

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

More thorough checks of bus drivers needed

When parents send children off to class on a school bus, they may think they are putting their child's well-being in the care of the local school district. Instead, the children are put in the custody of a company that is in the business of transporting children to earn a profit, frequently a handsome one. And, while several regulations apply to the company and its conduct, sometimes the system fails. Such was the case when it was revealed that Emanuel Bus Lines driver Dean Lee Werts had been arrested on charges of sexually molesting young boys.

You might not even know about Werts, however, if it hadn't been for a parent who brought the story to the Post. Werts was arrested Thursday, November 17 at his home in Franklin Township. That means his bus route was covered by someone else the next and subsequent days. When our reporter called Leon Emanuel, he described Werts as a good employee, suggesting the children might have made it all up. "We can't believe it," Emanuel said. "Kids watch a lot of TV today."

But the arrest was no surprise to Dallas area parents who had complained about Werts's behavior in 1988, at which time he was reassigned to a bus that carried older children.

The Post talked to Emanuel on two separate occasions Monday, November 21, asking a variety of questions. At no time during that interview did he indicate that any action had been taken; but he had told the head of the district's bus operation that Werts had been fired the day of his arrest. This week he said Werts was fired as soon as he heard the driver had been charged with crimes.

Every school bus driver must pass muster before being hired, part of which is a background investigation that would turn up criminal convictions. Werts passed with flying colors, despite having pled guilty in 1986 to a charge of supplying alcohol to minors. That's the kind of thing that any sensible person would think should disqualify someone from a job that places him in close contact with children. But the system either failed or was too weak to work properly, and Werts was driving a Dallas school bus in 1988.

As for the bus company, surely it isn't too much to expect that a personnel file include information about the 1988 meeting at which parents and district officials decided to ask that Werts be reassigned away from young children. One would also think that word of Werts's problems should have followed him back to Emanuel from the Myers Bus Line, which employed him at the time the alleged incidents occurred.

It isn't clear at this time just where the breakdown occurred which allowed a suspected child molester to drive a bus carrying children, but it is easy to propose a partial solution: In addition to the standard Act 34 screening, school districts should require thorough reference checks with former employers and an inquiry to police departments where applicants have lived and worked. This is standard operating procedure at any well-run private company, and we should expect no less from our schools and the subcontractors they hire.

It's probably best not to rely on the bus company to conduct those investigations, they are better left to the school district.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



The high school and college football seasons are winding down, just as collegiate basketball teams are hitting the hardwoods. I followed college basketball fairly closely for several years, paying particular attention to the UConn Huskies, my home-state team. However, the better the talent, the more my interest wanes, as there appears to be less and less difference between teams from New England, the Midwest, the South or anywhere else. The bottom line is, whoever recruits the best high school players wins, no matter how far away they come from. This process is making college sports more like the pros, and the transition isn't good for the schools or the players.

The New York Times has published a series of articles on Steve McNair, the outstanding quarterback at Alcorn State College, a black college not usually the subject of national attention. One article charted McNair's progress toward a degree and showed copies of his transcripts. They were pitiful, with most courses he passed in the "recreational psychology" or "playground management" category. Basic courses, such as math and English, were remedial level; he wasn't able to master basic biology. I'm not demeaning McNair, he's just a product of a system that coddles and rewards big-time athletes while in school, then abandons them after their playing days are over.

So, I won't be following the fortunes of the Huskies as closely this year; it's just not the same anymore.

Anyone who doubts the virtue of spending on public projects should take a spin through Dallas Borough and get a look at the sparkling new Christmas lights strung grandly above the roadway. They give the town a sprightly, festive air that was absent in recent years when worn and dingy decorations hung there. Bravo to the borough council!



Lion roars at Lehman

A replica of Penn State's famous Nittany Lion statue has been placed at the entrance to the arboretum. The statue is a gift of the Penn State Club of Wyoming Valley. The statue was presented in a recent ceremony attended by many Penn State Club members and campus representatives. At the unveiling of the statue are, from left, Ed Hosey, president emeritus of Penn State Club, Erwin Sagenkahn, board member, Dr. Thomas P. Winter, acting Campus Executive Officer, Jack Kolesar, club president, Lorraine Johnson, Dave Grimes, and Michael Hudacek Jr., all board members of the Penn State Club.

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

Young radicals of every generation—and the current crop called Generation X are mild by historical comparison—define the middle by declaring the edges.

Some radicals in a previous generation thought we ought to be protected from ourselves; hence our currently bloated federal bureaucracy, employing untold numbers at enormous cost to, and in many cases, tell us the obvious.

For example, a Senate study, conducted at the cost of \$260,000, was conducted to determine why it is that children fall off bicycles.

And the study concluded that children—believe it or not—fall off bicycles because they lose their balance. I said believe it or not.

To be sure, that's an extreme case, but what isn't an extreme case is that the history of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) is a tail which is now wagging the dog.

Born in 1971, with its first full year of operation in 1972, OSHA's principal fact of life is that its continued overregulation is costing American businesses and, therefore, consumers, many billions of dollars per year in, often needless, one-size-fits-all attempts to legislate common sense, or outlaw human error.

Not included in the hundreds of billions of dollars lost by Ameri-

As I was saying



Jack Hilsner

Whence comes mummy? No, not from Al Jolson - that was mammy, you dummy! It had to start somewhere, and an Arab physician writing in the 12th century, Abd' el-Latif, said the word mummy was derived from the Persian term "mumia," which meant pitch or bitumen. The blackened appearance of preserved bodies of ancient Egyptians led to the wrong assumption that they had been soaked in bitumen.

Since mumia was thought to have good medicinal properties, some bodies were traded as a mumia source, supplanting the natural pitch mined in Persian mountains. These bodies became known as mummies and authorities had to limit their export when demand for mumia exceeded supply.

Its actual benefits were always questionable. It was used to treat abscesses, fractures, concussion, paralysis, epilepsy, nausea and ulcers! King Francis I of France always carried with him some mumia mixed with pulverized rhubarb to treat his ailments. In 1809, the King of Persia gifted the Queen of England with mumia.

However, physician Ambrose Pare, writing in 1634, said it had no beneficial effects whatsoever: "this wiked kinde of drugge doth

OSHA: Man is bitten by tail wagging the dog

can business since OSHA began are litigation costs incurred by business, or even the costs of opposing or commenting on new regulations by the very body which Osha theoretically sets out to serve.

Who pays? Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public in the form of tax dollars to fund the agency, and in the form of higher product prices.

Those who advocate OSHA see a positive impact. They argue for more OSHA, more regulation, more rules, more red tape, more interference in the free market system, more smothering of the independent businessman and corporation alike.

But industry records indicate that OSHA has had no strong impact, except in the creation and continuation of another bureaucracy.

The monumental stacks of paperwork required by OSHA have not of themselves saved one life or prevented one injury on the job.

But they have provided many a luxury home for OSHA bureaucrats.

Rules governing on-the-job safety and related items are much more realistically addressed by local and state authorities.

The birth of OSHA also has given birth to some rather cynical, albeit, close to the truth definitions, including one of OSHA and many about our system in general. Contractors know the definitions well. Some them are:

- Contractor: A gambler who never gets to shuffle, cut or deal.
- Bid Opening: A poker game in which the losing hand wins.
- Bid: A wild guess carried out to two decimal places.

—Lowbidder: A contractor who is wondering what he left out.

—Engineer's estimate: The cost of construction in heaven.

—Project manager: The conductor of an orchestra in which every musician is from a different union.

—Critical path method: A management technique for losing your shirt under perfect control.

—OSHA: A protective coating made by half baking a mixture of fine print, split hairs, red tape and baloney, usually applied at random with a shotgun.

—Strike: An effort to increase egg production by strangling the chicken.

—Delayed payment: A tourniquet applied at the pockets.

—Completion date: A point at which liquidated damages begin.

—Auditor: People who go in after the war is lost and bayonet the wounded.

As is often the case with attempts to rectify an ill, the concept of OSHA was perhaps necessary when it began. There is little doubt that capitalism, which is based on greed, will sometimes find the most expendable link in the chain to be a human being. Translated, that has sometimes meant poor and/or unsafe working conditions were ignored by business in favor of profit.

In steps the well-meaning dogooders and we're off to the races. The problem becomes one of degree. We now see American business drowning in over regulations. We now see a large and paperwork laden bureaucracy which has long since outlived its original purpose and values.

We now see the tail wagging the dog.

More things you never knew until you read them here

nothing to help the diseased...it also infers many troublesome symptoms, as the paine of the heart or stomacke and stinke of the mouth."

Strict attempts to limit the mummy trade reduced it somewhat, but the ingredient continued to be in demand and was still used in medicines in 19th century Europe. I must say, there are days when methinks mine bod could use some mumia.

Next U.S. prez? When I signed on here, I promised never to get political, and I won't break that promise. But this is just a wee peek at my voting plans. My record is pitiful, all the sure winners I back turn out to be losers half-way into their terms. It is time I back a winner who turns out to be just that...none other than Colin Powell.

Couple of reasons. First, his taste in music. Personal tapes include the following: Carly Simon, Benny Goodman, Strauss waltzes, Louis Armstrong, the Statler Brothers, Mozart, Paul Simon and Count Basie. How's that for a mix? How can I go wrong this time?

Secondly, David Roth's current bio, "Sacred Honor," contains this revealing anecdote concerning a family party at the Powell quarters in Fort Bragg, Powell's daughter-in-law answered the door to confront two 82nd Airborne GIs who were passing through and wanted to greet their hero, General Powell. "Sorry," she told them, "We're having a family party right now; perhaps you can come back later."

They thanked her and left. "Who was that?" asked Powell. When

his daughter-in-law told him, he rushed outside, brought the two amazed soldiers back inside, introduced them all around and gave them drinks and cake. They thanked him and left with that hero image etched in deeper than ever.

Powell has said there is "no intention" of taking on Slick Willie in '96. The only way it would happen, he says, would be if her were drafted.

Open the door, Richard! Let's create a draft in here!

No computer vox. There's a supermarket out here which is nice until you check out. There you must listen to what sounds like a mechanical computer-generated voice telling you your prices and your total bill. Change, too...it annoys the heck out of me, but it is not a computer.

It's Joan Kenley from San Francisco, who supplies her measured tones to Positalker supermarket scanners. She is also the person who tells you on the phone, "The number you have dialed (pause) 123-4567 (pause) has been disconnected."

Joan's voice is also on Nynex, many other phone systems, Otis elevators, pay phones in Japan, and automated cockpit systems.

Kenley does a great job, managing to sound both calm and annoying at the same time, but it serves her right when she says, "Sometimes I pick up a phone in my hotel room and hear my own voice delivering a message. It shakes me up!"

Hey, Joanie, how would you like to work at our supermarket checkout and listen to yourself all the livelong day

Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - Dec. 7, 1934

ELECTRIC RATES GO DOWN FOURTH TIME

A sizable reduction in electric rates, the 4th downward revision announced by the company in the last six years, will be made effective by Luzerne County Gas & Electric Corp. beginning January 1. Reduction will result in a saving of approximately \$162,500 annually to residential, commercial and small power customers of the utility which supplies 27 communities in Wyoming Valley and vicinity.

50 Years Ago - Dec. 1, 1944

ORCHARD FARM SOLD

Known for many years as one of the leading livestock producing farms in the state, Orchard Farm in Dallas Township has been purchased from the William H. Conyngham Estate by George and Kenneth Rice of Lehman Township.

Class of 1944 football season on Thanksgiving Day saw Lehman Township High School emerge as the outstanding contender for Back Mountain championship honors. Kingston and Dallas Townships both close unimpressive seasons.

You could get - Oranges, 31¢ doz.; apples, 3 lbs. 25¢; Sirloin steak, 29¢ lb.; washed carrots, 5¢ lb.; onions, 4 lbs. 17¢.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 3, 1954

NEW TRAFFIC LITES FOR CENTER STREET

Magnetic, automatic traffic signals similar to those at the intersection of Carverton Road and Memorial Highway have been approved by the State Dept. of Highways for installation at the Center Street intersection in Shavertown. The changeover will be made this weekend or early next week by Thomas Electric Co.

Lehman Twp. is having a Christmas Home Lighting Contest this year sponsored by the Ladies Aux. of the Fire Co. Prizes in the amount of \$10, \$5, and \$3 will be awarded to the homes judged best decorated by a group of judges elected from outside the township.

Back Mountain deer-slayers took to the woods long before daylight on Monday, awaiting the official hour of the opening of deer season. At one minute past 7 a.m., rifles cracked and by 9 a.m. jeeps started to jolt down logging trails bringing out the bucks. Schools were dismissed with many students making their first kill.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 3, 1964

FERRIS FULLER BAGS ALBINO BUCK

Ferris Fuller of Jackson Street shot an albino buck on Peter Skopic's Christmas tree farm on Rte. 29, yesterday morning. The buck had unusual flat antlers with about 9 points and may be one of two that escaped last month from the Red Rock Game Farm.

The men's faculty of Lake Lehman High School will play the N.Y. Harlem Satellites Dec. 4 in the high school gym. The Satellites should prove to be quite a challenge to the faculty. As of date the Harlem ball club has won a total of 1045 games compared with a loss of nine games.

N.J. Molski, acting Northeast Division Supervisor, Pennsylvania Game Commission, reports all number of State Game Lands roads will again be open this year during the antlered and antlerless deer season. The opening areas will facilitate the harvest of deer in these hard to reach locations.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 5, 1974

OLD SHOE STAYS IN DALLAS AGAIN

An all-time record fourth quarter dividend of 25¢ per share has been declared by the board of directors of United Penn Corp. "This is the highest dividend to be dispersed in the history of the corporation," said Robert L. Jones, president of United Penn Corp. and United Penn Bank.

The first trumpet of Christmas will sound Friday at College Misericordia as the college again presents the annual Christmas Madrigal Dinner. Complete with traditional holiday feast, madrigal singers, wandering minstrels, page boys and heralds, the madrigal will transport its guests back to a Christmas celebration of 16th Century England.

The Mountaineers, for the fifth consecutive year, took the bronzed Old Shoe back to their trophy case last week after taking the Lake-Lehman Knights in a close 12-7 contest.

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P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
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Ronald A. Bartizek
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Charlotte E. Bartizek
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Peggy Young
ADVERTISING ACCT. EXEC

Grace R. Dove
REPORTER

Paul Rismiller
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Olga Kostrobala
CLASSIFIED/TYPESSETTING

Jill Urbanas
OFFICE MANAGER



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