

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

You are the key to 'town meeting'

Residents of the Back Mountain have been invited to a "town meeting" Thursday by the Back Mountain Citizens' Council. The council, formed in 1990, has invited office holders and candidates to attend and take questions from an audience of citizens. The meeting will be moderated, so that no individual or issue can dominate what is intended to be a wide ranging discussion about the Back Mountain's present and future.

The town meeting has played a long and important role in American history. Begun by the earliest settlers, it remains a tradition in many New England towns, frequently attracting hundreds of citizens. The title is an apt description: a meeting of the entire town to air grievances and hash out solutions to problems.

Because Pennsylvania lacks the open government tradition of New England, this meeting can be as much an opportunity for citizens and officials to get to know one another better as a forum for problem-solving. And, like all similar gatherings, the evening's success or failure will depend on the people who are really in charge, the voting public. The quality of discussion will spring from the relevance of the questions more than the eloquence of the answers.

The meeting will take place Thursday, May 6 in Room 105 of Hayfield House on the Penn State campus in Lehman, beginning at 7:30 p.m. No reservations are required, just an open mind and a good ear.

Lake Township takes a bow for recycling

Lake Township has added new meaning to the phrase, "Small is beautiful." The smallest community in the Back Mountain, the township recently was honored for the achievements of its recycling program.

With a population of 1,924, Lake Township falls well short of the size at which recycling becomes mandatory by state statute. But the people who live there are way ahead of the state, having instituted a voluntary drop off program in October, 1990. The program, which is staffed by about 20 volunteers, accepts aluminum, bimetals, glass and #1 and #2 plastic bottles. The center is open the second Saturday of each month.

The township was cited by the Luzerne County commissioners, in a ceremony where Irene Thomas, chairman, and other members of the Lake Township Recycling Committee took a bow on behalf of the conscientious citizens who make the program work.

Many larger communities must envy the dedication and concern shown by the citizens of Lake Township. They are living proof that people who care, and will take action, really can make a difference.

Back Mountain can't lose magistrate race

The Back Mountain is fortunate to be able to choose between two excellent candidates in the race that will decide who replaces retiring District Justice Earl Gregory. Jim Tupper and Carl Miers each bring years of law enforcement and public service experience to the race, and both are conducting positive campaigns that are respectful of each other and the voters.

The local Magisterial District is the largest in Luzerne County, serving about 30,000 people. The office handled 4,500 cases last year, from non-payment of debts to murder, and everything in between. The majority, though, were motor vehicle-related and those seem certain to rise with the increased attention being devoted by police to the Route 309-415 corridor. That means judgement must be combined with management skill if the office is to avoid being swamped by the caseload.

Carl Miers and Jim Tupper each have much to recommend them, and we're not about to split hairs just for the sake of endorsing one over the other. We're satisfied that each has sufficient qualifications and character to serve the Back Mountain well, and, measured by their campaigns, a healthy dose of common sense and good judgement as well.

Individual voters will make their decision based on their own experience and expectations, but the Back Mountain will be a winner either way.

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.



High water at Huntsville dam

Photo by Ron Bartizek

Letters

Unity is key to developing better education system

Editor:
In light of the fact that I recently decided to run for School Director in the Dallas District, and also because of the publicity regarding a demonstration scheduled for May 3 at the regular monthly board meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to express my views on public education in our state. Once again, it appears that a volatile environment will exist in our community when we should be concentrating on the primary issue of educating our children.

I do not blame the Taxpayer's Forum for feeling that the recent salary increase was abruptly announced by the board without

allowing the public to give input, but I honestly feel the frustration everyone is feeling is with the entire state education process rather than simply with this last salary issue.

If the Taxpayer Forum wants to change the way things are happening regarding teacher salaries and benefits, then they must shift their efforts to eliminating the union at the state level. We must establish the fact that the primary focus of our schools is not providing jobs and financial security to school employees, educators and administrators; but educating our children. Causing a huge disturbance at a local

meeting, in my opinion, won't change anything, but a well-orchestrated effort at the state level might wake everyone up.

Instead of wasting our energy on a futile effort to change what has been passed, why don't we change direction and focus on improving the education offered to our students by cooperating with faculty and planting the seeds of their cooperation in two years when the present contract expires.

The most recent assessment of U.S. schools shows that we have not made much headway in improving the learning process, and that we still lag behind other nations when measuring the

amount of knowledge our students actually absorb. If parents, teachers, students, administrators and community leaders would begin to work together rather than against each other, maybe we would achieve some positive results. We need to concentrate on communication and cooperation rather than confrontation.

I, as a parent, understand the frustrations felt by everyone involved, but I can't excuse the fact that our children are the big losers in this current mess, and that, to me, is unconscionable.

Pamela M. Langdon
Shavertown

Clinton violated rights of Branch Davidian members

Editor:
The President's oath of office includes the words: to PRESERVE, PROTECT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. Thus, it is clearly indicated that the Constitution is to be our compass and its tenets provide the State's authority. It is our Constitution—in particular its first ten amendments—that has been attacked and which may thereby become the ultimate casualty of "WACO".

How have we allowed this Government—once so simply defined by our founding fathers—to become so devious and complex that a minor federal bench appointee can procure a dubious

warrant which subsequently unleashes horrific events after abrogating the Civil Rights of a group of our own citizens?

Almost every religion has at one time or another been considered "Cult Wackos" and were cruelly persecuted—the Christians (in Rome), the Protestants (in Europe), the Puritans, the Quakers, the Mormons, etc. Whatever the Branch Davidians believed, their Constitutional rights were clearly violated and their lives were forfeit.

The wanton destruction and murder exhibited in the Los Angeles riots had no place in a civilized, lawful society. Perhaps, envisioning a future of savagery

or anarchy—the founding fathers added the Second Amendment to the Constitution—giving us the right to keep and bear arms. Inherent in this right is the right to defend our lives, families and property from assault.

Lacking proof of any insurrection, it appears that a hitherto peaceful group of people were arbitrarily selected for violent persecution by the minions of the state, who quickly marshalled an effort of maximum force. Yet the Fourth Amendment states that "The right of people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated."

In view of the Second and Fourth Amendments to the Constitution, it appears that there was little or no justification for the level of force used, or the subsequent harassment and vicious tank/gas attack which ensued. Rioters in prison have received better treatment, more consideration.

By thoughtlessly permitting this massive attack on the Branch Davidians President Clinton has obviously failed in his oath to "Preserve, Protect, and Defend the Constitution." Richard Nixon faced impeachment for less!

Joan Hiller
Dallas

A. Case for Conservation

A tribute to PA native Rachel Carson and her work

Editor's note: A typographical error in this column last week changed the meaning of a quote by former Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. We are reprinting the entire column this week.

By ALENE N. CASE

Earth Day has been celebrated once again. Some years I have wondered rather cynically if anything of substance has been accomplished by such festivities. This year is different — I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the changes that have transpired during the past 30 years and for the people who have made these changes happen.

The streams of Appalachia are no longer choked with silt from mines and quarries. Children are no longer tempted to cool off by running behind the "fog" truck spraying DDT in our neighborhoods. Ospreys and eagles once again soar above many areas in which they had previously been extinct.

Of course, many people have been responsible for these positive changes in our environment. But, one lady who challenged the notion that we could - or should - change our environment for our own convenience deserves our eternal gratitude. That lady was Rachel Carson.

From her earliest days as a child in Springdale, Pennsylva-

nia, Rachel Carson had two loves. She loved exploring the fields and woods along the Allegheny River. And she loved books. By the age of 11, she was a published writer in a children's magazine. Carson intended to major in English in college and pursue a career as an author. But, a required biology course turned out to be so interesting that she decided to forgo that dream and become a marine biologist. Her biographers insist that she did not realize that she would be able to combine her two interests.

Rachel Carson may have been the youngest of three children and protected in many ways by her mother, but she managed to develop a strong determination when it came to accomplishing a goal or ambition. That determination proved very useful as she stepped into the "man's world" of science in the first half of this century. Her second indispensable attribute was a keen sense of curiosity and an attention to detail. Indeed, one commentator remarked after reading her best-selling book *The Sea Around Us* "I assume from the author's knowledge that he must be a man."

The ocean had been unknown to her except for the sound in a conch shell or the lines of a favorite poem until Rachel graduated from college. The summer between college (Pennsylvania College for Women - now Chatham College) and graduate school at Johns Hopkins University she traveled

to Woods Hole, MA to work at the Marine Biological Laboratory. Here, she not only saw the ocean for the first time but also began a life-time of research on the organisms that live there.

My first introduction to Rachel Carson's work was her classic book *The Sea Around Us*, which I read in high school — long before I had my first chance to visit the ocean. Her vivid descriptions and logical explanations made marine biology come alive for me and probably influenced my decision to major in zoology at Duke. She also wrote two other books about the sea: *The Edge of the Sea* and *Under the Sea Wind*. Much of her early writing was done as an employee of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is now found only in out-of-print government publications. I, for one, am grateful that she did not stop there but published books for a more general audience.

Of course, most people know Rachel Carson as the author of *Silent Spring*. There are whole books written about the process of producing that book and other books about its impact upon the environmental movement in the United States. She is credited with beginning the push which finally created the Environmental Protection Agency. However, Carson did not write the book with the idea of starting anything. She merely wanted to alert America to the dangers of uncontrolled use of pesticides.

The research for *Silent Spring* was begun in 1958 and required almost four years of full-time work. She was determined to present the facts as they were available at that time so that ordinary citizens could make informed choices about the chemicals that were being used on farm fields and home gardens, in wetland areas, and above forests all over America. When the book was published in 1962, she found herself in the center of a huge controversy. Many critics resorted to personal attacks because she had done her research so well that one could hardly argue with the facts.

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas summed up the book with these words: "The alarming story is calmly told, with no theatrics and in a sober, factual way. This book is the most important chronicle of this century for the human race." But, one agent of the government's pest-control system belittled her by saying, "I thought she was a spinster. What's she so worried about genetics for?"

Rachel Carson died of cancer before she would see the many positive results of her great effort. I only hope that we, as a people, have come closer to her dream for us: "Now, I truly believe that we in this generation must come to terms with nature, and I think we're challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves."

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Published Weekly by Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
Telephone: 717-675-5211

Ronald A. Bartizek
Editor and Publisher

Charlotte E. Bartizek
Associate Publisher

Peggy Young
Advertising Acct. Exec.

Grace R. Dove
Reporter

Paul Rismiller
Production Manager

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