

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Laws only part of solution to violence

State Senator Charles Lemmond's discussion with a Lake-Lehman High School class about violence in schools and society was instructive in the perceptions of violence identified by the students. Perhaps the greatest insight came from exchange students Anna Norburg, from Sweden, and Jolanda Bosma from the Netherlands. Both said that America's television image is very violent, and each was surprised to find that we don't swagger around with sixguns on our hips.

It's unlikely that European television broadcasts nearly the number of violent American shows that U.S. networks do, so the two students' concept was formed from a limited exposure to our media. Imagine then, what our own children think life will be like when they grow up, after viewing endless hours of murder and mayhem on screen.

Senator Lemmond was correct when he assigned some of the blame for American violence on the media and entertainment industries. He also was right to explain that making more laws often isn't the best solution to a difficult problem. But it's hard to escape the conclusion that things won't get better until we discipline ourselves more tightly. The quandary is how to do it in a society that takes such great pride in maintaining each individual's right to make his or her own rules for living.

The irony is that many people defend the right to independence with great vigor while decrying any attempt to require citizens to exercise their freedom responsibly. That, of course, is a formula for disaster, which unfortunately is the proper characterization for too many corners of our society.

Publisher's notebook

When no news really can be good news

You may have noticed a preponderance of "good news" lately in The Dallas Post. Stories about Eagle Scout projects, student activities and someone building a model train layout were among those in recent issues. There are a few of reasons for the abundance of features.

First, the holidays are a slow news time, both because not a lot is happening and because most people just don't feel like kicking up a lot of dust during this season. We're among them, and given a choice between blowing a minor controversy out of proportion or expanding the number of feature stories, we choose the latter.

Also, as a small newspaper with a limited but valuable staff, we must juggle our need for news with their need for time off to be with their family and friends. Some papers address that problem by skipping the issue between Christmas and New Year's, which happens to provide about the lowest amount of sales revenue anyway. We think skipping a week would cheapen our value as a source of information, so we publish on a compressed schedule. After all, if we're to be taken seriously the other 51 weeks, we can't simply disappear when we feel like it.

Most important, we think articles about the good things people do are as valuable as the controversies. As the local news source for the Back Mountain, we take seriously our responsibility to present a clear and objective view of local affairs, good and not so good. Writing about Eagle Scout candidate Aaron Getz's project to supply emergency crew members with a kit to protect them from exposure to disease shows readers of all ages that young people do more than play video games and football. Articles on interesting school programs demonstrate that all the talk about the failures of schools and teachers isn't the whole story.

Of course, we want to do more. As we begin The Post's 105th publishing year, we are planning special coverage for 1994; projects that can help readers gain perspective on the towns they live in and the schools and institutions within them. If you have any ideas, we'd love to hear them.

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.

To submit an item for publication, send it to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612, or bring it to our office.



A. Case for conservation

Planting trees to honor Vietnam war dead

By ALENE N. CASE

There are many ways in which people deal with troubles. Some people cry or scream or lash out at others. Some people hide away and nurse their wounds. Some people find peace in relationships with other people. Some lose themselves in their work. And then, there are people like Geoffrey Steiner.

In 1969, Geoffrey Steiner was discharged from the Marines after having served in Vietnam. He studied biology and psychology in college, married, and tried to function as a regular member of American society. In 1974, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caught up with him, ruined his marriage, and threatened his life. At that time, PTSD was not recognized as a specific ailment and was rarely adequately treated. Mr. Steiner worked through his problems with various therapists and trained to provide therapy to other veterans who were having similar difficulties.

By 1979, Mr. Steiner realized that the city was not where he belonged. He sold his duplex in Minneapolis and bought a 100 acre farm near the tiny town of Cushing MN. On Veterans' Day in

1980, Geoff planted a tree on that farm in memory of his fallen comrades. Thus was born the idea of the Veterans National Living Memorial. One tree is planted there in honor of one soldier who died in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Steiner found that his dream was shared by many people, and, as his forest grew, so did the number of those willing to help. By the mid-80's, he was gaining national recognition. Newsweek, Reader's Digest, People and American Forests were among the magazines that wrote about his work. He was invited to meet the President at the White House. The Memorial was about half finished. Trails wound through the acres of small trees so that visitors could have their spirits renewed by the sight of new growth.

Perhaps you read about this unusual memorial and wondered, as I did, what had been happening there in recent years. My curiosity finally prompted me to contact Mr. Steiner by phone. Unfortunately, there is a very good reason that we have not heard about him lately. Just as his dream was expanding to include facilities which would help homeless and disturbed veterans, Geoff came down with Lyme disease. Now, his main objective is to get well.

But, Geoffrey Steiner has not been sitting idly by while he waits

for his body to heal. He has planted 1,000 trees in each of the last four years. And this year he surpassed the 58,000 tree goal. In fact, he estimates that he now has 60,000 trees on his 100 acre plot. There are at least 60 different varieties planted there. Some of the pines are now more than 20 feet tall.

Obviously, such a large forest will require on-going care. Some trees will die or become diseased and will need to be replaced. Trails for hiking and cross-country skiing will need maintenance. Visitors will need a guide and someone to talk to. Someone will need to guard against illegal harvesting. (Mr. Steiner has stipulated in his will the few circumstances under which a tree can be cut.) Donations and volunteer help are always welcome.

Mr. Steiner proudly states that the town of Cushing is not only the center of Minnesota but also of North America. If you find yourself in that vicinity on Highway 10, just ask for "The Tree Man" and most anyone will point you in the right direction. You will find a small forest and a man with a mission. If you cannot travel but would like to contribute, send your check to the Veterans Living Memorial, RR1, Box 396A, Cushing MN 56443.

J.W.J.

Religion and legal decisions don't mix

By J.W. JOHNSON

Everywhere you look, there's another article about, or another voice proclaiming the intellectual vigor of Stephen Carter's new book, *The Culture of Disbelief*.

This latest scholar cum popular writer emerges from the perspective that he is a professor of constitutional law at Yale University.

The book urges us, to rethink the role of religion in American law, politics and culture; indeed, and from Carter's point of view, to accept that, without renewed religious influence in all three of these areas, the country cannot move forward intelligently and compassionately.

Mr. Carter is wrong. In short, he says, "liberals have been shedding religious rhetoric like a useless second skin."

Indeed, Mr. Carter, rhetoric, by definition, is a second skin, something academicians like yourself seldom understand and, therefore, engage in it with impunity, and never shedding it.

Carter's premise is that the constitutional separation of church and state "originated in an effort to protect religion from the state, not the state from religion."

That's circular thinking, Mr. Carter. You pose a desirable premise, and support it with an unprovable assertion. Even a casual glance at this century's theocracies (Iraq, for example) clearly demonstrates that you cannot protect religion from the state without removing the state

from religion. Conversely, that's the very premise behind not taxing churches, Mr. Carter. If you have the power to tax, you have the power to control.

The role of religion in public affairs, according to that long ago observer of America, Alexis De Tocqueville, was to be "an independent moral voice," sort of a referee between government and citizen.

To pose a sports analogy...a referee (as in boxing) does not participate in the deciding of the issue; that's left to the judges. And in the case of public affairs, those judges are those whom we elect to Congress, appoint to the Judiciary, and most often, we defer to the most powerful judge of all—the court of public opinion.

It is without question, as Carter asserts, that the moral foundation provided by our churches, and reinforced in our homes, is the social fabric's most important thread. Witness the tatters of that fabric in all of our inner cities, many suburbs, and in some rural areas...and compare that with 90 percent of Americans calling themselves by one religious denomination or another, and only 30 percent of Americans actually attending and supporting a church, and Carter's point is well taken.

But to assert that the state should insert itself into this debate through, for example, including parochial schools in voucher plans, is just plain wrong, and dangerous. And one does not have to be a liberal to believe this. One only has to believe that the right to independent belief, and

the right to express the same, are our most important rights.

What is perhaps most disturbing is that Carter asserts it is appropriate to lace public debate with religious motives and rationales when discussing issues of abortion, euthanasia and the teaching of evolution.

To do so strikes at very heart of a separation of church and state. To apply religious motives and rationales is to, by definition, also be forced to embrace a particular motive or rationale in order to even express the ideal being supported. And, unless you want a nation where religious war determines public policy (been to Middle East lately?) to embrace a particular value is then to deny another value.

This is to invite the kind of senseless bloodshed which has been the hallmark of organized theology since history began recording such carnage.

And finally, whatever self delusions we might have about our position on the food chain, we need the perspective that humankind's chief contribution to the mystery called life (that's religion, folks) has been the causing of death...and whether it is a death of the body, or a slaying of the mind, in the larger sense and throughout history, we seem to put particular effort into this death if it is in witness of whatever theology is filling its wallet at the time. Amen.

Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - Jan. 12, 1934 KINGSTON TWP NEEDS NEW JUNIOR HIGH

Plans to construct a new junior high school in Kingston Township was vigorously protested by taxpayers who charged the cost of the proposed building would burden taxpayers unfairly. Directors argued that the increase in number of students demands additional rooms and that present buildings are inadequate. It is planned to secure one third of the cost of the building from Public Works Administration as an outright grant to the district.

A long felt need for a public library in Dallas neared satisfaction this week as Calvin McHose, superintendent of Dallas Borough High School, with the authority of the school directors, prepared to expand the school library with public support and have it open two nights each week for the lending of books.

50 Years Ago - Jan. 7, 1944 WARTIME NURSE RECRUITER VISITS BMT

Mrs. Lowery, representing the National Nursing Council for War Service and the U.S. Cadet Nurses Corps, will speak at College Misericordia about the new grant plan which, under the U.S. Public Health Service, offers a free professional education to qualified students. Her visit is part of a nation-wide endeavor to recruit 65,000 student nurses for wartime replacements caused by acute needs of the Army, Navy and civilian health agencies.

Mr. and Mrs. William Nulton, Alderson, have been notified by the American Red Cross and War Department that their son Pfc. Clifford S. Nulton, 33, has been missing in action in the African theatre since November 26.

You could get - Center cut pork chops 37¢ lb.; grade B eggs, 45¢ doz.; cabbage 5¢ lb.; Supreme bread, 2 lbs., 17¢.

40 Years Ago - Jan. 8, 1954 COPS CRACK DOWN ON TAVERN-KEEPERS

With the dedication of the new Ross Township elementary school Saturday night, residents realized a dream of many years' standing. Prior to the onset of World War II, a new school seemed a possibility, but the war years cancelled out the chances and the dream was laid regretfully aside.

Lake Township and Lehman Township police officers, with public sentiment solidly behind them, laid down the law to tavern-keepers to observe legal closing hours and serving no liquor to minors or the offenders would be arrested.

Howell E. Reese, has been elected vice president of Kelly, Nason Inc., New York, it was announced by John C. Kelly, president. Reese, former editor of The Dallas Post, joined Kelly, Nason Inc. advertising agency in 1940. Assigned to Nassau, Bahamas, he directed publicity for the agency's client Nassau Development Board for six years.

30 Years Ago - Jan. 9, 1964 MAJOR AREA FIRE CLAIMS FIVE LIVES

The A. Harden Coon Jr. family, parents and three small children were suffocated before dawn on New Year's Day when fire of undetermined origin, licking oxygen from the super-heated air, exploded into a raging inferno, generating heat so intense that stout steam radiators twisted and bent. Volunteers from every Back Mountain Fire company responded.

Kingston Township supervisors signed contracts Tuesday which signaled the beginning stages of the new township building. Part of the present structure will be torn down to make way for the erection of a new one, which is expected to get underway at the first break in weather probably in March.

Mrs. Lyndon B. (Ladybird) Johnson will appear at Wilkes College Gymnasium for the Wilkes College Convocation to be held January 11. She accepted the invitation tendered by Dr. Eugene S. Farley to share the platform with Dr. Frank P. Graham, chairman Area Development Administration, Washington, D.C.

20 Years Ago - Jan. 10, 1974 BAD ROADS CAUSE MANY AREA MISHAPS

Area police and road supervisors are in agreement that the state road department deserves no congratulations for their maintenance of Back Mountain secondary roads, thus far this winter.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred D. Bronson, funeral directors, announced their retirement after more than 44 years service as the Bronson Funeral Home in Sweet Valley.

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Q: Where do you find the most Back Mountain news each week?

A: Only in The Dallas Post