

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

It seems these days that many features begin with the words, "Fifty years ago..." and this column is no exception. Fifty years ago - younger readers won't believe this - a man was elected President of these United States for the fourth time! Yes, it's true, and his name was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, known familiarly as "FDR" for short.

His unprecedented fourth term, which Congress made sure does not happen again, was gained with 432 electoral votes to only 99 for his Republican opponent, Thomas E. Dewey. Why? Well, it has been said, with the invasion of Europe well under way, "You don't change pitchers in the last inning with victory in sight."

Perhaps, but the story behind the greatest campaigner and vote-getter in history is far more complex, stranger even than his winning 31 out of 48 states each of the four times he ran.

What, for example, would Sam Donaldson today make of the fact that this popular leader could not walk or stand without help? What would Hard Copy say? Or 60 Minutes? Would it even be remotely possible for that fact to lie quietly unreported today? Doubtful, doubtful, doubtful.

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

There's something wrong when:

—When the average Social Security recipient will receive \$178,000 from the SS fund, having only put \$39,000 in. When it's clear that those who designed the Social Security system intended it to be a supplement to a personal retirement system, and clearly didn't intend for the average citizen to collect anything—the retirement age set when the system began was 65; the average life expectancy then was 59.5. When it's also clear there are persons collecting Social Security, and at the same time living in West Palm Beach, without having SS proceeds taxed or received on a needs basis.

—When there exists ecological double standards in the sale and use of toxic chemicals internationally, particularly pesticides. And when little or no controls exist for the export of known toxic substances. When, in fact, one African nation was sold the cancer-causing chemical "Lindane" and persons there used it to catch fish by pouring the chemical into lakes; fish were killed, as was the villager's primary source of food and water.

—When, to protect a symbol, (the flag), some demagogues in Congress want to destroy the very foundation which gives it breath (the First Amendment).

—When movie raters (and with the apparent acquiescence of the public) rate a movie with horrific violence a PG and rate one with bared breasts and the "F" word an R.

—When the United States, the worlds largest debtor nation,

Would FDR's polio be front-page news today?

But that is exactly what happened back then, 50 years ago. The truth, strange as it seems, was never reported. Not a hint, Not a whisper. Roosevelt was completely paralyzed from the waist down. In August of 1921 his illness was diagnosed as poliomyelitis.

Polio, as it is more commonly known, takes its name from two Greek words meaning gray and marrow. When the disease strikes the gray matter of the spinal cord becomes the seat of an acute inflammation resulting in the destruction of the spinal motor nerve path to the muscles. Paralysis is the result, affecting anything from one hand to all muscle systems in the body. It was also called "infantile" because it seemed to strike children more often than adults, but most ages are not immune.

In Roosevelt's case, the attack might have resulted from cold water shock plus muscular fatigue, combined with chills and dampness. He was in continued agony and never fully recovered. He was destined to live the rest of his life in and out of a wheelchair, never walking, and standing only for short periods with the aid of braces and crutches.

That his situation could be almost hidden, and fully ignored by the press, is unbelievable. Yet in the Presidential Library at Hyde Park, there are more than 35,000 photographs but only two showing the president in his wheelchair. No newsreels, the forerunner of our video tapes, ever show the chair being pushed.

Out of thousands of political cartoons, not a single one show

him physically incapacitated in any way...instead he is shown running or jumping, things which were for him impossible. Obviously this was managed news. The White House carefully planned and successfully minimized his handicap with full cooperation from the press. Photographers who violated the unspoken "code of honor" and tried to sneak a picture of the President looking helpless, had their shots blocked by "accidents" or their cameras gently knocked to the ground.

It is odd that most biographers of FDR pay little attention to his disease and seven years of convalescence. It may be mentioned briefly in the beginning, but it is ignored later on. The deceptive strategy which soft-pedaled Roosevelt's physical condition is understandable, for paralyzed victims affect people's attitudes...for one, they are usually embarrassed. Polio has attacked men through centuries of history - mummies in Egypt have polio-withered limbs. Effective immunization came eventually, our last epidemic was in 1916.

Many victims, perhaps in compensation for what happened to their lower limbs, develop awesome muscular development in their upper arms and chest. This was what happened to Roosevelt.

And that jutting chin, held high always, the butt of political cartoonists, signified a cheery optimism that many of us could never muster. His cigarette holder was always at a jaunty angle too. With the burden of what he had to carry daily, I don't know how he did it. I'm not sure I could.

Spear publishes latest local history book, slates Northeastern PA history meeting

Dr. Sheldon Spear of Shavertown, professor of History at Luzerne County Community College, recently published "Wyoming Valley History Revisited," a series of essays on the people, places and periods of the Wyoming Valley, covering nearly 200 years, from the late 18th century to the 1970's.

The book includes informative discussions of the origins of many Northeastern Pennsylvania place names, the role of anthracite in the early industrial revolution as well as the Civil War years in the Wyoming Valley.

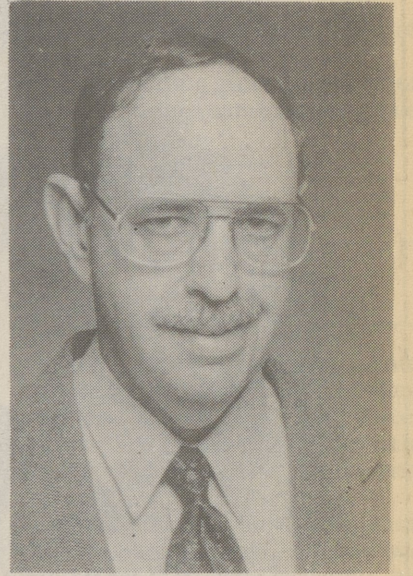
Contrasts between the rich and poor of 90 years ago are covered in the chapters on Glen Summit Springs and anthracite patch

towns. Coverage of the 20th century includes the 1920's, World War II years and the economic recovery following the post-war collapse of anthracite.

Dr. Spear, a native of Brooklyn, NY, has resided in Northeastern Pennsylvania since 1967. He is also the author of "Chapters in Wyoming Valley History," as well as numerous articles.

Dr. Spear will act as conference coordinator for the sixth annual conference on "This History of Northeastern Pennsylvania: The Last 100 Years," to be held Friday, Oct. 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the LCCC Educational Conference Center in Nanticoke.

"Wyoming Valley History Revisited" is available at local bookstores.



DR. SHELDON SPEAR

Starlight Ball chance tickets now available

The Wilkes-Barre General Hospital campus Auxiliary Starlight Ball Committee, Wyoming Valley Health Care System will hold its annual fundraising event, the Starlight Ball, November 12, at Genetti's Hotel, Wilkes-Barre. Festivities will begin at 7 p.m. with cocktails. A full-course dinner will be served at 8 p.m. with music provided by The Poets.

The Starlight Ball will feature a drawing for separate prizes of \$10,000, \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 in cash.

Tickets are \$100 per chance and may be purchased in the Wilkes-Barre General Hospital campus Hospitality Shoppe, main floor, or from any Auxiliary member.

Group purchases are encouraged. Sales will be limited to 300 tickets.

For ticket information, call the Auxiliary office at 829-8111, extension 2935.

More notes from all over

continues to give billions in foreign aid, more than half of it to two countries. Egypt and Israel, and waffle on supporting emerging democracies all over Eastern Europe, while continuing to provide arms to terrorists on both sides of the Middle Eastern conflict.

—When entitlement programs, interest on the national debt and defense now account for 82 percent of federal spending. And when entire generations of Americans now believe they are, indeed, entitled to a guarantee of happiness, rather than the constitutional guarantee of a pursuit of happiness.

—When 20 million Americans will spend nearly \$1 billion on liquid diet products, while 500 million people worldwide at best have inadequate nutrition.

—When Savings and Loan sharks can, with industry deregulation and duplicity by Congress, bilk the nation for \$500 billion dollars and then turn to us for a bailout.

—When our greatest drug problem—the voracious consumption of alcohol—continues to be winked at by the society at large. When every 23 minutes a drunk driver kills an innocent bystander. When drunk driving is the number one cause of death of young people between the ages of 16 and 21. When the drinking driver problem creates an estimated economic loss of over \$5 billion annually. When, on the average weekend night, one out of every 10 drivers on the road is drunk. When one out of every two Americans will be involved in an alcohol related auto crash in his or her lifetime. When drunk driving is responsible for the most common form of violent death in the nation. When nearly three fifths of 12,000 state inmates interviewed said they had been "very drunk" prior to committing the crimes for which they were imprisoned. When we continue to consume alcohol as if it were the elixir of life. When we continue to laugh at ourselves when, in a drunken stupor, we

can't put the key into the ignition. When we continue to decry the wayward path of our youth while setting an inebriate example for them. And when we continue to pay higher and higher sin taxes for the privilege.

—When our agricultural industry continues to scream about prices and foreign competition when that same industry receives more than 50 percent of its income from our federal government in some sort of subsidy.

—When welfare recipients are not required to, as a condition of receiving that government assistance, work in some manner. When, in fact, workfare programs in Massachusetts and in California have demonstrated themselves to be financially wise and socially redeeming.

—When, despite some 442 boxers having died in the ring since 1918, and despite the clear fact that boxing's alphabet soup ranking organizations and conflicting state rules, serve to find many boxers physically and financially tortured by the sport, we still do not have a federally operated boxing commission with uniform rules.

—When, in conversation with a teacher recently, I heard her say that she often worked during the summer in other capacities with children. She mentioned governmentally organized recreational programs, day care centers, etc. And she concluded by saying: "I'm going to try and be creative this summer in finding other work."

Exactly. Exactly. And for those who choose to ignore that this nation's greatness emerged from opportunity seized, becoming prosperity wrestled from adversity, then it's likely you will continue to elect state and federal politicians who promise more and more money from the state and federal treasury, all the while cutting your own imaginative, creative and potentially prosperous throat, hoping to receive pork barrels in which you can bleed.

Contra dances resume Sept. 10

The Folklore Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Chicory House or Wilkes-Barre will kick off a new season of monthly New England Contra Dances September 10 at 7 p.m. in "Fellowship Hall" of the First Presbyterian Church, 97 South Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre.

Beginners, singles, couples, young and old are all welcome. A review of basic figures will be held from 7 - 7:30 p.m. and all dances will be taught throughout the evening.

Dancers should wear soft-soled shoes or sneakers and casual dress.

Contra dancing is Celtic in origin; its music, no matter how far from traditional it may be, mostly takes the jig and reel forms native to the Celtic lands. In the US, contra dancing was traditional in New England, where after nearly dying out, it has enjoyed a tremendous revival in the last 25 years, its popularity spreading all over North America.

The local New England Contra Dances were begun in late 1990 by the Chicory House and Folklore Society.

Folklore Society/Chicory House New England Contra Dances will be held the second Saturday of each month, through June.

Admission to each New England Contra Dance is \$6 for adults; (\$5 for Chicory House or Folklore Society members); \$3 for children age 10 to 16, or \$15 for families. For more information, call 825-8772.

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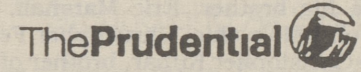
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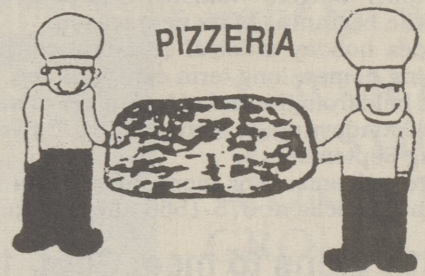
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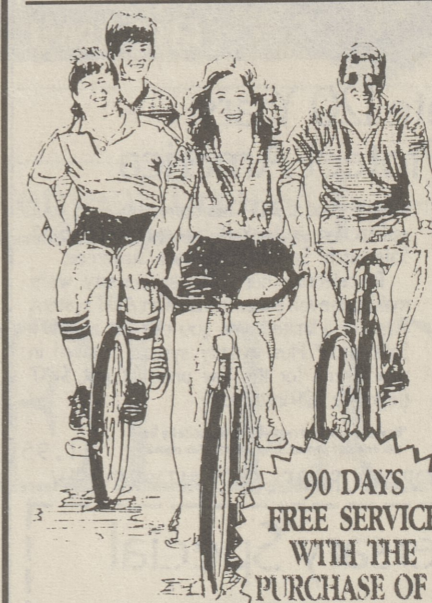
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