

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Arena's value is well worth its cost

The proposed Luzerne County Arena and Convention Center may cost more than its backers claim. It may not draw the number of visitors projected by a distinguished firm that analyzed its prospects. It may even not look as pretty as the color drawings that have been circulated. None of those possibilities, however, is reason for voters to pass by an opportunity that may never again be presented to them.

The arena is likely to be neither the economic savior nor financial disaster that pre-election rhetoric has characterized. It does have great potential to spur employment and growth while capturing a significant amount of spending that now leaves the area or at the very least is spent elsewhere. But the argument isn't just about money.

Long-time residents and newcomers alike are aware of this region's lack of confidence in itself. Even our neighbors in Lackawanna County joke that the only time anything gets done in Luzerne County is when a major disaster strikes and federal funds come pouring in. That's an unfair characterization, and there are scores of individual examples of excellence and ambition in this area. There are few institutions, however, that showcase a productive relationship between citizens, government and private enterprise. The arena could be the most important — and most visible — of these.

All sides in the arena debate have made mistakes or misstatements in their zeal to be proven correct. From the start, proponents should have said clearly that an annual tax burden of \$15 to \$20 per household was the farthest outside limit of the arena's cost, including bond repayment. Opponents have done far more than leave out a few inconvenient possibilities; they have engaged in wholesale deceit by throwing around a \$100 million cost figure that includes the expense of constructing an exit off I-81, widening Coal and Mundy streets and upgrading sewers. Understand this: The cost of building the exit is in the PennDOT budget, and is not the county's responsibility, and the necessity for street widening and sewer upgrades have been specifically excluded. That's why officials of both Wilkes-Barre Township and Wilkes-Barre City are for the arena.

Equally nonsensical is opposition to a 5 percent tax on hotel rooms to help fund the arena. It's astounding that some of the people who would benefit most from the arena's presence oppose the tax, which would add about \$3 to the typical daily room cost. It would be nearly impossible to find a traveler who has rearranged plans to save that small amount; it will be much easier to find people who will come here for arena events.

Perhaps the most muddled thinking on the whole question comes from Michael Warner of Jackson Township, who, when not making outrageous statements against the arena as a leader of the Taxes No Group, is running for a spot on the Lake-Lehman school board. In that capacity, he says the state should hand parents \$8,000 per year for each child so they can send their kids to private school. Yet, he thinks the outside chance of spending \$15 per year to support the arena is an egregious waste of public funds.

The arena is an opportunity, and, yes, we might have to pay a little for it. Few things of value come without some cost. Conversely, this region's culm banks, worn storefronts and shabby houses clearly display the price of failing to invest in the future, and in ourselves. You can decide if the primary on May 16 sends a signal of shortsightedness or one of long-overdue confidence in our worth and our future. Vote yes to fund the arena. It's well worth the limited risk.



Ready for action at Frances Slocum Park. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

Last December I wrote a tongue-in-cheek column ("All I want for Christmas is a Klingon distrup-tor") which mentioned a catalogue advertising how-to-books for home explosives and other goodies which I found in our incoming mail.

At the time I thought the catalogue was rather bizarre, even for some of the stuff which crosses my desk.

After writing the column, I didn't think much about it until April 17, when the bomb heard around the world destroyed a federal building in Oklahoma City.

One of the books police said they confiscated from a suspect's home was *Ragnar's Guide to the Home and Recreational Use of Explosives*, which I had found advertised in the Delta Press catalogue and mentioned in my December column.

At the time it seemed like a weird joke. Now it makes me sick.

One more howl of outrage

Last week on my lunch hour I quickly paged through the catalogue again (we have it in our files under "Whackos").

I gave up after the first seven pages, in which I counted at least 27 books containing detailed instructions and recipes for making homemade explosives.

Okay, circulation of this type of catalogue is certainly protected by our constitutional right of free speech. But is it necessary?

Do we really need to know how to make assault weapons, grenade launchers, plastic explosives, flamethrowers, claymore mines, beer can mortars, "tracers and other little bombs," hand grenades, land mines and fertilizer bombs?

Are sniper training, guerrilla warfare, urban combat and Ranger/ Special Forces techniques necessary to preserve our life, liberty and pursuit of happiness? How do they benefit society?

Granted, most sensible people will do as I did — laugh at the darned thing and either file it or toss it.

It's the minority lunatic fringe out there who won't, who will send away for some of those little love-ies just for the heck of it. Soon just having the information won't be enough.

They'll want to field-test the stuff to see if it really works.

Tim McVeigh did just that and lots more, if we're to believe the Oklahoma City police and the FBI. He blew away a couple hundred innocent men, women and kids to "protest" the government's mishandling of the Branch Davidian incident at Waco two years ago.

Oklahoma City and Waco are two of many reasons why I strongly object to the printing and dissemination of the type of claptrap found in the Delta Press catalogue. It's neither appropriate nor necessary in any society.

Sure, I don't like some of our government's hare-brained ideas either. I don't condone what happened at Waco two years ago, and I certainly don't like some of the rotten stuff the government has pulled on my Native American brothers and sisters, among others.

But blowing lots of people away isn't an appropriate way to make any type of statement. There's no excuse in the universe which justifies the taking of innocent lives.

Violence won't stop the injustice. Murder won't stop the killing.

Creator didn't give us hands to use for making explosives or killing people.

Cassie Rismiller, who came to work with her Dad, our own Ghost-writer, last week, contributed to this column.

A Case for Conservation



Alene N. Case

This year, I spent most of Earth Day on the road. As I crossed the border between Delaware and Pennsylvania, I decided to perform a little experiment to make this solitary drive a bit more interesting.

From that point south of Philadelphia on I-95 to the Bear Creek exit off the turnpike, I held my speedometer between 55 and 60 mph. In all that distance, I passed only two automobiles! One belonged to an elderly gentleman who had just entered the highway from an on-ramp; the other was an "elderly" VW beetle that probably couldn't go faster than 50 mph.

Meanwhile, cars of all shapes, ages, and sizes were whizzing past at speeds considerably in excess of mine. I did not attempt to count those, but it was certainly in the hundreds. About halfway home, a BMW went past doing at least 85 mph. What really annoyed me was that this particular car was also sporting one of those Wild Conservation license plates with the cute little owl on it. What a contradiction! Not only are BMWs notoriously poor in terms of gas mileage, but the driver was making it much worse than normal by speeding.

Yes, I know that our state is in the process of increasing the speed limit on such sections of highway to 65 mph. But, that is not really the point. There are three excellent reasons to maintain slower speeds when you are driving.

The first and most obvious reason is that slower speeds are safer. William Proxmire put it this way in the 1986 debate in the US Senate: "If the Senate raises the speed limit to 65 mph on rural interstate highways, we will be in effect signing death warrants for the lives of 500 or more men,

Consider several driving lessons from Earth Day

women, and children each year." He was right. The very next year the fatality rate on the rural interstates in the 38 states that raised the speed limit increased by 21%. Since speed is a factor in one third of all traffic fatalities, this is not surprising. The likelihood of having a fatal accident doubles between 60 and 70 mph. It is virtually impossible to survive a crash at speeds in excess of 70 mph.

There has been a recent debate about whether or not PA should restrict the right of our elderly to drive. The most common argument in favor of such restriction seems to be that older citizens drive too slowly. I figure our elders may have learned a thing or two in their many years of experience. As Flip Wilson used to say: "Little old ladies are cool. That's how you get to be a little old lady."

In addition to the conservation of human potential and of money saved in reduced medical expenses for injuries, driving slower also conserves natural resources and creates less pollution. If we all maintained a 55 mph speed on roads marked as such, we would save approximately 167,000 barrels of petroleum per day. That is about 2% of this nation's entire fuel consumption! You see, cars use fuel most efficiently at approximately 40 mph. At 70 mph, efficiency is reduced by about one third. You may be tempted to think that your new car cannot possibly be so wasteful because of all the improvements in design and equipment that have been made since the 55 mph speed limit was imposed twenty years ago. But, I'm telling you that it is true—those numbers are from a study done at Oak Ridge in 1992. In 1974, it was likely a lot worse.

With wasted fuel comes increased pollution. No car is 100% efficient at any speed. Pollution generated at slower speeds, such as in-town driving, contains large amounts of carbon monoxide as well as the expected carbon dioxide and water. It also contains lesser amounts of unburned

hydrocarbons and various nitrogen oxides (NOx). When a car is accelerated fast or driven at high speed, the concentration of carbon monoxide decreases and the hydrocarbons and NOx's increase dramatically. These pollutants are responsible for much of the dirty air in our region. NOx's not only add to the problem of acid deposition, they also contribute to the formation of ozone.

All of these pollutants are individually dangerous to human health. NOx is related to increased incidence of short-term respiratory illnesses such as colds, bronchitis, croup and pneumonia. Ozone can irritate eyes at levels well within the legal limit. At higher levels, it causes breathing problems and may actually speed up the aging of lung tissue. It also damages plants and has been blamed for billions of dollars per year in lost farm revenue due to lower crop yields.

It seems obvious to me that this is one area in which each American can decide to contribute to the solution of several problems at once. It is also obvious that we are not now doing so. When is the last time you saw a car commercial that included the mileage rating or emissions standards for the car? Consumers should be demanding higher mileage ratings whether or not there is an immediate energy crisis. As it stands at the moment, there are about 45 years remaining in the "Age of Petroleum." Do we really think that some other magic fuel will come along and save us from ourselves. Do we think that people 200 years from now will not need a dab of petroleum jelly every once in a while? How about synthetic fabrics, plastic toys, and jet fuel?

Let's heed the words of the Honorable Senator from Vermont, Robert T. Stafford, who gives us all the reasons we need to conserve: "Energy is a limited resource. The attitude that there is plenty for us is irresponsible and unfair to our children and grandchildren because it is their share of energy we will be using."

Only yesterday

60 Years Ago - May 17, 1935 MUNICIPALITIES ARGUE ABOUT TIME CHANGE

Because the lowest bids for complete construction of additional classrooms and auditorium exceed the bond issue voted last fall by \$10,500, Dallas Township School Board has decided to reject all bids, ignore the bond issue and borrow only enough money to complete necessary classrooms to accommodate classes next year.

Forty members of the Senior Class of Kingston Township High School will be graduated June 4. Rev. James A. Martin, supervising principal, announced this week. Class Day will be on May 29 and the Baccalaureate Service on Sunday, June 6.

The Luzerne Merchants Association at a special meeting this week decided to abandon DST and return to Standard Time for the summer. Luzerne Borough mines in that section and borough schools did not adopt DST when other communities in this section changed.

50 Years Ago - May 18, 1945 FRANKLIN TWP. WILL UNVEIL HONOR ROLL

Franklin Township Honor Roll, with more than 70 names, will be dedicated on the Orange school grounds, May 20 at 2 p.m. Boy Scouts of Centermoreland, Girl Scouts and Brownies from Carverton will conduct the flag-raising ceremony and Franklin Township servicemen will unveil the honor roll.

The War Department yesterday afternoon notified Mr. and Mrs. John Girvan of Lake Street that their son, Robert, who had been missing in action for a year, was killed May 14, 1944 when his dugout on the Italian front received a direct enemy artillery hit.

40 Years Ago - May 13, 1955 CAR STOLEN FOR SECOND TIME

High school graduates planning to enroll in the college for the fall semester of '55 may now be able to complete their college education without interruption for duty in the Armed Forces if they enroll in one of 52 colleges and universities throughout the U.S. that have a Naval Reserve Officer Training Unit attached. ROTC students will remain in deferred status until the completion of their college training, at which time they will be commissioned as ensign USNR and will be required to serve in active duty for a period of two years.

"There's nothing like a satisfied customer," according to L.L. Richardson who this week had the same 1939 grey four-door Dodge Sedan stolen from his used car lot for the second time. A car that was traded in a few weeks ago was stuck in a ditch on Demunds Road. His men went to pick it up, and noting that there was no damage, returned it to the used car lot along Memorial Highway, removing the temporary license plates. Next morning looking out of his bedroom window at his home just across the street, Richardson saw the vacant space where the car had stood. "Look, Grace!" he yelled "We got another satisfied customer. He's come back for the '39 Dodge."

30 Years Ago - May 13, 1965 MATHERS BUILDING GETS NEW TENANTS

Lake-Lehman Jointure played cagey last week by reducing its directorate to nine members in advance of its acceptance by Department of Public Instruction in Harrisburg as a third class school district. Lester B. Squier met with his directors to work out a plan which would insure Lake-Lehman retaining its identity during the forthcoming mandated organization of the school district. The law requires nine directors for a school district.

Trucksville's "Little Car Palace," or the Mathers Building as it is formally known, located across from the firehall on Carverton Road, adjacent to the highway, has finally found some tenants. The larger side of the building, measuring 40x70, will be the home of a new Economy Store, while the smaller side will be a teen-haven — sort of a combination soda fountain and recreation and meeting spot.

You could get - Rib roast 69¢ lb.; fresh hams, 53¢ lb.; oranges doz. 39¢; Tide detergent, 3 lb., 1 1/4 oz. pkg. 75¢; red grapes 19¢ lb.

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Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



The Post simply doesn't have the resources to devote time and attention to county politics. That said, it's good to see a couple of Back Mountain people in the race for commissioner this year. Recent occupants of that office appear to believe the county ends at Wyoming Avenue; Jim Phillips is the only one who ever approached us, and that was only once, when he hoped to capture the state representative seat that had been vacated by Scott Dieterick. County offices have been controlled by the largest bloc of voters, in Wilkes-Barre and the West Side. Even Hazleton, with a substantial percentage of the county population, gets short shrift.

County government is an anachronism in much of the nation. In my native Connecticut, there's a sheriff and a judiciary, and not much else. All government functions have been divided between the state and local municipalities. Eliminating the county layer has forced state officials to be more responsive to local concerns. Even in states that maintain strong counties, almost all employ a county executive to run things efficiently. That may be too much to hope for, but at the very least our county government desperately needs new blood, and Red Jones and Ed Kelly may be the ones to supply it.

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