

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

'Eyesore' ordinances make good sense

Jackson Township's supervisors will take a wise and responsible step by adopting an ordinance that requires owners of burned buildings to face financial loss if the structures aren't properly cleaned up. Under the rule, the township will hold in escrow \$1000 for each \$20,000 paid by an insurance company. The money will be released if damage is repaired or the remains removed within a reasonable time period.

In formulating the measure, the supervisors were concerned for the community, but worried that the rule might constitute undue interference by government in private affairs. They should rest easy on that count; it's entirely proper for governing bodies to place the welfare of all residents ahead of the private gain of an individual, and to place sanctions on irresponsibility. We should do more of the latter.

For the most part, people in the Back Mountain maintain their property as well as they can afford. That fact makes the offenses stand out more starkly. A recent example was the dilapidated former Hearthstone Pub in the center of Dallas that for years housed vagrants and threatened nearby buildings if it had caught fire. Only when the borough stepped in was that dangerous eyesore removed.

Burned-out buildings present a danger to the community. Not only can they house vermin and become home for undesirables, they are a magnet for children who can be injured while exploring in unsafe territory. So, there is full justification for requiring their owners to be responsible for repairing or removing the structures.

Safety and economic concerns are raised most often, but esthetics also are a legitimate reason to force property owners to take responsibility for themselves. A society that doesn't place value on maintaining an orderly appearance displays a lack of true concern for itself and the environment which it shares. Just ask yourself how you feel about the trash that is strewn behind homes on Dallas Borough's Main Street, in full view of motorists on Route 415. It's not a pretty sight, and demeans all of us.

Laws like the one about to be adopted in Jackson Township, and a similar one recently put in place by Kingstons Township, began in response to massive abandonment of property in major cities. A drive through Philadelphia, New York or Washington reveals thousands of examples of landlords who took the insurance money and ran after their property was burned. Small towns can have the same problem on a lesser scale, and it's good to see the issue being addressed sooner rather than later.

Publisher's notebook

This is one rite of spring I can do nicely without

Spring is here, and with the warm weather car windows are coming down as drivers intent on showing off their supercharged radios blast unwanted music at anyone within 100 yards. Aside from being annoying, those overamplified car speakers are dangerous. There's no way the driver could hear the noise from a horn, the scream of a pedestrian or the wail of an ambulance siren over the din of a rock or rap beat at 100 decibels.

If that level of noise was measured in the workplace, the EPA would shut it down. If a young man was hip-hopping down Main Street playing a boom box that loud, the police would arrest him, or at least quiet him down. But, combine the macho man (they're almost always male) with his two favorite machines — the car and the stereo — and you create a movable wall of sound that seems to escape prosecution.

Oh well, it could be worse. They could be tuned to Fred Williams.

About the opinion pages

The Dallas Post attempts to publish opinions on a variety of topics in many forms. Editorials, which are the opinion of the management of The Post, appear on the editorial page. Cartoons are the opinion of the cartoonist and columns are the opinion of the author. Neither necessarily reflects the viewpoint of The Post.

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published subject to the following guidelines. Letters must not exceed 500 words. Except in unusual circumstances, no writer may have more than one letter published during a 30 day period. Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification. Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer. The Post retains the right to accept or reject any letter and to edit letters as necessary without distorting their meaning.

In addition to letters to the editor, we welcome longer pieces that may be run as columns. The author or the subject's relevance to the Back Mountain will be our prime consideration when selecting material for publication.

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Just ducky at Newberry Estate

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

Letters

Failure to stock Harveys Lake harms angling tradition

Editor:
Once again, Spring is here. The residents are coming out of the woodwork to partake in various outdoor activities. The runners are running, the bikers are biking, and the gardeners are preparing for a fruitful season.

One traditional event will be missing an important component this Spring. Harveys Lake will not be stocked with trout before the first day of trout season. Instead, anglers will have only Moon Lake to fish in the Back Mountain area,

along with some streams. Last year, Harveys Lake received a limited supply of stocked fish, which was only prompted by public outcry. At the time, the Fish Commission used the excuse that mature trout would be available via the previous years' fingerling stocking program. Even with the admitted failure of its fingerling stocking program, the Fish Commission refused to reinstate Harveys Lake as an approved trout water.

It must also be noted that the

Fish Commission has realized increased revenues from the trout stamp that must be purchased at an additional fee, in comparison to the regular license fee when an angler chooses to trout fish. This demonstrates that the anglers are paying more, but getting less in return.

It is unfortunate that the Fish Commission has excluded this beautiful natural resource from its stocking program. Harveys Lake provides a relaxed atmos-

phere whereby all age groups can fish without the risk of being injured from the hazardous conditions associated with stream fishing.

In closing, as the season nears, concerned citizens should contact the Fish Commission and their state legislators to make the first day of trout season a traditional one at Harveys Lake.

Peter M. Kaminski, President
Harveys Lake Protective Ass'n

J.W.J.

Why isn't conduct discussed when AIDS is the topic?

By J.W. JOHNSON

"It's not a gay/lesbian thing...it's a human thing," said multi-talented performer Mandy Patinkin. The remarks came at the close of his extraordinary one-man musical presentation called "Dress Casual", seen recently at the Kennedy Center in Washington.

Patinkin married a gloriously gifted voice to an unerring sense of comedic timing, and a less than clinging hold of pathos' hand. The result was a marvelous and riveting one and a half hour performance.

And as the performance neared its close, he began talking about the problem of gay and lesbian discrimination, saying he needed \$50,000 to help the ACLU publish an information booklet designed to educate citizens against more "Amendment Twos", the anti-gay legislation recently approved in Colorado.

Most in the audience agreed with him.

Most, including myself, also gave money.

And we did so because most of us abhor the simple unfairness of discrimination against persons strictly and only because of a genetically and/or environmentally adjudicated lifestyle.

Or is that the only reason such discrimination, justifiably or otherwise, exists? For example, Silas

McMerner has said on this page:

"I'm sick and tired of seeing Magic Johnson being portrayed as a hero," he has yelled more than once. "It's his lifestyle which got him into trouble, and now it's his otherwise good image which is being used by politicians."

"Yeah, chipped in Roscoe Bismark," and those politicians could care less if he dropped dead tomorrow."

"But don't you think he's doing some good?" asks Spike Opchinsky.

Everyone, and to a degree, sort of agrees with Spike.

And everyone at the Breakfast Club has an opinion about the anything but magical scourge known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, terrifyingly otherwise known as AIDS.

(My own belief is that everyone has the AIDS virus and, it's those among us who are particularly susceptible to environmental degradation whose bodies, first, permit the AIDS virus to become active and, later, then succumb to the side effects of the full-blown illness.)

But Mandy Patinkin said not one word about AIDS. Or safer sex.

Not one word.

Just that discrimination against gays was wrong.

Magic Johnson, of course, is that enormously talented and personable basketball player now known to be infected with the

virus said to cause AIDS. McMerner's problem with the publicity surrounding Johnson's acknowledgement is that the activity which got Johnson into trouble is taking a back seat to Johnson's otherwise pristine image; indeed, his magic smile being used to tell people about the horrors of AIDS without enough emphasis on the behavior which caused the problem in the first place.

"Instead of him (Johnson) telling these kids that his behaviour was wrong, he's simply telling them to wear a rubber," McMerner complains.

In other words, and according to McMerner's Pilgrimage philosophy, Johnson ought to be as much publicly pilloried for his behavior, as sainted for his courage.

Silas has a point. Lost in the much ballyhooed courage of Johnson in acknowledging his infection with the virus which causes AIDS are the "women, women and more women" which Johnson has admitted was his lifestyle.

And you can also be sure that if this were an affliction of primarily white, straight males, the emphasis on what is being done, and what to do about it in the meantime, would be vastly different than it is today.

The problem is that it is a disease which almost exclusively affects gay men who do not practice safe sex.

Also lost in the AIDS discussion is that this disease, while deadly, affects a relatively small number of people...less than 225,000 people in the United States having been diagnosed with full-blown AIDS.

"However, and for the first time in history," says Roscoe, "we have a communicable and contagious disease which obviously presents a major and national health problem, but whose progenitors have not been quarantined."

Why is that?
"Because the vast majority of the people with AIDS are among the most talented, creative and brightest people we have," he says.

And it's those same people who have access to the publicity machinery?

He nods. "Therefore we've been made to feel guilty about even considering a quarantine which at another time and place, and given the deadly nature of this disease, would have been done without even thinking about it."

And while I will continue to give money to fight this and other ignorances, I will also continue to wonder, Mandy....why not one word about safe sex, Mandy?

Not one word.

Was that because you knew that to approach the signature element of the gay lifestyle would beg the question of the discrimination you were rightfully protesting?

Not one word, Mandy. Not one word.

Library news

Exhibit of Beatrix Potter figurines grace library this month

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The display case at the Back Mountain Memorial Library is featuring a collection of Beatrix Potter figurines borrowed from Miss Frances Linskill of Dallas. We have had this collection on display a few times over the years and decided it was time to see if we could borrow it once more, especially now, in time for Easter. Frances and her sister, Grace Martin, were in the library last week and set the figurines up in the display case with several copies of the books that go with the figures and many floral arrangements and special rocks to make it look very authentic.

There are 28 characters featured in the display and they are grouped in individual settings. Of

the 22 Potter books, The tale of Peter Rabbit' outsells the others; with 100,000 alone sold in England each year. In the display Mr. Benjamin Bunny, Mrs. Rabbit, Benjamin Bunny, Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail and, of course, Peter Rabbit himself, are featured with that book. 'The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse' features Mrs. Tittlemouse, Lady Mouse, Johnny Townhouse and Timmy Willie; 'The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes' book is with Goody Tiptoes and Timmy; and Mrs. Tiggy Winkle is with her book, 'The tale of Mrs. Tiggy Winkle'. Tom Kitten, Miss Moppet, Tabitha Twitchit and Ribby are altogether in a group; and the Foxy Whiskered Gentleman, Jemima Puddleduck and Kep are in another group setting.

The other famous characters are scattered throughout the display. This display has become very timely; because, without realizing it at the time we set up the project; Peter Rabbit and friends is now a 100 year old tale. Both of the Wilkes-Barre daily papers have featured articles on the collection and pictures of Beatrix Potter and her friend taken in 1891 with her friend on a string; None other than a rabbit. The 100 year old celebration is also front page news in the USA Today and after 50 years since the animation was started for television viewing, the first episode aired on Monday night, March 29, featuring Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny. The background story of how this actually came about is fascinat-

ing. The other six episodes will air through next spring. The six half-hour episodes cost \$11 million and is the most lavish animation to come out of the United Kingdom. We are grateful to Miss Linskill for allowing us to enjoy the sheer enjoyment of this collection and to share the wonderful world of Beatrix Potter. The display will be at the library until April 28 for springtime enjoyment. A new Book Club book is "J Is for Judgment" by Sue Crafton. "J" is for Jaffe; Wendell Jaffe, dead these past five years. Or so it seemed until his former insurance agent spotted him in the bar of a dusty little resort halfway between Cabo San Lucas and La Paz.