

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

A few boating rules are long overdue

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is entertaining a regulation that would establish a minimum age for operators of motor boats in the state. The proposed rule would set the age of 12 as a minimum to operate a boat propelled by a motor of more than 10 horsepower, unless accompanied by a person age 16 or older. In addition, youngsters aged 12 to 15 would have to obtain a boating safety certificate in order to operate a motorboat alone. Another regulation would replace the requirement for flotation cushions and other Type IV devices with wearable lifesaving gear such as vests.

Closer to home, the commission also is considering a proposal to establish speed restrictions on Harveys Lake and other waters.

All these seem sensible and necessary, especially in light of the present total absence of enforceable regulations to assure minimal safety on waterways. Anyone who has spent time on a summer weekend on Harveys Lake will testify to the need for some rules on conduct and enforcement to see that they are obeyed.

Of particular note, the requirement that 12 to 15 year olds receive some instruction in the safe operation of motorboats should be made universal. It's absurd that anyone can buy and pilot a powerful motorboat without demonstrating the slightest knowledge of safe boating practices.

Publisher's notebook

Don't be surprised by gun violence

Were you shocked that 11 school building windows and a home's bedroom window were shot out last week? So was I. Were you saddened that this kind of mindless violence took place? Me, too. Were you a little bit frightened by the prospect of a bullet whizzing through your window? Good, that's how any sane person would feel. Were you surprised that such things could happen in the Back Mountain? You shouldn't be.

Last week's incidents were a jarring reminder that the Back Mountain hasn't escaped the celebration of gun violence that infuses our society. It should surprise no one that shooting guns is an option chosen more and more frequently by the unhappy, the dispossessed or the dejected. Look in just about any corner of popular culture, and violence is equated with confidence, security and assertiveness. It's in the movies—especially in the movie ads—but is found nearly as often on television. Have a disagreement with someone? Grab a gun and fire. Feeling insecure? Nothing makes you stand taller than a six-shooter in your pocket or purse. Lose out to a rival in love or life? Get even; get a gun.

The old NRA cliché, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people," is true in the most narrow sense. Still, there's no question that tightened laws on the purchase and possession of weapons can cut down on gun use, especially if there's a reward for turning in some of the 200 million already in circulation. Fewer guns would surely mean less gun violence.

But waiting periods and handgun restrictions alone won't solve this problem as long as so many in our nation savor the power they feel from that cold steel in their hand, or continue in the foolish notion that gun ownership makes them safer. As a study published last week showed, just the opposite is true, a finding that anyone with common sense and an open mind already knew. Others persist in the paranoid belief that someday, somehow, our government will turn on us, and only that quaint, Colonial institution, the civilian militia, will save us from tyranny. Perhaps some are even hankering for that kind of showdown; just like in the movies.

They fail to understand that their vote, not their gun, is the most potent weapon in their arsenal.

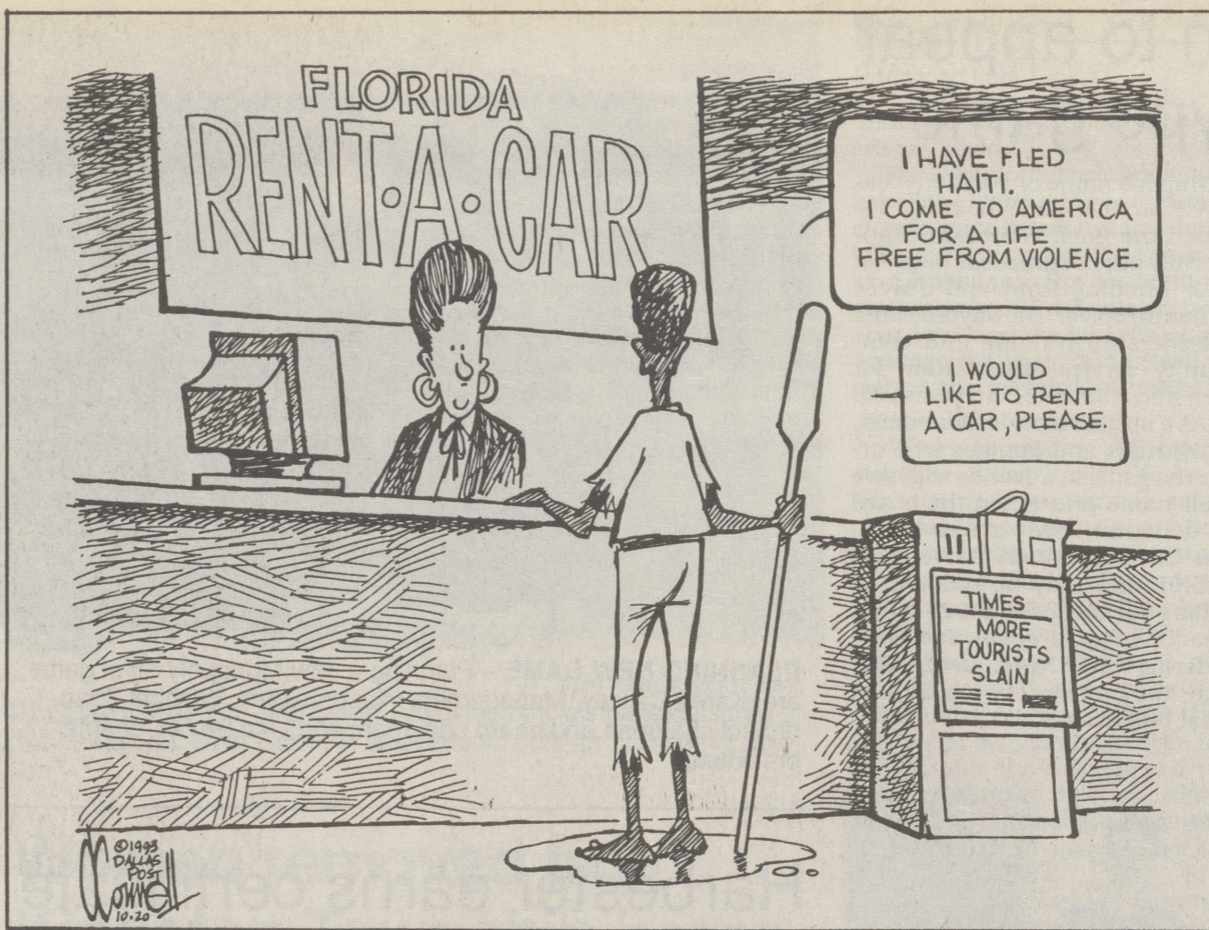
Our area is home to thousands of avid hunters, people who own legitimate hunting weapons and know how to use and care for them. They aren't the problem, if that's the limit of their involvement with firearms. It's when the line is crossed, when a gun becomes more than simply a tool for gathering food, that the problems begin.

Yes, it's frightening when random gunshots ring out in your neighborhood. Even more scary is this; people like me, who oppose the Wild West ethic that underlies our feeble gun laws, eventually resign themselves to the idea that the only defense is a good offense, that someday we'll have to buy a gun for protection against an ever more dangerous society. That response is already a fact for thousands of people who vehemently support tighter controls but live in cities where shootings like the ones in Dallas—and much worse—are a daily occurrence. And the gun makers are lining up to sell them deadly weapons, including a cute line of revolvers for women dubbed "Ladysmith" from Smith & Wesson.

Here's a chilling number. Each year, more people are killed by guns in America than died in Vietnam in all the years of that war. So where are the protest marchers and the political mavericks who shine a spotlight on issues in traumatic times? Why isn't gun control as high on the national agenda as health care?

Unfortunately, until our culture grows up—if it survives long enough—the frequency of gun violence will continue to rise, and one-by-one our property, our friends and our neighbors will be added to that nauseating statistic.

Ron Bartizek



J.W.J.

Has our present legal system gone crazy?

By J.W. JOHNSON

A woman in New York City pulls up to a busy intersection, whereupon she is besieged by three men who set about washing her front and rear windshield.

She did not request the service, and specifically so states this to the man closest to the driver's seat. The work continues, as does the subsequent badgering for payment.

Finally the woman, fearful that the man is actually going to physically force her to pay him, reaches into her purse and sprays the man with Mace.

Within seconds, more than 10 men have surrounded the car, preventing it from moving. Minutes later, the police arrive and, believe it or not, the woman is arrested...and she now faces a \$100,000 lawsuit brought by the man she sprayed.

Another case involves a 21 year old Philadelphia area woman who, following much drinking, had a serious automobile accident...and her lawyers are now suing a tavern where she allegedly consumed the alcohol. Ignoring the fact that no one held the woman down and poured alcohol down her throat, the suit alleges the tavern owners knew she was underage (19 at the time), but, nonetheless, continued to serve her until she was inebriated beyond the ability to drive a car. (The tavern owners have denied the charge, saying the woman was not even at the tavern on the night in question.)

And lest we forget one of my favorite such cases, how about the accountant who, along with his two children, were flying to a Bahamas vacation. As the plane neared Nassau, it began to buck violently, and a pilot announced that an engine failure would force a return to Miami.

Within minutes, the plane's other two engines had stopped, and the passengers were informed that the plane would have to "ditch." However, the pilot managed to get one engine restarted and the plane landed safely. All's well that ends well, right?

Not if you're the alleged victim of alleged "psychological injuries," as the accountant claimed. Not

that he and the other two dozen passengers were ungrateful for the pilots having saved their lives; rather, the accountant wants to be compensated for being frightened.

So should we, as Shakespeare suggested, kill all the lawyers? Hardly.

However, we do need to revamp a system in which the legal system has effectively become a lottery where juries and lawyers mete out winning verdicts for the "victim" of the day. As well, and on the criminal side of aisle, we need to revamp a system where the certainty of punishment is exceeded by the ability to pay for acquittal...not that judges and juries are bought; rather, that literally the amount of money which can be brought to bear upon the question so often delays the process that justice is seen blowing in the wind.

And why do we need lawyers in the first place?

Unfortunately, and in place of common sense and integrity, lawyers have become the first line of inquiry in the free enterprise/private ownership of property economic system. The vast majority of lawyers are engaged in business and property law.

The rest of the lawyers are engaged primarily in the protection of citizens against the heavy hand of government at all levels, and a minority are engaged in criminal defense.

And since most Americans would want to continue owning private property and functioning in the free enterprise system, and also want protection under law from government, then we're stuck with lawyers to afford us those privileges.

We don't however, need lawyers with gratuitous advertisements, i.e., a New York radio station recently aired an ad by a law firm which suggested that "to protect your rights and be compensated by a large cash award," a person should call XYZ law firm. There was a time when this sort of solicitation was illegal. Sadly, that is not the case now.

But perhaps the single most important thing we can do is look

in the mirror. We, as in we the people, have become the most litigious society on the planet. Everywhere you look, someone is suing someone about everything, i.e., the cases cited above, and others:

—Item: Parents sue balloon manufacturer because balloon breaks and frightens child.

—Item: Parents sue school district because child is not permitted to go on school trip as punishment for being disrespectful.

—Item: Man sues soft drink manufacturer because he cut his lip trying to remove a bottle cap with his teeth.

Where is it written that life is fair? And it will become no more fair by looking to the legal system as an adjunct to the economic system in providing money to us. It only then becomes fair for the lawyers who get rich bending the rules, torturing common sense, and chasing the ambulances.

Put another way: Is it now reasonable for us to sue another driver because he or she almost hit us?

Will major league pitchers eventually be the subject of litigation for keeping batters off the plate?

You laugh...but where there's greed seeking a lawyer, there's a potential and probable lawsuit...witness another New York City case where a woman brought suit alleging she feared getting ill because she had visited a hotel where asbestos was being removed. Thankfully, the suit was dismissed and the lawyer fined \$10,000 for his frivolity.

Closer to home, just look at the attorney listings in your local phone book. Admittedly, some are duplicate listings of individual attorneys who are also found as part of a firm elsewhere in the listings. Still, I promise you, the total number of listings has more than doubled in the past 10 years. And you never used to see full yellow page ads promoting attorney services for "victims".

To be sure, the issue is not the right to legal representation, rather, that in the pursuit of so-called justice, the tail is now wagging the dog.

Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - Oct. 27, 1933 A&P TO OPEN MODERN MARKET IN DALLAS

Consummation this week of the transaction through which the A & P Tea Co. will set up its new store quarters in the building now occupied by the Meridian Restaurant was seen as a tremendous stimulant to business in Dallas. The decision to include in its new store a complete meat department and a fresh vegetable department was taken as evidence of that company's faith in the business future of this area.

As a result of demands made by Dallas Borough Taxpayers Association and persons who have paid their 1933 taxes, 30-day notices will be mailed out by Tax Collector F.M. Gordon on November 6 to all borough taxpayers who have not at that time paid their 1933 tax accounts. The 30-day notice is required by law before the constable can serve notice on delinquent taxpayers and make arrangements for constable's sale for taxes.

50 Years Ago - Oct. 22, 1943 LUNDY TO OPEN NEW BANQUET ROOM

In order to provide increased space for his rapidly growing business Herbert Lundy, owner of the Lundy Building on Main street, has engaged a contractor to completely renovate and re-decorate the vacant corner store room in the building and convert it into a banquet room. When completed the new diningroom will provide facilities for service clubs, dinner groups and community gatherings.

Registration of War Ration Book #4, containing green stamps to be used to purchase canned fruits and vegetables starting November 1, will be held at uniform hours in the schools of Dallas Borough, Lehman, Jackson and Dallas Township on the first three days of next week. The A, B & C stamps will have the same point values as those of Book 2.

You could get - U.S. #1 Maine potatoes 50-lb. bag, \$1.59; cabbage, 4¢ lb.; Tokay grapes, 2 lbs., 29¢; veal cutlets, 39¢ lb., (12 pts.).

40 Years Ago - Oct. 23, 1953 NEW GOLF COURSE OPENS FOUR HOLES

A.C. Devens purchased the former Dallas Borough Building with his bid of \$1,500 at a special meeting of Dallas Borough Council Tuesday night at the Back Mountain Library. Mr. Devens was the only bidder.

Police officers of Dallas, Trucksville, and Shavertown warn parents that damage done by their children is their responsibility and not to be laid at the door of "Kids will be kids, especially at Halloween". Damage has already been done with rocks thrown, cars marked with wax and chalk and garbage cans dumped. Danger to life and limb will result in firm discipline. If parents are not willing to keep their children under control says Chief of Police Russell Honeywell at Dallas, they can pay the bill.

30 Years Ago - Oct. 24, 1963 WATER COMPANY IS WARY OF DROUGHT

Dallas Water Co. though suffering no complications due to the drought which is menacing the Eastern Seaboard, at present casts a wary eye toward the future and asks cooperation from its consumers. Conservation is sensible and prudent. It may become a must in this area.

Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday at 2 a.m. Residents were reminded to set their clocks back one hour before going to bed Saturday.

20 Years Ago - Oct. 25, 1973 DALLAS, PENN STATE DEDICATE BUILDINGS

Dedication ceremonies for the Dallas Intermediate Building were held October 21 in the multipurpose room at the school. Congressman Dan J. Flood was on hand to discuss how the new school came about.

Back Mountain police forces are well prepared to take on Halloween pranksters. Night crews have been doubled, cruisers are increasing patrols and police phones are ready to answer complaints as soon as possible.

More than 100 Penn State officials, Wilkes-Barre campus advisory board members, General State Authority representatives, local area and state government officials attended the formal dedication of the \$1.5 million lab at the campus in Lehman, Tuesday. The new 2-level building marked the completion of Phase II of the campus development and enables the local institute to offer a wider range of associate and baccalaureate degree programs to more students.

Library news

Discount coupon book will benefit library

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Friends of the Back Mountain Memorial Library are selling the "Entertainment '94" book at the library with proceeds to benefit the library. The cost of the book is \$25 and it is packed with hundreds of discount offers from many of the best-known restaurants and merchants in your area. You can save 50% on almost everything—dining, travel, shopping, theatre, sports and more.

The Entertainment Card is welcomed at some of the best restaurants in town, with special second entrée "on the house" benefits. The card is also the key to 50% savings at over 1500 hotels nationwide and is filled with thousands of dollars worth of 2 for 1 and 50% off coupons good for the entire family—dining, movies, sports, services and more. The "Entertainment '94" book may be purchased at the information desk in the library.

Orders may be placed for Discovery Toys at the library on

Tuesday, Oct. 26 from 10:30 to 12 and Wednesday, Oct. 27 from 9:30 to 3 p.m. Laura Frank, educational consultant, will be demonstrating the toys, books and games for children. All proceeds from the sales will benefit the children's room at the library.

New books at the library: "The Real Anita Hill; The Untold Story" by David Brock shows that more than a year and a half after the dramatic confrontation between Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill, opinions remain sharply divided on which one was telling the truth, and on the episode's significance and meaning for American society. Polls conducted showed that public sentiment in Thomas' favor had weakened, while Anita Hill has become a national celebrity, a heroine credited with putting sexual harassment on the national agenda.

"The Age of Innocence" by Edith Wharton, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, first appeared in four large installments in 'The Pictorial Review' from July to October,

1920. It was published the same year in book form in New York and London. The new text edition is based on the sixth impression of the first edition and published by the Library of America, 1986, by permission. The story is the elegant portrait of desire and betrayal in Old New York. The author evokes a time of gaslit streets, formal dances and society people, who dreaded scandal more than disease.

"Sein Language" by Jerry Seinfeld. At age 15, Jerry Seinfeld started writing down funny thoughts that kept coming into his head and never imagined that they would amount to a book. A lot of people have this little corner of their brain that wants to play all the time. The idea of this book for Jerry and for you is to keep that corner alive. It's good to play and you must keep in practice. He can't believe his book is in a bookstore. He loves bookstores. A bookstore is physical evidence we have that people are still thinking; the way the world should be.

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