

## Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

This weekend we'll celebrate Memorial Day, honoring veterans who died in all our wars. We'll raise our flags, hear prayers and Taps and lay wreaths on monuments.

Like most others, my family has sent its share of men to war. I grew up hearing their stories, an important part of my family's history which has helped make me who I am today.

During World War I, Uncle Bill Swickey was "gassed" in service and Uncle Freddie Bitter had to learn how to ride a horse, which was then required of Army all officers, after earning a battlefield commission.

During World War II, Dad (Harry Ritchie) was a tech sergeant with the 90th General Hospital in Barle-Duc, France. His kid brother, Ray, went down with his ship, the *Cooper*, during the battle of Ormoc Bay in the Philippines, while my godfather, Walt Hansgen, barely missed being captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge.

My stepfather, Peter Kuchmanich, served with the army in Korea.

Of all our family's servicemen,

## Honoring our veterans

Dad is the only one still alive.

For the past two years I've had the opportunity to honor my warrior ancestors in a unique way, during festivals held by my people at the Lenni-Lenape Historical Society's Museum of Indian Culture in Allentown.

Typically, Native festivals begin with the Grand Entry, followed by the veterans' Honor Dance, two sacred ceremonies which we don't permit visitors to photograph.

During the Grand Entry, our spiritual leaders respectfully carry the American flag around the dance ring while the drummers sing a special chant, dancers follow in a solemn procession and the crowd stands at silent attention.

When the Honor Dance is announced, anyone present who has served their country with honor in uniform is invited to come into the dance ring. Led again by our spiritual leaders, the veterans slowly circle the ring, with people honoring deceased veterans in their families at the end of the line, while our women go the opposite way around the ring.

When the Native women and the veterans meet, the women raise their right hands to salute the leader and the flag, then shake the hand of each veteran and each family member and say "Wanishi" ("thank you" in Lenape) as they pass.

It's an intensely solemn, beautiful and meaningful experience for all who participate.

The first time I danced, I honored my uncle, Ray Ritchie. As I

circled the ring doing the traditional dignified toe-heel, toe-heel, I pictured his face as I had last seen it in a large portrait in my grandmother's living room - a handsome sailor with piercing blue-gray eyes and wavy auburn hair like Dad and Grandma had.

Although I had never met him, I felt I knew him through Grandma's stories of him and Dad when they were young. His name is recorded at our high school as a football standout and has been immortalized as part of the name of a VFW post and on a monument honoring World War II servicemen in our hometown in central New Jersey.

Another dimension was added to my knowledge of his life when I first met Quentin "Cap" Walters, who served on one of the ships that rescued survivors from Uncle Ray's and other ships during the battle.

It's neat to meet someone who knew an uncle I had never met.

So when I danced to honor my uncle, he wasn't just the subject of my grandmother's reminiscences. I felt as if I had really known him.

I wondered what he and Grandma would think, looking down from the Spirit World, if they could see me, the chubby, freckle-faced kid with the funny eyes, now dressed in full Native regalia with my hair tied up Lenape style, honoring him the best way I know how.

For a minute at the end, I think I felt him watching me.

To the veterans, POW's and MIA's of all our wars: Wanishi!



## Freeport Fling is raffle prize

AAA Travel in Dallas has donated a 4-night trip to Freeport in the Bahamas to be raffled at this year's library auction. The trip includes round-trip air from Philadelphia, 4 nights at the Radisson Lucaya Beach Hotel, airport to hotel transfers, hotel baggage handling and tips for two adults. The winner also may upgrade to a longer stay or a different location, at an additional cost.

Tickets are available at \$1 each at the library or from library staff or board members. The drawing will be held July 9. Jim Hawk, manager of the local office, is coordinating the item with the library.

## Library Auction Corner



July 6-7-8-9

For 49 summers, the people of the Back Mountain have come together to donate their goods, services and time to the auction block of the Back Mountain Memorial Library.

The life of the library is a year-to-year proposition, and the auction is crucial to its operation. Twenty-five percent of the annual budget comes from the auction.

This year's 49th annual auction will be held July 6-9 at the library grounds on Huntsville Road in Dallas.

Any and all donations of cash or saleable items can help assure the continued fine service of the library to our communities. For more information, call the library at 675-1182.

## Make English official

stable in the world. It has managed to overcome its language barriers, hasn't it?

However, and in contradiction to most other democracies, Switzerland is helped by geography conveniently defining the different language regions and also by being a very passive nation. Put another way, democracies generally encourage both diversity and aggressive individual action within a common framework and through common points of reference, i.e., our own Bill of Rights. Without a common language to allow both diversity and aggressive individual actions to be understood and shared, it's likely that our nation would have gone through many civil wars in its history, and would not now occupy its premier position as leader of the world's democracies.

The motion of a common language in this nation is now threatened from several sources, among which are:

-continued governmental emphasis on citizen participation in government by persons who don't speak English, (and many of who can't read or write).

-and a governmentally encouraged proliferation of both radio and cable TV stations which cater to regional and ethnic audiences.

Largely through Washington ivory tower thinking, and its primarily Democratically controlled Congress over the past 20 years, has come the misguided notion that cultural differences, particularly in language, ought not to be assimilated, but rather cultivated.

This notion is dead wrong.

And to the contrary, the English language has long been the unifying force in America, and should be its only official language. Bilingual education should be a transitional process

only in our schools.

We should be seeking to preserve, not destroy, the degree of unity which this melting pot nation has achieved. The kind of crisis developing—with increased polarization—was what skeptics of our republican democracy predicted in the late 1700's. But for over 200 years, the U.S. has maintained sufficiently unity to make for orderly, stable government.

This is primarily because immigrants coming to this land took it upon themselves to learn the language—and wanted to learn it. They also wanted their children to learn it, and to be Americans, not hyphenated Americans. That English is our dominant language is not something for which we should apologize. That was an accident of history.

But that continued polarization among various ethnic groups will not accidentally cause anything; it will almost certainly result in separate nations among one nation, bringing with it all the problems and conflicts inherent in that fractionalization.

Only an official language; that is, an accepted language, enables everyone to completely understand the nation's laws, history, freedom and traditions, all of which are necessary toward the preservation of individual freedoms and our republican democracy.

Whether or not the Senate will agree with the House and keep the spending cuts for bilingual education will, literally, be debated in the upcoming weeks. As this debate proceeds, families should encourage cultural awareness and language differences at home. But we should have official English.

And we should have it now.

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

"My parents came to this country and learned the language and became Americans. And my mother only thought she was an American when she began dreaming in English."

Thus contributed a Breakfast Club guest last year as club members debated the impact of minorities on the electoral process.

Such remarks are music to the ears of a group called "English First", a Springfield, Virginia lobbying group which claimed a recent victory in its effort to make English this nation's official language.

According to material provided to me by a diligent reader, English First was instrumental in the House of Representative's recent passage of HR 1158, which included a \$38 million cut in spending for bilingual education. The bill has gone to the U.S. Senate.

As the former Soviet Union has discovered, totalitarianism cannot keep an unwilling people together forever. Likewise, countries divided by language also find hot water being poured on the social glue.

It has always seem empirically self-evident that a common language is essential for social contracts to be trusted and understood. But what about Switzerland, you say, where that trilingual nation is one of the most

## Library news

### Aspiring young author gives book to library

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

A note of coincidence and interest! The Back Mountain Memorial Library is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1995 and the New York Public Library in New York City is celebrating its 100th. The cover of *The New Yorker* magazine for May 22, 1995 shows two friendly walking lions in black tux and top hats walking down the ramp in celebration with cameras and many fans cheering them on. The Back Mountain Memorial Library will be celebrating in grand style on October 9, 1995, the actual opening day, 50 years later with open house and many other congratulatory activities on that Monday from 9:30 until 8:30 closing time.

A little friend, Colin Conrad, who attends Little People Day Care School on the second floor of the library after school, was visiting with Jane, one of our front desk personnel, and he was telling her he writes books. He told her about the current book he was

working on called "Magic Megle" and Megle performs magic tricks on the table for her friends.

He drew the picture on the front and wrote the story to go with it. Colin gave a copy of the booklet to Jane, because she was interested in it, and asked him to give her a copy and did. She was happy and said thank you. Colin is 9 years old and attends third grade at the Gate of Heaven School. This special little booklet is hanging on our bulletin board.

New books at the library: "In Retrospect" by Robert S. McNamara is about the tragedy and lessons of Vietnam. The author is the brilliant secretary of defense for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, who helped lead America into Vietnam. McNamara believed the fight against communism in Asia was worth the sacrifice of American lives, and yet he eventually came to believe that the war was, in fact, unwinnable. He has been silent—until now. "The Apocalypse Watch" by

Robert Ludlum is about a remote hideaway deep in the Hausruck Mountains of Austria—the fortress like nerve center of an ominous movement, the Brotherhood of the Watch. American agent Harry Latham has penetrated the movement, a neo-nazi organization that was born in the days after the Third Reich's defeat and whose deadly tentacles have spread to the United States and beyond. Three years later, Harry Latham disappears.

"Strange Highways" by Dean Koontz takes the reader along the strange highways of human experience; the adventures and terrors and failures and triumphs that we know as we make our way from birth to death, along the routes that we choose for ourselves and along others onto which we are detoured by fate. It is a journey down wrong roads that can lead to unexpectedly and stunningly right destinations ... into subterranean depths and unlikely heroes.

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