

## Arena

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Most of their profits are sent out of the area.

At least with local businesses working at the arena, the jobs and profits would stay in the area instead of going out of town.

"Some businesses have been here for 50 years," he said. "It's their home too - they have a stake in our future."

He is concerned that Luzerne County will lose the \$19.2 million state grant which will help fund the project.

"If we don't use this money, the state will send it elsewhere," he said. "We will literally be giving our tax money away to another community if we don't use it for the arena."

He also pointed out the convenience of having events and shows within a short drive of home.

"It's much better than driving three hours to Philadelphia, then fighting the crowds and traffic for a parking space," he said.

Stager doesn't want the residents of Luzerne County to look back in 20 years and wish they had gone along with building the arena. He saw a similar situation in Jackson Township, which 20 years ago turned down a federal grant to build sewers. The supervisors felt that the rural township didn't need them, Stager said.

They didn't foresee the township's rapid development, particularly after 1972, Stager said.

"Ten years ago we had to spend lots of money installing sewers, which we could have gotten for free 20 years ago," he said. "Sometimes 20-20 hindsight is the most accurate."

## VE Day

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uge and the men in uniform celebrating by - what else? - grabbing and kissing the nearest pretty girl.

Celebrations were also going on in Picadilly Circus, the Champs Elysees, Rome, Oslo, Copenhagen and Brussels. But not in Dallas, Pennsylvania, in the United States of America.

According to that week's edition of *The Dallas Post*, Vol. 55, No. 19, six cents per copy, a rather normal - even small you might say - headline proclaimed "Back Mt. Celebrates End of War." The article went on, "People blew car horns, sirens and rang bells shortly after the formal announcement. The Dallas fire truck drove around awhile, but few people were out in the streets and the excitement died down after only about 15 minutes."

It rained that day. Churches opened for prayer. Evans Drug selling chocolates for \$1.50 a box, open 365 days per year for 15 years, closed all of VE Day.

## Honor Roll

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municipal building.

A gift from Shavertown drug-gist Edward Hall, it contains an inscription and the names of 318 Kingston Township High School graduates and students who served in World War II, sandblasted into a plaque of black Carrarra glass and covered with gold leaf paint.

Dedicated March 22, 1943, the original contained only 192 names, with the remaining 126 added later.

Eight were women: Norma Walter, who served with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC); nurses Estella Prushko, Bessie Howells and Ellen Piatt; and Ethel Bertram, Dorothy Luft, Nancy Kosey and Marjorie G. Darrow, whose area of service wasn't listed.

Francis Youngblood didn't know his name was on the Honor Roll until he read about it in an issue of *The Dallas Post* which was sent to him while he was in the service.

His two children and three grandchildren, all township residents, have never seen his name, he said.

Youngblood was drafted into the Air Corps in April, 1943, and was sent to Miami Beach for basic training. The government had taken over the entire town, he said.

"It was a different world down there," he chuckled. "We left Pennsylvania in winter clothing and here they were in Miami Beach in summer uniforms. Some people were swimming in the surf."

After basic training, Youngblood was sent to airplane mechanics school at Keesler Field near Biloxi, MI, then to gunnery school at Panama City, FL.

His duties as an airplane mechanic, doing 100-hour pre-flight inspections of B-17 and B-24

## Arena's OK, but not taxes

Although Warner favors the arena, he believes it shouldn't be funded with public money.

"The arena should be in the hands of the private sector, which could build and operate it and still save the county \$1.5 million," Warner said. "Private enterprise built this country."

Under the county's plan, a \$22 million bond issue, a \$19.2 million state appropriation and a hotel tax, estimated to generate \$800,000, would fund the arena, which proponents say will cost approximately \$41 million.

*"The arena should be in the hands of the private sector."*

Michael Warner  
Taxes No member

Debt service alone could cost Luzerne County's taxpayers as much as \$1.5 million a year, which not incurring a debt would save them, Warner said.

"The county will spend nearly \$70 million by the time the arena is all paid off, without figuring in the costs of widening Route 309 and Coal and Mundy streets, building a new exit on Route 81 and upgrading the area's sewers and drainage system," Warner said. "The total costs could approach \$100 million by the time everything is finished."

A proposal drafted by Taxes No suggests a unique idea - don't begin construction until private entrepreneurs have raised \$41.2 million through tax-deductible

donations, personal payroll deduction contributions and the profits from special fundraising events.

He has calculated that with workers donating an hour's wages every week, the arena would be paid for in 75 weeks, based on the county's average wage of \$19,500 per year.

"By delaying breaking ground until you have the money up front, you save interest on the debt and don't encounter any hidden financing costs," Warner said.

The county wouldn't lose the \$19.2 million already appropriated by the state for the arena if area legislators appealed to Governor Tom Ridge to allow it to be used to pay for the highway exit, road, sewage and drainage projects, he added.

Taxes No's proposal also calls for the creation of an account to pay for arena repairs and maintenance, which they say the county hasn't budgeted for.

"Other arenas have needed repairs within the first five years, if nothing else, due to the weather," Warner said. "Ours will too."

The hotel tax would be eliminated under Taxes No's plan.

"The tax is a very touchy situation," Warner said. "The hoteliers have vowed to fight it all the way to the state Supreme Court, which could take up to four years. During this time the arena authority could collect the tax but wouldn't be allowed to use any of the money, which would create an \$800,000 deficit every year, or

up to \$3.2 million if the court case drags out over four years. If the hoteliers win their case, the county would be out the \$3.2 million, which it would have to return to them."

Taxes No is also concerned about the "surprises" and sudden snags which seem to pop up on every construction job, especially in deep coal country.

No borehole tests have been done at the arena site yet, forcing planners to rely on old mining maps which Warner says aren't accurate.

"We can't do much until we run the borehole tests," he said. "They'll give us the best information on exactly what's underground."

Warner is "troubled" that the government is acting more and more like an entrepreneur, which he says wasn't part of our nation's Founding Fathers' philosophy.

## Youth hockey coaches support arena, pg 11

"Wages, prices, business owners and competition were meant to be the function of the private sector, not the government," he said. "People should hold the philosophy of separation of business and the state as sacred as they do the philosophy of separation of church and state, as it was set up in the beginning of our country."

Only President Roosevelt's death caused a similar closing.

The Shaver Theatre was showing (in living Technicolor) "Something For the Boys" with Phil Silvers and Carmen Miranda. Acme Market was selling a two-pound bag of coffee for 42¢. Buck shad was 25¢ per pound; roe 42¢; Ivory soap: 3 bars for 14¢. Stove wood \$1.00 per cord.

On the social page, Mrs. Charlotte Lewis celebrated her 90th birthday at the home of her daughter, Mrs. C.A. Perkins on Harris Hill Road. Also on the social page was an ad for Stegmaier's occupying fully half a page: "Brewed to the taste of a nation."

The classified ads in that issue were called "The Trading Post" and you could buy baby chicks at 12¢ each; an oak sideboard cost \$4.75; you could call Carl Crockett for "prompt removal of dead, old, disabled, horses, cows or mules." (Carl said he would pay any phone charges if you

called him.)

And that was the home town of Dallas, Pennsylvania. Overseas, not surprisingly, soldiers, seamen and airmen from the Back Mountain reacted in pretty much the same way...thoughts of the unfinished Pacific conflict sobered any great amount of celebrating that might or might not have started.

Lamar Sharpe of Trucksville said, "They were sending back those with 85 points or higher, based on a set formula, and I had 83. I had to wait a bit, but I knew I was heading for a short furlough and then training for B-29's and the Pacific. So why get excited?"

Sharpe heads south soon for another reunion of his B-24 crew; they had one at Frances Slocum last July, and he looks forward not only to this one but "many more to come!"

Shavertown's Al Brown didn't get too excited either on VE Day. "More relieved than anything," he said. "After our rescue by the

Scottish Guards the Brits moved us to Brussels. You know the British - they are always eating, six times a day. They really overfed us after the POW food, and I wound up in the hospital! I ate more chocolate bars than was good for me. On VE Day we hit a few Belgian bars, but that was about it. Low key, all of it, because we knew it wasn't over quite yet."

And that's pretty much the VE Day feeling of all the vets. If you'd talk to Ed Smith of Harveys Lake, Al Baloga of New Goss Manor, Bud Bayer, Shavertown, Bill Smith, Orange and Emmett Hoover, Troxel Switch Road...with what they all knew faced them, next, at the time VE Day was "no big deal!"

It remains however, the biggest deal of all to the citizens of a ruined continent. It meant, finally, an end to the killing, more than 35,000,000 in North Africa and Europe, from 1939 to VE Day, 1945.

## Arena statistics

As election time nears, many questions, facts and figures about the proposed Luzerne County arena are being bandied about by proponents and opponents.

Designed to seat between 10,000 and 12,000 people, the arena will occupy 235,000 square feet, including 43,000 square feet of floor space, 12,000 square feet of meeting rooms and a 29,000 square-foot concourse, located on a 75-acre site opposite the Lord & Taylor facility on Highland Boulevard in Wilkes-Barre.

According to the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, construction of the arena will generate 538 jobs at the arena itself and another 200 jobs building the new Exit 46 off Route 81.

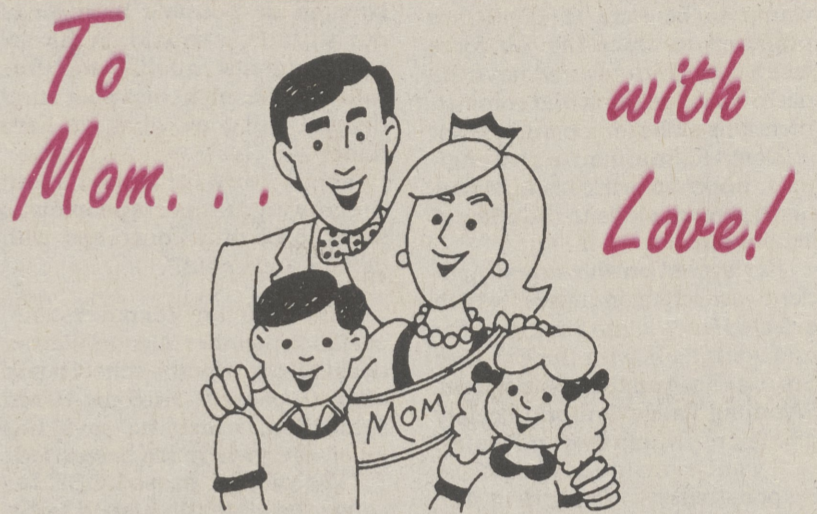
The facility itself will generate 40 full-time and 300 part-time jobs, with more commercial and office development following in adjacent areas, the Chamber said.

The cost to Luzerne County residents will be approximately \$22 million plus interest, or about \$1.5 million per year for the next 30 years. An additional \$19.2 million state grant which Governor Casey earmarked for the arena brings the total cost to \$41.2 million.

The convention center authority recommends levying a five percent hotel tax, estimated to bring in \$1,182,000, and a 25¢ per ticket surcharge, estimated to generate \$150,000 per year.

Other funding sources could include special lease agreements for corporate box seats and vendors, naming parts of the facility in exchange for a donation, sales of season tickets and state or federal grants.

The 75-acre site is part of 300 acres of strip mine land reclaimed during the 1970's. Because state and federal funding were used in the reclamation project, 67 percent of the land must be used for public purposes and may not be used for industrial development. The remaining 33 percent, however, is eligible for industrial development.



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