

# The Dallas Post

## EDITORIALS

### Publisher's notebook

## Sunday Independent closing not unusual in today's economy

The sudden closing of the Sunday Independent after 88 years of publication was a shock to people in the communities the newspaper served; unfortunately, it wasn't an unusual event in the recent history of the newspaper industry.

As the early 1990's recession has progressed, many newspapers nationwide ceased publication. Some were victims of excessive debt taken on by purchasers who thought the booming '80's would continue indefinitely. Others died as retail shops in their small towns withered, unable to compete with the glitz and low prices of mall stores or Wal-Mart, which tend not to advertise once their competition has vanished. Still others were the afternoon papers in two-newspaper towns, mortally wounded by the readership and delivery advantages of morning newspapers. Most of these were under the same ownership as the morning paper, with varying degrees of editorial independence.

Eulogies for the Independent will cite management incompetence or union greed, or both as the cause of death. They'll point to an outdated news product and minimal promotion, poor service to advertisers and other failings. All these observations will contain a grain of truth, but alone, or even together, they wouldn't account for the failure. The fundamental reason the Sunday Independent failed was the inherent difficulty of competing head-to-head against a well financed seven-day newspaper—The Times Leader—with a one-day publishing cycle.

Weekly newspapers thrive all across America, and right here, too. But in all 50 states, there was no publication remaining like the Sunday Independent, a weekly general interest paper centered in the same city as a daily competitor. As long as the dailies stayed out of the Sunday market, the Independent could survive and prosper. But when The TL added a Sunday edition in 1987, the death throes began, culminating in last week's final edition.

That the TL went Sunday was no surprise to anyone in the newspaper business. In the last 20 years, Sunday editions have become the foundation of medium and large circulation dailies, often accounting for one-half of total advertising sales, and 30 percent or more of circulation revenue. In nearly every case, a newspaper's Sunday issue circulation is notably larger than the daily average, and the price of a copy is two or three times the daily tab. Those kinds of economies were irresistible to the folks who run The Times Leader, when in 1987, after a decade of heavy losses, they laid plans to bring the paper to profitability. I was among them, and recall the excitement generated by the prospect of being a full service newspaper, as well as the fear that, like a feeble attempt made years earlier, the new edition would fail to gain a foothold.

The fears proved unfounded, and within a short time it became obvious that the Sunday edition would be a success. Before long it was equally clear that advertisers and readers wouldn't support two Sunday papers for very long, unless both were exceptionally compelling products. But after a few tentative attempts at change, the Independent remained essentially as it had been for decades although many readers now expected more from it.

Could the Independent have survived if it had changed more quickly? We'll never know the answer, but the best guess is that whatever the paper did, as long as it remained in direct competition with the TL its days were numbered. Faced with that prospect, the owners logically chose to cut their losses now rather than see the paper slowly bleed to death. That's not good news for the people who worked there, and the whole affair probably could have been handled better, but the hard reality is that competition in our economy frequently takes its toll of companies and the people who work at them.

So, what happens next? The Citizens' Voice has added a Sunday edition in an attempt to pick up the Independent's former readers, especially the ones who hold fast in their determination never to buy The Times Leader. That path is fraught with peril for the Voice, which has limited financial reserves and staffing, both of which must be beefed up to produce and deliver an acceptable Sunday package. But Voice management also knows the difficulty of competing against a seven-day newspaper with one that publishes only six days.

If the CV's effort falls short, a couple of other attempts will be made to fill the perceived void, but they too are likely to sputter and fail. Advertisers will find new outlets for their leftover money, at least until the other papers raise their rates, or they'll just save it. Readers, who vote with their pocketbook, will decide just how successful the remaining publications will become.

And, hopefully, former SI employees will find new jobs that will provide a living wage and at least some of the satisfaction that being part of a newspaper can bring.

Ron Bartizek



Spring bloom

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

### Reporter's notebook

## How about a regional clean-up week?

While verifying local clean-up dates with area municipal officials, I learned that only four of the eight municipalities in our coverage area have days when residents can bring their unwanted furniture, appliances and other large items to their municipal buildings for disposal.

Dallas Borough, Harveys Lake Borough, Dallas Township and Kingston Township have set dates for their annual cleanups, while Franklin, Jackson, Lehman and Lake townships do not.

"We don't have one, but that certainly doesn't mean that we don't need one," was the most common reaction.

Simply dropping refrigerators, washers and old couches off in abandoned strip mine pits or on a lonely back road in the middle of the night isn't the ideal way to deal with these things. Trash tends to attract more trash, until sections of some back country roads begin to resemble junkyards.

On several occasions, Jackson Township supervisor Walter Glogowski has described to me the stinking, rotting deer carcasses and other disgusting treasures inflicted by irresponsible midnight dumpers on his municipality's back roads.

On my way to and from work every day I see the trail of discarded bottles, a tire or two and other "little lovelies" discarded along the berm of Demunds Road in Franklin Township.

West Eighth Street in Franklin and Kingston Townships is a frequent favorite dumping ground for deer hides and carcasses during hunting season. One year I counted five, all tossed along a two-mile stretch within a week.

Recently I noticed the commendable efforts of the Lake-Lehman Hockey Club, hard at work in its Adopt-a-Highway program along a two-mile stretch of Route 118.

I counted several dozen large white bags of trash, at least six tires, a large white appliance and an unidentified large metal object which the students had cleared out and piled along the highway for state trucks to ahaul away.

But why should kids have to take a beautiful spring day to clean up after supposedly responsible adults who should know better than to use the roadside as a dumping ground? Aren't we always telling our youth to pick up after themselves?

Do as I say, not as I do. Although several area scrap yards will accept large appliances, they require that certain parts be removed first, such as refrigerator

compressors, due to the danger from freon gas, and washer or dryer motors.

That's fine, as long as you have the ability, strength and the proper tools to remove them. And a pickup truck or van to get them to the scrap yard. And a strong buddy to help you lift them on and off the truck.

But what about the people who can't or don't know how to prepare their large appliances for proper disposal? And what do we then do with the compressors and other parts that the scrap yard isn't allowed to accept?

And what are we to do with our old tires?

No wonder we have "midnight junkyards" along our back roads and in our abandoned coal stripings.

I would like to suggest a possible solution.

Since most of the municipalities in our coverage area already

have developed cooperative agreements to purchase supplies in bulk and pool manpower and equipment for road paving, why can't they use this system to set up a cleanup week, to be run simultaneously in all municipalities?

The municipalities could share the costs of the large dumpsters, which could be set up in three locations: Dallas Township, to serve residents of Dallas Borough and Franklin and Dallas townships; Kingston Township, for residents of Kingston and Jackson townships and Lake Township, for residents of Lake and Lehman townships and Harveys Lake Borough.

Our area municipalities works together so well for road maintenance that we would be foolish not to utilize this system for other worthwhile endeavors.

By Grace R. Dove



### April 28 Old Photo is identified

Shirley Weidner of Lehman identified our "recycling pioneer" photo. The girl was Shirley herself. It was about 20 years ago at a recycling drive at Shavertown United Methodist Church, as she recalls. She doesn't remember what organization was sponsoring the drive but she did her part! Thanks for the call.

## Only yesterday

### 60 Years Ago - May 26, 1933 FIRETRUCK TO GET BIG 6-CYLINDER MOTOR

Plans for improving the Dr. Henry M. Laing fire fighting apparatus were discussed at a special meeting of the fire company held in the borough building. Representatives of the Mack truck company were present to submit plans and specifications for remodeling the truck with the installation of a six cylinder, 104 horse power motor.

Lee Tracy, whose success in motion pictures has exceeded his fame as a Broadway star, will arrive in Shavertown today to visit his mother, Mrs. W.L. Tracy before continuing to New York City where his new picture "The Nuisance" opens tomorrow.

The largest class in the history of Kingston Township schools will be graduated Friday night when approximately 42 seniors receive their diplomas. On Monday, the class will leave for a 3-day visit to Washington, D.C.

You could get - Watermelons 49¢ ea.; cheese bread, 10¢ loaf; bacon, 13¢ lb.; corn, 4 cans, 29¢.

### 50 Years Ago - May 21, 1943 WAR GAS SHORTAGE HURTS FARMERS

Two weeks before any other Luzerne County newspaper carried a line on acute gas shortage that is threatening to curtail the government's agricultural program in the East and has brought a ban on pleasure driving, *The Dallas Post* scored a clean-cut scoop, two stories in the May 7 and 14 issues told of the serious difficulties facing farm tractor owners who are unable to buy gas and gave an indication of events to come.

The first silver star was placed on Idetown's Honor Roll when Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Fritz received word that their 23-year old son, John, Technical sergeant and aerial engineer on a U.S. bomber has been missing in action over the Southwest Pacific since May 7. John was a 1938 graduate of Lehman High School.

"Berlin Correspondent" with Virginia Gilmore, now playing at Shaver Theatre.

### 40 Years Ago - May 22, 1953 JOHN VAVRAK IS HELD P.O.W. IN KOREA

Mrs. Alma Vavrak, Demunds was overjoyed when indirect news from her son, John, appeared in a city newspaper. Having no telephone she had not been reached before publication. He is reported in good condition though still a prisoner of war in Korea where he has been confined for two and a half years.

More than 800 persons representing, old customers, former stockholders, friends and leaders in financial circles of Wyoming Valley attended the formal opening of the Dallas Branch of Miners National Bank of Wilkes-Barre Tuesday.

An enthusiastic gathering at Irem Temple Country Club Tuesday evening launched the 7th Library Auction. The first item of the annual sale, a doll cradle went to Archibald Brooks, the high bidder.

### 30 Years Ago - May 23, 1963 OLD BUILDINGS RAZED FOR NEW HIGHWAY

Voters of the Dallas Area School District showed preference for economy minded directors when L.L. Richardson, Dallas Borough and Andrew Kozemchak, Dallas Township, won the Republican nominations for school directors at large.

Mrs. Calla Parrish, "Aunt Callie" of Beaumont, celebrated her 101st birthday Tuesday at Carpenter Convalescent Home, Idetown where she became a resident seven months ago. Her only survivors are a niece, great niece, and two great-great nieces.

Back Mountain saw a slight change of face this week as familiar buildings along Memorial Highway fell to the contractor's axe. Building were razed to make way for the new Dallas-Luzerne Highway.

You could get - Turkeys, 10-12 lb. average 36¢ lb.; boneless chuck 49¢ lb.; Valencia oranges 49¢ doz.; lg. green peppers, 19¢ lb.

### 20 Years Ago - May 24, 1973 DAMA FEES INCREASE BY TWO THIRDS

DAMA at a recent meeting announced that permit fees would increase to \$250 beginning Aug. 1, present fees \$150. DAMA found it necessary to increase the fee because installation of laterals to each home cost DAMA \$300 each, an official said. The authority is losing about \$6000 a year on connections it was reported.

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