

## As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

You've heard the great arena announcement, probably more than once. You'll now hear the grumbles. But before we deal with them, consider this: Our Valley With A Heart already has an arena, albeit on a smaller scale than the 12,000-seater planned. It's the West Side Armory, on the Kingstone side of the Susquehanna.

Sure, it's a little old, and sure, it shows its age. But, in the 50s did it ever have its moments! For instance, remember the Wilkes-Barre Barons, Eastern League basketball champions? When the Scranton Miners with Hank Rosenthal came to play, the West Side Armory would be packed solid with loyal fans. They'd claim 5,000 but it seemed like more. Every bleacher seat would be filled, every balcony seat, and three-deep standees ringed all around upstairs and overflowed the corner downstairs.

Thrills? The armory/arena had 'em in spades. Run through these names: "Pistol Pete" Pasko, Herky Baltimore, Jack Leighton, Chic Craig, Milt Ticco, Khyler "Cas" Ostrowski, "Shag" Hawkins, and the Chanicka brothers, Bill and Steve, each and every one capable

## Recalling thrills at the old arena..the armory

of bringing a screaming crowd to its feet, time after time. (Cas in particular could shoot while tumbling end over teacup, but it would go right in.) There were others, too many over the years, to mention.

Some Baron games were simply no contest for this unusually talented group. If the score was lopsided and the contest boring, Ted Hanauer would hide the basketball under his jersey in the back, and then stand around looking innocent while the others looked for the ball. And don't forget that father and son pair, the colorful Mendy and Harry Rudolph who were almost showmen first and referees second. If you fouled, you knew it, fast. A whistle blew, a Rudolph finger shook at you, and a Rudolph voice resounded, "NO. YOU!"

I followed the Barons from the early years. "Followed" had a double meaning for after a game we die-hard fans would crowd into "White's Cafe" on South Penn Avenue. It was a neighborhood tavern, not a "beer joint," run by team owner/coach Eddie White and his Dad, where they cleaned their coils regularly and the draft beer was superb: Gibbons, Stegmairers and Bartels, all local. The big moment of the evening came about the third beer - Mrs. White and helpers coming out of the kitchen with heaping mounds of free hot dogs. Never, but never, has anything tasted so good. It didn't get any better than that.

For me, then came marriage and raising children. I may have

missed a few games, even seasons. But at the proper age (no, not 3!) my son was introduced to Baron basketball by means of season tickets at the armory-arena, first row balcony opposite the team bench, seats 10 and 11. (Who said it didn't get any better?)

And so I grew older, and my family grew up, pretty well used to a local arena, however "mini." We naturally look forward to the biggie; we shall support it wholeheartedly, and I can't wait to pick my team.

I am sure it was a painful decision for Mr. Casey, given his background, but it only proves Mr. Barrouk and company at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Partnership did an exceptional homework job. But, as I was saying, there are those grumbles...

A local newspaper columnist whom I call the "Prince of Darkness" (because of his penchant for bleak and seamy subjects) wrote that he told a senior on the square who was worried about city bussing, to "call the Partnership and they would give him a ride to the arena."

Now don't you find that rather childish? And that radio talk jock who asked, "How many tractor pulls can you watch? We need jobs, not arenas." Well, doesn't that character realize that an arena can only attract jobs? Probably not, and he is to be pitied.

Fellows, the die is cast and the deed is done. I send this message to you negative thinkers: "Lighten up and let the future happen."



### Outstanding students

Daddow-Isaacs American Legion Post 672, recently presented its American Legion Award to the outstanding eighth grade boy and girl from the Dallas Middle School, based on their courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award recipients for this academic year were Jennifer Vodzak daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Vodzak of Dallas and Brian C. Blase, son of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Blase of Dallas. At the presentation were from left, Mrs. Mary Blase, Brian Blase, Jennifer Vodzak, Mrs. Ann Vodzak and Mr. John Vodzak.



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## Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

In the course of my work reading and people-watching, I often encounter amusing or strange items which appeal to my irrefpressible love of the offbeat.

Unlike my hero, *Miami Herald* columnist Dave Barry, Alert Readers don't send me whacky news clips, so I collect my own.

Here are the latest hot stories which have recently tickled my offbeat funnybone. I hope that they'll also make you chuckle.

• Smart bombs/dumb bombs: mentioned by a reporter during a discussion on CNN with a military analyst.

Evidently "smart" bombs are programmed to hit specific distant targets, while "dumb" bombs must be dropped very close to their targets in order to blow up the right things.

There's no guarantee that either type is 100 percent accurate.

I question the intelligence of any type of bomb, smart or dumb. Using the words *smart* and *bomb* in the same phrase is probably an oxymoron.

If these smart bombs are so darned intelligent, why do they sometimes result in "collateral damage?"

• Collateral damage: military-speak for "Oops! We missed the target and just blew away a couple dozen civilians!"

This shouldn't be confused with "friendly fire," another oxymoron and military-speak for "Oops! We missed the enemy and just shot up a bunch of our own guys!"

• Help wanted: receptionist/security guard (one position).

I recently saw this in the classified section of a local daily newspaper. This company must serve some rough customers.

My mental picture of the receptionist/security guard is a sweet, grandmotherly lady demurely seated at a desk, a bank of telephones and a standard front office arsenal at her side.

"Good morning, sir. How may I help you? FREEZE! THIS IS THE POLICE! EAT PEPPER MACE, CREEP!"

• "Free to good home: cat/dog, house trained, spade (spaded or sprayed)" often found in several area papers' classified sections.

The correct term for the operation insuring that Puss or Rover won't make any babies is "spayed" for females and "neutered" - a sort of radical vasectomy - for males.

Not spaded or sprayed. "Spading" is what nearly happened to my big dog, Taschi, after she dug up my sister Phyllis's flower beds. Taschi was evidently getting even with us for not sharing our dinner with her and leaving her tied up alone outside. Although Phyllis was very gra-

## Strange stuff in the news

*If bombs are so smart, why do they cause 'collateral damage?'*

cious about dirt and petunias being spread all over her sidewalk, I'm sure that she really felt like smacking the little surface one upside the head with a shovel (spade.)

"Spraying" involves a well-aimed squirt from a bottle when Puss/ Rover misbehaves, which my other sister, Alice, swears works wonders when her cat tries to shred the couch arms during a spiteful fur fit.

By the way, Alice's cat is spayed as well as sprayed.

• Fish stocking: to date the Pennsylvania Fish Commission has stocked Harveys Lake with more than a million trout fingerlings, ranging from three to eight inches in size and costing between 25¢ and 75¢ each, in a program designed to establish "a viable resident population of catchable-size trout."

Harveys Lake is also home to chain pickerel, large and smallmouth bass and walleye, whose favorite food is smaller fish, such as trout fingerlings.

Suddenly the Fish Commission has decided that the fingerling

stocking program isn't working - intense research, has proven that some of the trout fingerlings may have been eaten by the bigger fish.

• The San Francisco city council has forced an exotic dancing act to get rid of one of its props, a shower stall because it wasn't accessible to "wheelchair-bound exotic dancers."

Roll that one by me again? • Heard on the scanner: "Car 54, where are you?"

Readers born after the early 60's may not understand this one, although I can still sing the entire theme song perfectly.

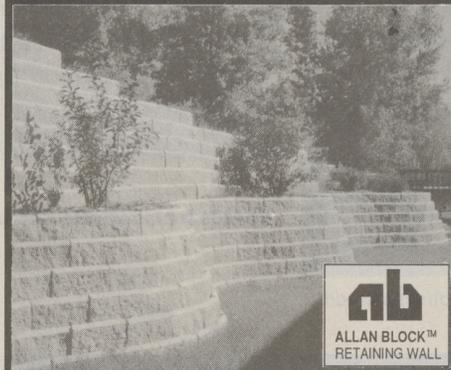
• NASA recently launched a billion-dollar plus satellite to spy on the Soviet army. Its specially calculated orbit makes it useless for any other function.

Keep in mind that since the fall of Communism several years ago, there isn't any more Soviet army.

• A national monthly magazine which considers Bigfoot, UFO sightings, UFO coverups by the government (any government), Men in Black, hauntings, Viking remains in Tennessee and other oddities to be real, recently warned its readers not to believe everything that they read about these same subjects in a popular supermarket tabloid.

Sounds like another oxymoron - Fate takes on *The Weekly World News*.

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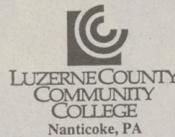
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