

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Words of wisdom from Dallas student

Harry Haas IV, president of the Dallas High School Class of 1993, minced no words in his speech to graduating classmates when he defended the teachers who guided the class through four years at the school. Taking to task the more extreme members of local taxpayers' associations, Haas reminded listeners that a school district has responsibilities other than setting the lowest possible tax rate.

The speech was a timely reminder that most of the teachers in Dallas schools are liked and respected by their students, and—like the population in general—try to do their jobs well. Haas pointed out that attacks on teachers hurt students, too, since teachers "are the students' friends."

It has become fashionable in some quarters to complain not only about perceived high taxes but also about all the incompetent nincompoops who are teaching the children. Maybe that's the way some people rationalize their selfishness, but it just ain't so. Individual teachers are no less or more conscientious or hard-working than other people, and attacks on them serve only to demean their image in the eyes of the very students who in the past were told to respect them.

School boards, of course, must deal constantly with the competing interests of taxpayers, teachers and students. Haas said the change from an eight to seven period day was an example of the compromises that come from that struggle, and in that case, the students lost. Fewer periods require fewer teachers, and thus a lower budget. But the change reduced options for students, so Haas and many of his classmates couldn't take Spanish IV, an important class for him because he'll be an exchange scholar to Madrid, Spain later this year.

There are legitimate issues of performance and pay to be discussed with teachers and their union, as well as about the overall quality and direction of local schools. But those discussions must not be allowed to again slide into mindless name-calling or baseless personal attacks. When that happens, it becomes too easy to gloss over the truly important business of our schools; to educate our sons and daughters, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and to prepare them for the challenging world that awaits them upon graduation. Their ultimate success will be the best assurance of a comfortable life for all of us.

Harveys Lake gets little for its trouble

So, what did the residents of Harveys Lake expect when they turned out to oppose Shirley Hanson's plan to build condominiums on the former amusement park land owned by her family? "Listen carefully," she warned in May, 1991, "if you put this commercial property in the wrong hands it could destroy the lake."

No one is yet suggesting that has happened, and hopefully it won't. But it's also apparent that when borough council rejected Hanson's rezoning request later that year, it also opened the door for intensive use of the land for entertainment attractions, and ceded any opportunity to control that use. The result is a growing concern that the amphitheater now in operation will book noisier and raunchier acts in order to sell more tickets, and the resulting crowd will be harder for police to rein in should it get out of control.

Those who paid attention all along will recall that Thom Greco, the promoter for the amphitheater, threatened to bring in hard rock groups only if a 10 percent amusement tax proposed by Lake-Lehman School District was enacted. That tax plan was withdrawn, so most observers assumed that only more "wholesome" acts would play the local stage. But since that time, seating has been expanded to 6,000, in anticipation of larger crowds, which are likely to come for the harsher, fresher sounds of hard or "grunge" rock.

No blame can be ascribed to Mr. Greco. He's in the business of selling as many tickets and making as much money as possible, not of worrying about the comfort of the people who live at Harveys Lake. And he's very good at it.

The question becomes what does Harveys Lake get out of all this? Businesses in town don't report any surge in sales because of the amphitheater, since people drive in, buy their food and drinks on the premises, and drive out. There's no amusement tax, so none of the money that flows through the ticket booths stays in the borough. Employment opportunities are minimal. The additional cost of traffic and crowd control are supposedly paid for by the promoter, but that's about all.

A stage like the Harveys Lake amphitheater offers great attraction for music fans and performers. No arena or civic center can match an outdoor setting for pure pleasure and relaxation. But most such facilities are located far from residential areas, so their noise and traffic aren't disruptive to residents. That's not the case here, and more consideration should be given to the folks who take the brunt of the amphitheater's drawbacks, as well as the town that makes it possible.

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.



Just hangin' out

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

J.W.J.

Health care reform plans: A major migraine

By J.W. JOHNSON

There are at least 37 million persons in these United States who are without health insurance. This and many more numbers will be generated out of this debate before the smoke clears. From the U.S. Census Bureau, here are some others:

The largest number of uninsured persons live in the southern U.S., at 14.9 million; the fewest in the northeast at 5.3 million. The balance lives in the north central U.S. where 6.3 million are uninsured, with the west having 8.9 million.

Of those numbers, some 27.1 million are white, 8.3 million non-white, and 7.0 million are Hispanic.

(Just two more numbers, I promise)

From the American Medical Association, we learn these important numbers:

—85 cents of every health care dollar spent is spent in the last six months of a person's life.

—13 cents of every health care dollar is spent on administration. And all any of us really want is to insure that the time we spend on this planet is in as good health as possible.

The program is that we're not spending billions and billions of dollars...and millions of us remain unwell, and millions of us remain without any health care

whatsoever.

Is socialized medicine the answer?

Should we abandon third-party payment for health care?

Should health insurance follow us regardless of where we work?

I put these and many other questions to a retired doctor and to a doctor in the prime of his practice. The retired doctor's perspective was rather unique, him having worked for 15 years under socialized medicine in the former Czechoslovakia, and 23 years as a physician in the United States. The young doctor has practiced exclusively in the United States.

Following are the retired doctor's observations:

"Whatever government runs or regulates becomes spoiled or degenerates. Socialistic medicine ruined health care almost totally. Physicians were underpaid and overworked; consequently, they lost interest in patients. Patients, in order to restore physician interest, began to tip them. This ended in general bribery everywhere. Today, patients pay almost as much to bribe the doctors and other health personnel as though they had no insurance.

"The only way to get out of the health care mess is to require co-payments from patients; a 10 percent co-payment for procedures and medicines, and 20 per cent

for other materials, i.e., glasses or dentures. And further, to make it illegal to have an insurance for co-payments. To make the patient substantially responsible for the cost of his or her health care is the only way to bring costs under control.

"The pluralistic health care system in the U.S. should be preserved. Without diversity, there can be no progress and everything will deteriorate.

"The best way to insure poor and old people is to prepay their health care with Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's)—yearly or biannually by bidding—to keep it low—state by state—not federal. This is necessary to preserve free enterprise and competition in the present system; otherwise, a free health care system will not keep the standards high. The socialistic part (HMO) will then have no choice but to adjust their lower standards to the free enterprise higher standards.

"We also need to eliminate state run hospitals by transferring them to HMO's; also transfer VA and other federal hospitals in the same manner, by bidding.

"To eliminate Medicare and Medicaid by transferring to HMO's the care they provide. States would pay the bids.

"To require every employer—with more than five workers—to contribute some percentage of

their health insurance to the insurance company of the employer's choice.

"To make state governments pay for preventive medicine—it pays off.

"To put limits on lawsuits for health care negligence, and eliminate penalties for psychological suffering.

"For those persons unable to make co-payments, then we need to go back to the way it used to be with charitable organizations (not government) assessing the true need of the individual and providing funds accordingly."

The young doctor was brief and candid.

"I'll admit," he said, "that I do procedures just to be paid for them. That's the system, and I take advantage of it. What should be done is that doctors should be salaried, and not be paid by procedures. Paying a doctor by procedure will almost certainly mean that more and more procedures will be done, in particular if the payment perceives he has no financial stake in paying the final bill."

The final report from the President's health care reform committee is due out next month. Write to Senators Wofford and Specter and Congressman McDade and tell them what you think.

In the meantime, I have a headache.



The Dallas Class of '53

Can you believe that one of our supervisors graduated 40 years ago?

Gee, maybe that's not him kneeling in the first row—but I think it is. He really hasn't changed much since this reunion photo was taken.

Let's see how many of our readers will identify this week's unsolved photo! Give us a call with the names.

Gee, I think I recognize someone else. Could that be Miss Pennsylvania's "Daddy"? Sure looks like him in the top row!

Would you like to write a column? The Dallas Post is open to submissions from local persons with strong feelings or particular expertise on topics of contemporary interest. If you would like your work to be considered, call the editor at 675-5211, or send your work to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612.

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