

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Lehman, teachers show professionalism

In a rare display of accommodation, the Lake-Lehman school board and teachers' union reached a new three-year agreement with none of the rancor that has become standard fare in similar negotiations. Under revised state rules for contract talks, each side submitted its requests to a "fact finder," who reviewed them and sent back his outline for a fair contract. When both the school board and union agreed to accept that plan, it was automatically adopted as the basis for agreement.

Compare that few-month process with events in the Abington Heights School District, where teachers are completing their second year without an agreement and the opposing sides argue bitterly over relatively minor differences. Meanwhile, the community has become polarized into two camps; one which opposes any compromise with the union, and another which would trade a little higher taxes for labor peace and the continuation of the district's high educational standards.

We have noticed for some time the harmony that exists between students, teachers and the general population of the Lake-Lehman district. The enthusiasm and general good will that are apparent to an observer emanate from a spirit of cooperation and a shared sense of the importance to the larger community of good schools and schooling.

As for the contract itself, while it grants raises at the lowest rate we've heard about, it may prove to be more than many taxpayers can bear. With income tax receipts running 6 percent behind projections, it's obvious that many district residents will have trouble paying their present property tax bill, never mind a higher one. For those on limited fixed incomes, even a modest increase will mean a sacrifice in another area of their lives.

One plus for the district is the contract's three-year span. That will limit the commitment taxpayers have been made a party to, and provide the opportunity to adjust if local economic conditions strengthen or worsen measurably. And the board will look for ways to save money where possible in order to minimize the impact.

All in all, it would seem the citizens of the Lake-Lehman School District have been well served by the school board and the teachers. Certainly, this agreement is preferable to months of haggling and division, as long as the board can find other economies without harming educational quality.

Publisher's notebook

Even though we publish a new issue each week, it's the nature of our business that we never feel finished. There's always more to be reported or written about, so when one week's paper is printed it just means it's time to plan the next. Special publications are an exception, and provide at least an occasional feeling of finality. So, we're pleased to present the latest edition of Guide to the Back Mountain with this week's Post, and we're happy that another year of it is behind us.

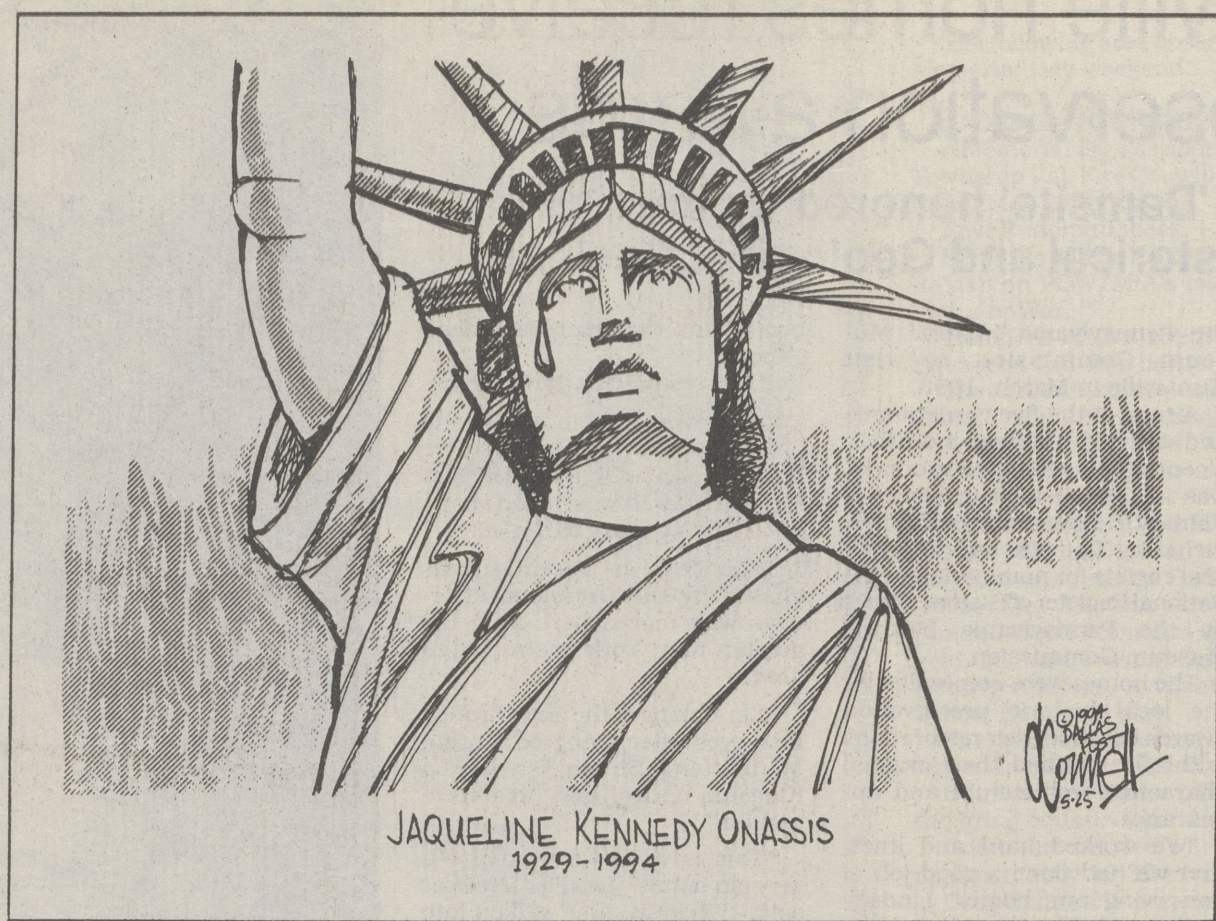
This was our third Guide (we also publish The Abington Journal in Clarks Summit, and we've done three Guides there, too.), and I think it's our best. At 56 pages, it's certainly the biggest. While lists of organizations, government offices, schools and other useful information are the backbone of the Guide, this year's features about Harveys Lake also make it fun to read. If you think the Guide is only for newcomers, browse through the lists and see how much of this "routine" information you didn't know.

Hearings on health care reform have moved to full committees in the Senate and House, and there are vast differences between competing ideas. While it's probably a safe bet that reform of some kind will come out in the end, predicting just what form it will take is impossible right now. One thing I've never been able to accept is that covering all Americans should cost a nickel more than we spend now. Compared to any other advanced nation, we spend considerably more per citizen, so why should covering everyone cost more? Rationing is the big scare word for opponents to any shift toward universal coverage, and it's true that prudent discipline will lead to fewer medical procedures, mostly by weeding out the excesses that presently drive costs. But rationing wouldn't be new, it's now done by how much you can afford and whether or not you have insurance.

The annual cleanup week in Dallas Borough and Dallas and Kingston townships is over, and the tally is impressive or disheartening depending on your perspective. Both the borough and Kingston Township collected a bit less stuff than last year, but the volume still is astounding. Dallas Borough filled 24 construction refuse dumpsters (those are the BIG ones), down from 27 in 1993. Kingston Township's a little larger, so they filled 40 containers, also three less than last year.

The cleanups are a valuable public service, and you have to wonder where the junk would end up if they didn't exist. But anyone watching the stream of vehicles loaded with stuff can't help being struck by the level of waste in our society. It's not just worn or broken items that show up; a good amount of it is simply unwanted, such as outgrown tricycles and abandoned toys.

As for the broken items, Kingston Township manager Jeff Box offers a word to the wise. "If they had bought a little better quality to begin with, they wouldn't be throwing them away," he said of the "countless" number of plastic patio chairs dumped each spring. The same goes for lawnmowers and other articles that seem to predominate.



Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - June 1, 1934 17-YEAR LOCUSTS MAY MISS LUZERNE COUNTY

The 17 year locust will appear in certain parts of Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio during June, but it is not expected that their path will touch Luzerne County. State entomologists report.

The Greater Dallas Rotary Club will entertain at least 300 Rotarians from the 41 clubs in the 51st District at an all-day program at Irem Temple Country Club July 21. It will be the second annual outdoor program. Wilkes-Barre Rotary Club started the plan last year at Buckwood-on-the-Delaware.

Lehman High School baseball team is champion of the Back Mountain Scholastic League, having won all its five scheduled games. Trucksville is in 2nd place.

50 Years Ago - May 26, 1944 SCRANTON DIOCESE BUYS BAUR ESTATE

The spacious grounds and residence owned by the late Kate G. Baur have been sold to Scranton Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church for the new Gate of Heaven Parish, which will be established in Dallas.

More than \$10,000 damage was caused Friday afternoon when six tons of hay and straw stored in one part of the stables at T.N. Wood's Harveys Lake estate caught fire by spontaneous combustion.

One hundred sixty six boys and girls are receiving diplomas this spring from Back Mountain schools. The war has had little effect on the size of the graduating classes. Nine Back Mountain Seniors are in the U.S. service, but several more will leave after graduating.

40 Years Ago - May 28, 1954 LARGEST JOINTURE IN HISTORY CREATED

John Vavrek returned Prisoner of War, son of Mrs. Anna Vavrek, Demunds, plans to enter the secretarial field. Upon release from Veterans' Hospital in April he enrolled at Wilkes-Barre Business College.

History was made Friday evening at the Dallas-Franklin Township School when directors from Dallas Borough, Kingston Township, Dallas-Franklin Townships and Lake-Noxen Townships joint boards came to an unanimous agreement on a 6-way school jointure. Solicitors from three joint boards will meet to draw up an agreement for a 6-way jointure with an open end to permit the inclusion of Lehman-Jackson-Ross and Monroe Townships on an equal basis should the latter townships desire to be part of a 10-way jointure.

Now playing at Forty Fort Theatre, "The Robe".

30 Years Ago - May 28, 1964 FLACK DELIVERS 4TH BABY IN HIS CAREER

Appointments made by the Wyoming Conference affect the Back Mountain. The same conference which returned Dr. J. Rolland Crompton to the area as District Superintendent, replacing Rev. Leon Bouton, took the pastors of the Dallas and Lehman Charges. Taking the pulpit in Dallas will be the new minister Rev. Robert Sheehan, while Rev. Winfield Kelly comes to Lehman.

Charles Flack, Dallas ambulance crewman delivered the fourth baby of his baby-delivering career at 4:40 Sunday morning. By the time the ambulance got to Luzerne, Flack was able to present Mrs. Muriel Wilson, Lower Demunds Road, with her new baby girl.

You could get - Hams 55¢ lb.; strawberries 39¢ pt.; lettuce 2 lg. hds, 29¢; Pillsbury cake mixes, three 19-oz. pkgs. 95¢; green onions, 3 bnches. 19¢.

20 Years Ago - May 29, 1974 K.T. HOME RULE PLAN PASSES PRIMARY

A home rule charter which will put Kingston Township under its own administrative code drawn up by the people was passed by voters in the May primary election. The new administrative code will be developed by a group of township voters to be appointed by the Kingston Township Supervisors in the near future. The new code will appear on the ballot in the November election for voter approval.

The 30th Annual Lehman Horse Show, sponsored by Lehman Vol. Fire Co., will be held July 4, 6 and 7, featuring English and Western style horsemanship and special events for the youths.

College Misericordia's 15-year old Theatre 3 series officially came to its conclusion last week with the final Theatre 3 President Dinner.

A. Case for conservation

Microbes: our smallest, strongest helpers

By ALENE N. CASE

Microbes are a diverse group of one-celled, microscopic creatures. Some of them are known as bacteria, others as algae. Many millions live naturally in all kinds of water bodies. Some are specially adapted to use oil as a source of energy or cell material or both. As such, they can be particularly helpful in situations where large amounts of petroleum are accidentally released into the oceans.

We have all reacted with horror at the sight of oil-drenched birds and animals being cleaned by volunteers after an oil spill. We have heard about the decline of fish populations and read about contaminated shellfish. We have sympathized with the people who were hired to carefully wipe oil from beach rocks with paper towels. We have watched impressive pictures on TV showing booms skimming surface oil and keeping it from spreading. And, when there hasn't been a spectacular spill for quite a while, we have tended to forget about the whole thing.

But, those little microbes keep munching on those oil globules and converting them into relatively harmless components.

These bacteria and algae have evolved in a world where oils are a natural part of the environment. Plants and animals contain fats and oils, which means that decomposers would need to be prepared to deal with them. There are also "oil seeps" in some areas of the oceans. Some microbes have adapted to life in these areas

by developing ways to use the oil as food. It turns out that most parts of the world's oceans have fairly diverse communities of these tiny organisms.

Therefore, when there is an oil spill, part of the solution to the problem is already on hand. During the first few days, the microbes cannot contribute very much to the clean-up effort. There are at least two reasons for this delay. First, the lightweight components of most types of oil are the most toxic. These light fractions tend to evaporate during the first couple of days unless the spill is in extremely cold seas. Second, it takes a while for the population of microbes to expand enough to make a measurable difference.

After the initial phase is over, there are other factors that affect the speed of biodecomposition. Some are obvious; some are more obscure. The temperature of the water is very important. In other words, spills in the Gulf of Mexico tend to be gobbled up faster than those off Alaska. But, that is only true if there is a large local population of microbes, if the spilled oil is a type useable by those microbes, and if there are enough other nutrients available for growth of the microbes.

The people who are called upon to clean up oil spills have been trying to figure out how to eliminate some of these uncertainties. Sometimes extra oil-eating bacteria are brought in to increase the population. Sometimes various types of fertilizers are added to

make the bacteria grow faster. (Not much can be done about the type of oil that has been spilled after it is already in the water.) Fertilizer addition has been the most successful in aiding bioremediation, but many studies are not conclusive for a wide variety of reasons - mainly political. Other people are studying ways to create "super-bacteria" through genetic engineering. These engineered bacteria might multiply faster, eat more oil, be able to grow in colder water, etc. As with all genetic engineering proposals, there are powerful arguments against trying this.

Obviously, if we continue to depend on fossil fuels and continue to transport them in paper-thin tankers, we should be figuring out how to help these tiny creatures help us. In other words, we need to listen to a student who wrote the following challenging idea in the conclusion of a term paper on this subject and then dispaired that it would happen in his lifetime: "The ideal way to proceed would be to create an international consortium of scientists and engineers, funded by as wide a variety of private and public sources as possible, who would be available to respond to oil releases for the purpose of conducting studies on remediation and the absolute fate of oil."

Why should it be so difficult? We need to make this effort to work with natural systems to correct errors that will certainly be made many times in the future.

J.W.J.

Presidents: the leaders we love to hate

By J.W. JOHNSON

Will the assault on the office of the presidency ever cease? Those leading the charge believe it is President Clinton being skewered...but at some point, fire from firestorm, is going to burn the office itself.

Right wing propagandists say that Clinton has received a free ride from the press. The facts are that during the 1992 campaign, the media focused on allegations of marital infidelity and draft evasion indiscretions. The focus continues now upon alleged sexual issues, added to which is the now famous, but relatively insignificant, real estate venture known as Whitewater.

And on both sides of the questions, the media is once again blamed as the source of the problem, when it is merely the mirror reflecting what it finds back upon a constituency unwilling to accept that its politicians are human beings. That's always been the case. What's changed is that voters now seem more willing to believe the most heinous of allegations and, on that basis, vote down, vote out or pillory the politician who is the subject of those allegations.

It's either that extreme, or the extreme that it doesn't matter what a given politician does, as long as the federal dollars continue flowing into his state or district.

Take northeast Pennsylvania for example where allegations against former Representative Dan Flood fell largely on deaf ears here because Flood was responsible for, literally, billions of fed-

eral dollars finding their way in this corner of the state. The same is true of Rep. Joseph McDade whose time as a representative has truly been a Teflon experience.

This kind of love or hate relationships with politicians has been true throughout this nation's history. It started, perhaps, with Thomas Jefferson who, in 1802 was accused by the press of a sexual relationship with one of his slaves.

Jefferson was reelected two years later.

In 1824, John Quincy Adams was accused of bigotry and adultery.

He was elected. Four years later, Andrew Jackson was accused having a mother who was a prostitute and he himself of adultery.

He was elected. In 1884 Grover Cleveland was accused of fathering an illegitimate child.

He was elected. Maybe Clinton is right. Maybe voters are interested in more than the sex lives of politicians.

On the other hand, Clinton is perhaps unaware that a nation with too much time on its hands, and too much money to spend, will find less that substantive distractions with which to occupy themselves, and by which to judge those who would presume to govern them.

Still, as I presume to judge those in office, I'm reminded of the words of John Steinbeck in his book *Cannery Row*. He said: "The things we admire most in men, kindness and generosity,

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Ronald A. Bartzek
Editor and Publisher

Charlotte E. Bartzek
Associate Publisher

Peggy Young
Advertising Acct. Exec.

Grace R. Dove
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