

Walline is named hospital education director

Vera Walline, Lake Winola, has been named Education Director at Tyler Memorial Hospital. In her new role, she is responsible for coordinating staff, patient and community education programs.

A Dallas native, she attended Bryn Mawr College. She holds an M.P.H. in health services

administration from Yale University and is a certified health education specialist.

Before returning to the region, she worked with the Health Services Organization and Referral Baha'i World Center in Haifa, Israel, where for nine years she coordinated health center programs. She previously worked as

a nursing mothers counselor and rehabilitation counselor in Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Walline is active in community organizations including the Tunkhannock Library and Inter-Agency Council. She and her husband, David, are the parents of three children.

J.W.J.

Would Jefferson recognize America?

By J.W. JOHNSON

The recent changing of the guard in Washington must have been a wonderment to at least one of our forebears... Thomas Jefferson. As would have been his wonderment at the far right wing of the GOP trying to run this nation for the better part of the last decade.

Certainly our forebears, and in particular Jefferson, approached both government and theology differently. And although at best an agnostic—someone who believes in a higher power, and not necessarily religion—Jefferson had this to say about Jesus Christ.

"It is not to be understood that I am with him in all his doctrines. I am a materialist; he takes the side of spiritualism; he preaches the efficacy of repentance toward forgiveness of sin; I require a counterpoise of good works to redeem it, etc.

"It is the innocence of his character, the purity and sublimity of his moral precepts, the eloquence of his inculcations, the beauty of apologies in which he conveys them, that I so much admire; sometimes, indeed, needing indulgence to eastern hyperbole.

"My eulogies, too, may be founded on a postulate which all may be ready to grant. Among the sayings and discourses imputed to him by his biographers, I find many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the most lovely benevolence; and others, again, of so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanry and imposture, as to pronounce it impossible that such contradictions should have proceeded from the same being.

"I separate, therefore, the gold from the dross; restore to him the former and leave the latter to the

stupidity of some, and roguery of others of his disciples. Of this band of dupes and imposters, Paul was the first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus."

And while Jefferson at another point in time described the joining of church and state as "loathsome", he most often declared his unqualified support for the moral fiber of Jesus.

As such, it is nice to think that Jefferson would have agreed to a summary of his view of the great American experiment as being an appropriate inauguration gift to the new President, and the American people.

Such a summary can be found in Jefferson's own inaugural speech, made some 190 years ago on March 4, 1801. Jefferson described what he believed were the essential principles of our government using the following words:

—equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political.

—peace, commerce and honest friendship, with all nations—entangling alliances with none.

—the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies.

—the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home, and safety abroad.

—a jealous care of the right of election by the people—a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of the revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided.

—absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority—the vital principle of republics, from which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.

—a well-disciplined militia—

our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority.

—economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened.

—the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith.

—encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaiden.

—the diffusion of information and the arraignment of all abuses at the bar of public reason.

—freedom of religion.

—freedom of the press.

—freedom of person under the protection of the habeas corpus.

—and trial by jury impartially selected.

Jefferson went on to say:

"These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and the blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith—the text of civil instruction—the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety."

Of course, even a casual glance at Jefferson's words will find that much of what he perceived as essential elements of the great American experiment are under assault, or have been so radically changed as to be unrecognizable by the man who initially framed them.

As well, the agrarian Jefferson, and despite his lack of ardor for things theological, would have found the commercialism of the Christmas season to, at best, be crass.

Tax breaks available for low-income families

State Rep. Phyllis Mundy, Kingston, would like to make area residents living on a limited income aware of special tax forgiveness provisions explained on pages 27 through 30 of the PA 40 tax form booklet.

The tax forgiveness allows those who are eligible to reduce their tax liability depending upon the amount of their income and number of dependents.

Anyone with questions about this special tax forgiveness or other

state income tax concerns should contact district offices of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. All questions about federal taxes should be directed to the Internal Revenue Service's toll-free number at 1-800-829-1040.

The economic viewpoint

Is American democracy disintegrating?

By HOWARD J. GROSSMAN

According to William Greider in a new book titled "Who Will Tell The People", American democracy has been betrayed and what we often think which passed for democracy is a failure of American politics and a dismaying and troublesome slowing down of the democratic process itself. He maintains that democracy is in deep trouble and that the very fabric of the system; that is, the meaning of self-government, the values that have sustained us are unraveling quickly.

Greider speaks of the premise that while power corrupts, powerlessness also corrupts. Too many people never develop an understanding of power and that if power means acting on your behalf, powerless means not being able to participate or act accordingly on behalf of yourself as an individual citizen and national stakeholder.

He points to the data which shows how few citizens actually participate and vote in primary elections and in many cases in general elections. "The fewer citizens who are paying attention and actually voting, the easier it will be for the status quo to endure". He further notes that in at least one opinion pole, voters desired certain priorities but then voted a President into office in 1988 who did not remotely reflect these priorities.

He believes that "citizens still struggle for the democratic meaning, though giving up on elections." To replace the electoral process, voluntary associations have sprung up across the country to represent what citizens believe to be their particular interest. He notes that if democracy has lost any accountability to the governed it is because there is no longer any reliable linkage be-

tween the citizen and those who hold the reigns of power.

Greider suggests that "during the last generation, a "new politics" has enveloped government that guarantees the exclusion of most Americans from the debate—the expense of politics of facts and information. A major industry has grown up in Washington around what might be called "democracy for hire"—business firms and outposts of sponsored scholars devoted to concocting facts and opinions and expert analysis, then aiming them at the government. These are the thinktanks, the consultants, the public relation firms, and others who provide the informational base upon which rests much of the nation's participatory focus in developing national policies and strategies.

Greider points to the "boiler room" strategy utilized in Washington, DC wherein hundred of phone lines and sophisticated computer system, "resembling the phone banks employed in election campaigns" provide opportunities for dialing America on a variety of public issues, searching for citizens who can be persuaded to endorse political objectives of major corporate America. He further notes the artificiality of many of the 400 million pieces of mail which Congress receives annually "contrived by interested parties of one kind or another

Greider notes that "the land of Jefferson and Paine is long gone. He seems to reflect an attitude that democracy is beyond redemption as we knew it and as we wrote it in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. He maintains that government is different than private enterprise. Government has a power to coerce or penalize (or reward) that belongs to no private institution. "It has obligations, as

well, that are unique—including the obligation to uphold the law. Managing government to save money for industrial corporations versus enforcing a new environmental law is a political question, not an argument for business economists, and in a democracy, it is supposed to be settled in a regular order of political decision making".

He advocates community organization "linked by a national organization and a common heritage—the inspiration of Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation, he maintains that (contrary to popular impressions, "the Industrial Areas Foundation) has flourished though its methods are now quite different...it now has 24 organizations in seven states, encompassing twelve hundred congregations and associations with nearly 2 million members..."

"Who Will Tell The People" is a book which will not make all people happy. It stresses failure, but also hails the many varieties of substitution democracy which have sprung up across the nation. It suggests that failure will not always lead to unacceptable conclusions but cause a rising tide of opportunity which will not always lead success.

Clearly, there are no easy answers to the ability of democracy to survive the 21st century. Greider, however, has caused the thought process of American citizens to focus attention on a topic which is often taken for granted based upon the founding doctrines of this great nation from 1776 onward.

Howard Grossman is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He lives in Dallas.

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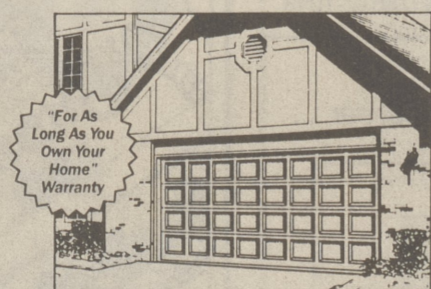
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