

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

In only a few days the month of April ushers itself into view, bringing on its first day the custom of "April Fool". There are several versions of how this foolishness got started...the most likely one explains that it all began in the 19th century, in France under King Charles IX.

New Year's Day, up to the year 1564 before the Georgian calendar, was celebrated on March 25, the advent of spring. King Charles moved it back to January 1, but many of his subjects disagreed with the change. They continued to exchange gifts and attend parties during the week ending April 1.

Some citizens even ridiculed such conservatism by jokingly sending invitations to nonexistent parties and giving silly gifts as a joke. The jokes came to a head on April 1, each year, thus becoming a custom. It took another 200 years for that custom to reach England, but when it did, it moved on to the New World. The parties and gifts had by then been replaced by practical jokes and outlandish pronouncements. And

April Fool: the untold story

so today in America, around countless office water coolers, an old French custom is celebrated as "April Fool's Day."

APRIL FOOL! This column is no exception. It's not about April Fool's Day at all. It's about the furor over a proposed local arena, and I had to trick you into reading more arena stuff. It worked, didn't it? But all kidding aside...read on...this particular stuff will be different, I guarantee.

There will be two new perspectives. First, that of our sister city of Scranton. I know Scranton. In my bachelor days local restaurants closed on Sundays so I ate in Scranton, where they stayed open. Scranton had cultural events while Wilkes-Barre was still learning what the word meant. Scranton supported (still does) a large and successful stamp and coin shop. Our little one is mostly baseball cards. They had the first mall, the first downtown revitalization, the first this, the first that.

So what do you suppose Scranton thinks of us? Do they call us "The Valley With a Heart?" Nope. They say we are the "Unconscious Valley." They go on to snicker and say "Nothing ever goes on there until there is a natural disaster and the government comes in to spend a billion dollars."

And who do you suppose would try to pick up the spilled state dollars if we kill the arena? (It won't happen, but if it did...) Scranton would have started digging the foundation before the ink was even dry. And Scranton citizens would laugh themselves silly over our worries about an arena

adding \$5 to \$11 per year to our taxes. Hell, they spend 10 times that every month on the state lottery. (And so do we! Or on cigarette taxes, or how about on Atlantic City?)

Now a second perspective. The nay-saying rabble in the front row say senior citizens won't support an arena. Who sez? I've gone to the Meadowlands often and stopped only when the driving became a pain. A 20-minute drive to a local arena would be painless. I would go. I would support it, and I am a senior.

They say seniors won't support concerts. Who sez? I'd go to see Old Blue Eyes, and Tony Bennett, and Willie Nelson. And some big bands. Mr. Aten's Big Band Society alone would fill two arenas. We'll all go. And we're seniors.

I'd go to sport shows and watch them catch trophy bass. I'd go to stamp and coin shows, antique shows, state championship basketball games, flower and garden shows, trade shows, ice shows, the Ringling Brothers circus, and yes, I'll even try hockey and risk getting hooked. I'll go. And I'm a senior.

Come to think of it, there are enough of us to tip the scales in favor of an arena. If we get off our big rusty dusties we can end this foolishness. Vote YES to that referendum on May 16. (Let's have the last laugh for Scranton for a change.)

Remember, this is not April Fool! Make it a present to yourself, your family, and generations to come. Vote yes! Let's have an arena!

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

As this is being written, the Pennsylvania Senate is considering a bill designed to strengthen the state's rape law. Under the current law, a woman must prove that she resisted to make certain of a rape conviction. Simply saying no is not enough under Pennsylvania law. And that's the way it's been for a long time, until the issue was reexamined following a 1994 Supreme Court ruling which overturned a 1988 rape conviction because, and while the defendant repeatedly said no to the man, she did nothing beyond that.

In January, the State Senate passed a bill that would create a new criminal offense called sexual assault. The law would cover cases lacking evidence of force, including situations in which victims submit to the advances in order to avoid serious injury or death.

That such a law is necessary points to the incredibly ingrained idea that women in this country are mere chattel.

Small wonder that—and even as child abuse numbers soar here and nationwide—hidden in those numbers are equally shocking facts:

As often as not, and often in concert with, or even before the child is abused, the child's mother

Attitude adjustment, not a new law, will protect women

is. And if not abused in the home, then in the society in general, i.e., in 1989 there were 2.96 forcible rapes in Pennsylvania per 1,000 population. Project that over the state's nearly 12 million people and you can see that violence against women is more than just what the shock TV jerks talk about.

Violence against women is so much a part of our societal nomenclature that, for example, in New York State last year, five men were charged with first-degree rape of a drunken woman in a small town bar. They were eventually permitted to plead guilty to misdemeanor sexual conduct.

Instead of the 25 years in prison which comes with first degree rape, they each received \$750 fines....and walked.

Sound far fetched....read on.

A Colorado woman was kidnapped and raped. She escaped from her attacker and stopped a passing motorist. The motorist was taking her to the police station when the rapist pulled alongside, shot the driver, kidnapped the woman again....and murdered her.

Juries across the country routinely underpunish perpetrators of crimes against women, failing, for example, to see that a crime has even been committed when a woman is assaulted by her husband....and if you're a rape victim, be prepared to undergo hell when you go to court.

National numbers on rape convictions bear this out. Only 10 percent of reported rapes result in a conviction....50 percent

of rapists get less than a year in jail....and 25 percent get only probation.

The attitude about violence against women is as old as the relationship between men and women. Men are stronger than women. When the frustration of simple existence rears its head, often the easiest and most convenient target is the woman standing nearby.

As day to day survival issues have diminished and been replaced by a relatively comfortable and safe living environment for most persons, the attitudes about how to deal with frustration and other issues of power have not caught up...many men still believe it is correct, proper, and appropriate and even necessary to hit "their women" occasionally....to show them who's boss, or to keep them in line, or....(fill in the blank).

Aside from public education programs which point out that violence solves nothing, about all that can be done is for our legislatures to address the question legally.

And the State Legislature needs to address the current archaic version of the rape law soon. Likewise, until we get serious about the continued abuse of women and children in this society, then we will continue to read about children being dropped from buildings, and stuffed in garbage cans, along with women being raped, all acts of violence against the weakest of us...that is, those who bear the future, and the future itself.

Some future, huh?

Letters

'Do It For The Kids'

Editor:

Those of us planning to participate in the Third Annual "Do It For The Kids" Walk-A-Thon on Saturday, April 8, will be walking for hundreds of children with physical and mental disabilities who have been served by the Wyoming Valley Children's Association.

The 3.1 mile walk, starting and ending at Kirby Park and winding through the streets of downtown Wilkes-Barre, is a major fundraiser for the association as participants secure sponsors who support them financially in their efforts.

I know the work being done by the Wyoming Valley Children's Association is beneficial to many families in our area. I've seen what can be done with children whose physical and mental capabilities are diminished for whatever reason. I've seen how families can regain hope as they watch their child progress. I've seen smiles on the faces of children who never smiled before.

As a first-hand observer of the efforts of those involved with the Wyoming Valley Children's Association, I have become a strong advocate for the kinds of programs offered by the association.

My five-year-old niece Kali has been involved with the teachers and therapists at the association since she was six weeks old. She is now a member of the pre-school program offered by the association and is expected for the first time, to cross the finish line of the walk on her own. The fact that Kali can do that is testimony to the work done by the association's staff members.

I invite you to join me, Kali, her mother and hundreds of other people who believe in the programs of the Wyoming Valley Children's Association. Won't you please call the Children's Association at 829-2453 today and ask for your Walk-A-Thon brochure?

Walk with us on April 8 and help us continue the work done by people who believe the strongest in our most valuable asset - our children.

Doty Martin
1995 "Do It For The Kids"
Walk-A-Thon Chairperson

The Post has more local news

Four years ago I was privileged to run in the most significant judicial election ever to be held in the history of Luzerne County when we elected an unprecedented 4 individuals as Judges to our Court of Common Pleas. In that election, the first that I had ever participated in as a candidate, over 21,000 men and women voted for my candidacy! As a result I finished 5th overall from among a field of 17 candidates.

This past month over 3500 registered voters signed my petitions for Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Luzerne County. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in that process. Your early confidence in me is very much appreciated by me and my family.

This May 16th the voters of Luzerne County will once again elect a new Judge to their court. With your Help, I will be that Judge!

DEDICATED TO JUSTICE!

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Dallas Borough street sweeping regs

Dallas Borough Road Department has begun spring street sweeping. All residents are asked to cooperate by not parking on the Borough's roadways between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. until they see that their street has been cleaned.

The Road Department will also collect bagged leaves for residents who are raking their yards and flower beds. Bagged leaves should be placed along the side of the roadway. All bags will be emptied and returned.