after our family moved to the Wyoming Valley in 1978, we noticed the lack of an organized recycling program. I mentioned this to one of our new friends and she suggested that I talk with Rickard Dungan. For the next several years, Rickard and I sorted newspapers, crushed glass, and flattened cans together in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church in Wilkes-Barre. Rickard was one of those people who was never content to sit around and "enjoy" his retirement years. But, as his eightieth birthday approached, he realized that our little recycling operation could not go on indefinitely. He started the Citizens Recycling Council and obtained a grant to help the city of Wilkes-Barre begin a pilot program for curb-side pick-up of recyclables. I visited Rickard three weeks before his death at the age of 81. He was in a nursing home suffering from spinal cancer. It was obvious that he did not expect to recover. But when he spoke of progress on the recycling grant, his eyes fairly sparkled.

I suppose we have all met people who give themselves completely to some particular cause. They inspire us with their sense of purpose and tenacity. But, the work we (my husband and I) have been doing in Eastern Europe has convinced me that such people are an absolutely essential ingredient in any successful environmental project. Technology is fine, but in order to accomplish a worthy goal people need to be willing to sacrifice time and energy. Consider this: the four environmental leaders, who now have the monitoring equipment spent their own money to come to the USA to be trained in its use. Each one spent one third to one half of an entire year's salary for the plane fare! And that is only the beginning of the dedication these people have shown.

Let me give you some examples. Our hostess in Sofia, Bulgaria, was Dr. Elizaveta Matveeva. She is a biologist who moonlights as an interpreter. Her skills in language and in science give her an

international credibility that few others possess, and she is savvy enough to use both to benefit the conservation organizations to which she belongs. Eliza helped to organize an international conference in Sofia before the communist government was ousted. ECOFORUM included scientists, journalists, and enough government officials so that it would appear that it was all the Bulgarian government's idea. They couldn't say no.

Mila Kapusta struggled for eighteen years. His Ph.D. work was never published because it exposed heavy metals pollution which the government of Czechoslovakia would not admit. He spent his time building hiking trails and working as a forester. He used his photography skills in environmental education programs. When the opening came, Milan jumped in with both feet. He now heads the Global ReLeaf program in Slovakia. He and his wife work for a large environmental organization trying to improve the quality of life in the entire country. He has written a book, led student exchanges, and begun once again to study the effects of metals pollution. This is a mild-mannered man who had every reason to give up hope in the future - but he is working harder than ever.

Then there are some young people in Budapest who call themselves the Toad Action Group. This is not just a catchy phrase with a cool acronym. They actually go to a stretch of busy highway in the middle of the night and protect migrating toads from getting run over. They lobbied the Hungarian government to put up a toad crossing sign - much like the ones we have for deer. Now, that is dedication in the cause of conservation!

As we traveled we were constantly impressed with people's willingness to do anything they could to help us accomplish our mission. One group in Romania offered to let us take their only pH meter with us to Lithuania when ours malfunctioned. Instead, they

were able to help us fix the one we had brought. Another young man gave up an entire vacation day to provide translation services for us at the cargo office in the Budapest airport. With his help and the serendipitous fact that one of his "tree planters" worked there as a customs official, we managed to gain the release of all 53 boxes of equipment that had been tied up there for three weeks.

And then there is Jozsef Majer. His list of accomplishments and projects makes me tired just reading it! Jozsef's favorite word is "polite" and he is certainly polite, if that word can be used to describe a bulldog. Dr. Majer is the chair of the Ecology Department at Janus Pannonius University in Pecs, Hungary. He is the world's leading authority on several families of flies. He has responsibilities in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, graduate students, and a busy teaching schedule. But there any similarity to an "ivory tower" professor ends. Jozsef leads two separate environmental organizations which have accomplished all sort of things. They have successfully protested against the expansion of the nuclear power industry in southern Hungary, purchased a cormorant rookery in Croatia, stopped construction of an unnecessary highway, and documented many local pollution problems. They continue to work for the protection of endangered birds like the black stork, to hold summer bird-banding camps, to publicize environmental problems, to monitor water quality, and to push for an international park along the Drava River.

Obviously, people in Central and Eastern Europe are committed to solving their environmental problems. We in the Western world can best help by listening and letting them tell us which forms of help would be best for them. As my late friend, Rickard Dungan, knew, dedication and perseverance are qualities that are required in solving problems against seemingly impossible odds. Our European colleagues already know that.

Would you like to write a column?

The Dallas Post attempts to publish a wide range of opinion and information. We welcome material from local authors with expertise in or an opinion about a particular issue.

If you would like to submit an item for publication, send it to The Dallas Post at P.O.

Box 366, Dallas PA 18612, or drop it off at our office at 45 Main Road, Dallas Township (across from Offset Paperback). Be sure to include an address and phone number where you can be reached. If you would like the material back, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - Dec. 9, 1932 UNEMPLOYED BUILD ROAD TO K.T. SCHOOL

The Senior class of Dallas Township High School will offer the popular play "When a Woman Decides" at the Himmler Theatre. The play is one of a series planned events which the senior class is sponsoring to finance their graduation trip to Washington next June.

After numerous delays, Kingston Township will share in the relief offered unemployed. Township supervisors, school directors met with Mr. Kaschenbach owner of a plot of ground adjoining the new high school and completed plans for construction of a road from the new school to Lehigh St., Shavertown. On Monday, 15 men the first of a group of unemployed were put to work making repairs to the streets under the supervision of township supervisors. These men will receive orders for foodstuffs for work done.

You could get - Pillsbury flour, 24 lb. bag 93¢; Louella butter, 2 lbs., 61¢; eggs 39¢ doz.; Campbell beans with pork 5¢ can.

50 Years Ago - Dec. 11, 1942 HUNTERS MISTAKENLY SHOOT ED KERN'S PIG

Military leave of absence has been granted to Robert Henderson, music supervisor of Dallas Borough schools, who will take his second physical at Wilkes-Barre Induction Center on Dec. 11 for induction into the U.S. Army.

Dallas Rotary Club held its annual Christmas party in the Blue Room at Tally-Ho Grille. Members brought their youngsters and those that had none adopted a neighbor's boy for the evening.

Edwin Kern lost a 300-lb. pig Friday at his farm in Alderson. Investigation proved that it had been struck by a stray bullet, probably from the rifle of some deer hunters in the adjacent woods.

Wed - Elizabeth Bunney to Michael E. Kuchta; Bertha Walters to Sgt. Sheldon Ehret.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 12, 1952 MASONIC LODGE TO GET NEW HOME

George M. Dallas Lodge F. & A.M. at a special meeting, commissioned Lacey, Atherton & Davis to proceed with plans and specifications for construction of a new Masonic Home on Main Street, Dallas. Cost of construction is not to exceed \$40,000 exclusive of furnishings and plans subject to the approval of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

A crew of seven from Commonwealth Telephone Co. cut down and erected the 40 foot Christmas tree on the Warden-Kunle plot north of Dallas. The tree donated by Tax Collector, A. Earl Dungey, was moved with gear and a pole carrier furnished by Joe Sekera, of Commonwealth.

"Springfield Rifle" starring Gary Cooper now playing at the Himmler Theatre.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 13, 1962 REV. KANE RECEIVES SERVICE AWARD

Atty. James L. Brown, president of the Back Mountain Protective Association has announced that its Community Service Award will go this year to Rev. Francis Kane, pastor of Gate of Heaven Church. The award is made annually to that person who has performed outstanding community service.

Richard Williams announced at the Lake-Lehman PTA meeting that a large air mattress is needed to bring Fred Hennebaul home to the Johnston Rehabilitation Center for Christmas and called attention to the need of 21 pints of blood as replacement for blood used in his treatment.

Back Mountain Library is richer by 452 books, selected on the first day of Deer Season by a group who made a day of it at Gardner's Wholesale Book Store, taking advantage of a school holiday and the usual day off for librarians.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 14, 1972 DALLAS BORO REVIEWS NEW ZONING MAP

Dallas Borough Planning Commission will hold a public hearing tonight at Dallas Elementary School to review a map and text it has prepared for a new zoning ordinance. Borough residents are invited to attend the hearing to submit questions they may have about the prepared ordinance.

A special presentation of Hello Dolly by the Chansonette Theater of Easton will be given at the Wilkes College Center for the Performing Arts Dec. 16 at 8 p.m.

Over 500 youngsters were at Shavertown Fire Company to greet Santa Claus when he arrived in the Back Mountain. The children joined him at the fire hall where they were treated to candy, nuts, apples and Christmas stockings filled with goodies.

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P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
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Ronald A. Bartizek
Editor and Publisher

Charlotte E. Bartizek
Associate Publisher

Peggy Young
Advertising Acct. Exec.

Bill Harper
Reporter

Paul Rismiller
Production Manager

Grace R. Dove
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