

# The Dallas Post

## EDITORIALS

### Let's plan now for future growth

The Dallas Borough Zoning Hearing Board's rejection of the plan for a new Wendy's restaurant along Route 415 in the borough is a reminder of how important it is to anticipate growth in the Back Mountain. After approving a variance for signs and another to allow the installation of a drive-up window, the board turned down the proposal because it showed an exit onto Mill Street, a short, narrow connector between 415 and Woodlawn Drive. The panel asked that the site plan be reworked to show entrance and exit only onto the highway. That can no doubt be accomplished, though it might come at the price of a few parking spaces, but leaves open the question of what to do with increased traffic on an already congested stretch of road.

People who drive Route 415, particularly if they're heading toward Harveys Lake, have spent many a day crawling from Mr. Z's to Dallas center, as the highway narrows to a single lane in each direction with a turning-only lane between. Since the traffic signal at the corners remains green for only 30 seconds, it takes several cycles to make one's way through the center of town and on your way. Plans to widen Route 415 in front of the Post Office will help, if they are ever carried out. PennDOT announced upgrades and widening at several intersections with great fanfare a couple of years ago, but nothing has yet been done. That may change later this summer, when the first improvements are made, but Dallas center will likely wait another year or two for repairs. Meanwhile, adding a highly-popular restaurant will only multiply the problems and frustration.

The solution, it seems, is for the borough, the developers and PennDOT to sit down and develop a workable plan that makes the best use of the property, which is suitable only for commercial purposes, while assuring that the traffic situation is improved. That would be to the benefit of the business, its customers, and everyone else who must pass through the center of Dallas on the way from Point A to Point B.

There's a lesson in this for all communities in the Back Mountain. More growth is coming, if it hasn't already arrived in your neighborhood. We need a coordinated plan to make the most of it without sacrificing the remaining attributes of our area. Traffic isn't the only concern; we suffer frequent water rationing, open space is disappearing and recreation space is stagnant in the face of increasing demand. The laissez-faire approach to the future has real and hidden costs, just as regulation does. But it would be better to take control of our destiny as much as we can, rather than watch as our now attractive area becomes overbuilt and the prosperity we enjoy passes on to the next popular spot.

### Publisher's notebook

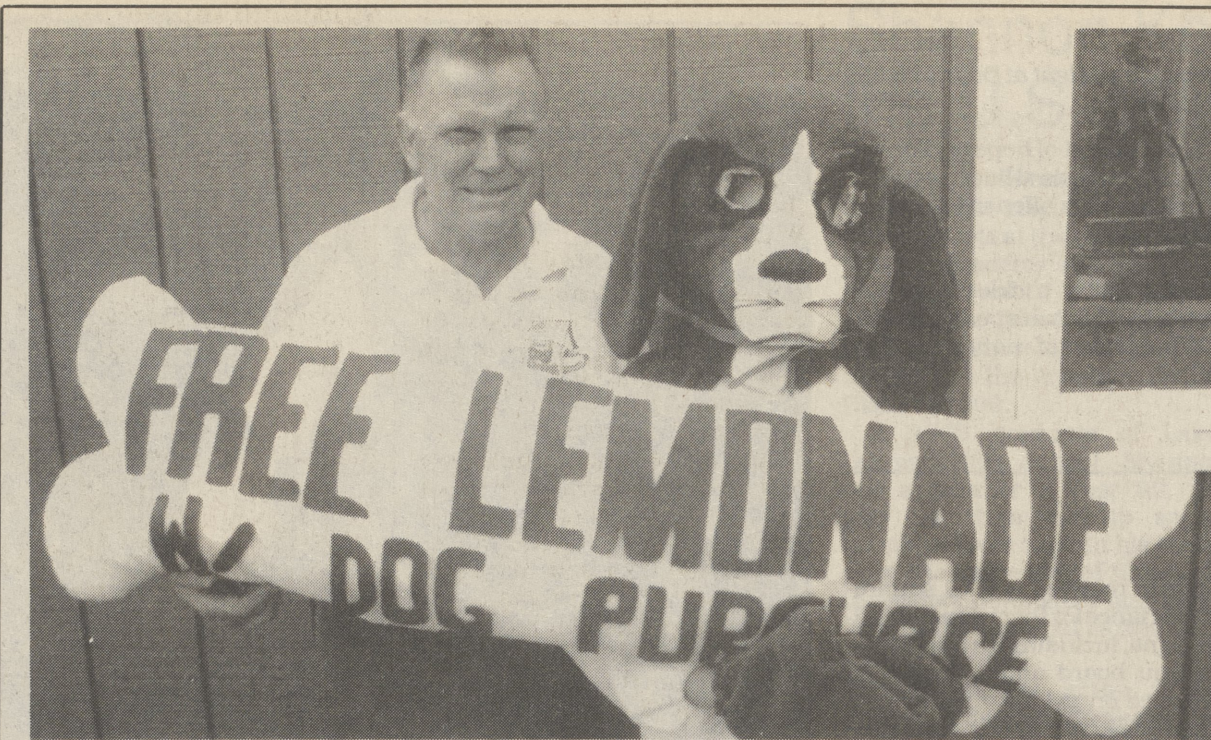
Ron Bartizek



They're gone, at least for now. We've been able to reclaim the deck from the "inchworms" that have covered our house and yard for a month. The only good thing about this infestation is I've learned the real names for these ugly creatures — the fall cankerworm — and a couple of others. What I really call them is unprintable. We didn't come up with any miracle potions to use against the bugs, but I did find that a mild solution of chlorine bleach in water can remove the brown stains which oozed from their crushed little bodies onto the siding. They got crushed, by the way, by the broom Charlotte and I used to sweep them off long enough for the mailman to make it to the door. I hope the district forester is right; that two years of a worm population explosion will bring famine and despair to the insect world next spring.

I am appalled that the Senate was not allowed to vote on the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster for Surgeon General. People may agree or disagree on a nominee's qualifications and fitness for office, but he and the American people deserve the opportunity for an up-or-down vote. This was politics at its most petty, as Phil Gramm, who is less likely to be elected president than Pat Paulsen, tried to curry favor with the segment of his party opposed to abortion over all other issues. Shame, also, on President Clinton, who tried to characterize the vote as a referendum on abortion choice; the more important issue was that a majority of Senators were unable to confirm an appointment.

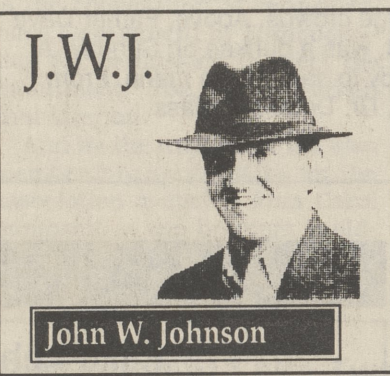
And just for the record, what happened to a real filibuster? Mr. Gramm was able to threaten a filibuster without sacrificing as much as a cocktail hour. I think the Senate ought to return to the days when a member had to demonstrate his commitment to a cause by standing and talking for a day or two, and enlisting like-minded colleagues if necessary.



### First anniversary

The "dog days" of summer hit the Back Mountain June 22 with the first anniversary celebration of Rice's Dog House on Route 415 near the district justice's office. Owner Bob Rice and mascot Rebecca Hoffman offered a free fresh-squeezed lemonade with every meal purchase. Rice's specializes in 19 varieties of high-quality hot dogs, ranging from the plain "Puppy" and mustard-decked "Poodle" to the chili and onion "Mexican Hairless." It offers phone-in, fax-in, drive-in and walk-in takeout service seven days a week.

POST PHOTO: GRACE R. DOVE



John W. Johnson

An amendment to the state's "Sunshine" law has changed the way an area school board does business.

Last December, the Benton (Columbia County) School board denied citizens the right to speak at a meeting that has been designated as "special." An amendment to the state's 1974 Sunshine Law mandates that all public meetings, including the so-called "special" meetings, must include time for public comment.

The school board changed its policy in January.

The Public Meeting Law of Pennsylvania (HB124) was drafted to insure that citizens know what public officials do, and have access to governmental proceedings. Still, many governmental bodies ignore its provisions. In the wake of the recent primary, and the upcoming November election, following are those provisions.

The Sunshine Law covers any branch, department, board, authority or commission of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, any political sub-division of the Commonwealth, or any state, municipal, township, or school authority, school board, school governing body, commission, and all state school bodies.

The law essentially says that all decisions made by any official body must be made in public. The law calls this a "formal action" and defines it as the taking of any vote on any resolution, rule, order, motion, regulation or ordinance, or the setting of any official policy. Meetings, pre-trial conferences, hearings, and formal ac-

### PA 'Sunshine' law is important to all of us

tion by the judicial branch are not subject to the Sunshine law.

Chief among the tools often used by public agencies to avoid public discussion is something called an "executive session." The Sunshine law provides only that a public meeting "shall be adjourned, begun, recessed or interrupted in any way for the purpose of an executive session" for the following reasons, and the following reasons only:

—Considered dismissal or disciplining of, or hearing complaints or charges brought against a public elected officer, employee, or other public agent unless such person requests a public hearing.

—Considering actions of the deliberating body with respect to labor negotiations.

The law also says that no executive session shall last for longer than 30 minutes.

The following items are also covered by the Sunshine law:

—The minutes of a public meeting shall be taken and promptly recorded, and shall be a public record, and open for examination and inspection by citizens of the Commonwealth.

—That every agency shall hold all public meetings at specified times and places, and that public notice as to the time of location shall be given at least once a year.

—That at least three days notice shall be given if a regularly scheduled meeting is postponed or cancelled, and at least 24 hours of notice of special or rescheduled meetings. Specifically exempt from provisions of the Sunshine law are party caucuses. Go to a public meeting. Be heard.

Censorship—and whether it is indirectly done through citizen denial of a right to speak, or directly done through the heavy hand of those who would presume to prescribe what you can think—has no place in a free society.

According to the 10th annual report of People for the American Way, a group dedicated to monitoring attempts at banning text and library books, censorship is exploding particularly in public schools.

The group reported 348 censorship attempts in 44 states during the 1991-92 school year. The most frequent complaint was that materials were Satanic or anti-Christian. The second most common complaint was profanity, followed by complaints about sexual content.

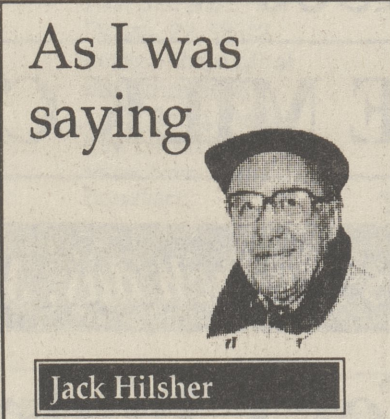
For example, one of the books most frequently targeted was John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, because of its allegedly 'anti-Christian' content, and its profanity.

It bears repeating: censorship has no place in a free society. Our elected officials have no right to prescribe what you or I can read, or see. Parents obviously have the right to decide what their children will use in schools, but it is not in the interest of parents or children when a few individuals seek to deny all students access to materials which do not fit some narrowly construed criteria for political or moral correctness.

This whole idea of the free flow of information and ideas seems simply enough, doesn't it? And it was John Milton who said: "give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties."

Milton uttered those words more than 100 years before this nation's Declaration of Independence and its subsequent constitution, the First Amendment.

The First Amendment, and the right of free expression contained therein, is the most basic freedom that we enjoy in this nation. All other freedoms are the progeny of this right, without which we would be subjects and not citizens.



Jack Hilsher

Recently one of Hollywood's bouncer sex kittens - blondish Melanie Griffith - did some lobbying in our capitol, speaking to some Washington conservatives on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts.

When she was introduced to a 92-year old senator from South Carolina an observer said, "I saw Strom Thurmond come back to life."

That was not entirely fair. As anyone who watched the Clarence Thomas hearings knows, Strom is very much alive, even though Yankee viewers had trouble with his Southern syntax. And even though, as Dave Barry reported, his distracting hair looked "as though he had washed it in Pepsi." (Barry also accurately reported Strom's questions like, "Might inny sondcher tablemp?")

Mr. Thurmond, the Senate's

### No other senator is like colorful Strom Thurmond

longest-serving member, is now head of the powerful Armed Services Committee and my favorite Washington character. (Forget Flood; Strom's better.) He is also third in line of succession to the U.S. presidency! This might be scary to some but not to me, considering what we've got there now. Anything - but ANYTHING - would be a marked improvement.

AARP's bulletin for June featured some interesting facts about this remarkable pol, whose career covers over 60 years and a dozen presidents. Born in South Carolina, Thurmond was Democratic governor in '48 when he ran for President as the "Dixiecrat" candidate.

His first wife died in 1960 and he married a beauty contest winner 44 years younger. They are now separated after four children, the first of which he had when 68 years of age.

Thurmond is in great shape. He swims and pedals an exercise bike daily; he also lifts weights and does sit-ups. His diet he says, is "light on booze and heavy on vegetables and fruits. Besides, I've got lucky genes."

After 40 years in the Army Reserves, Thurmond retired as a major-general. He owns three medals: the Legion of Merit, the

Purple Heart and the French Croix de Guerre, earned for landing with the 82nd Airborne in Normandy on D-Day. A national security specialist said, "The Pentagon likes him quite a bit."

After opposing civil rights bills for ten years (he once filibustered for 24 hours and 18 minutes, a record) he quit the Democratic party and moved to the GOP in '84. He was the first senator to hire a Black staff member and offer constituent help to Black voters and institutions.

He balanced his budget in South Carolina when governor. He'd balance the general budget if they'd let him. He won't cut Social Security to do it, and he says, "some changes are necessary for Medicare and Medicaid, but states may be able to do it more efficiently and economically."

On the touchy subject of term limits, Thurmond is in favor of them. He says, "12 years is about right for the Senate." The AARP article concluded, "But until such legislation is passed, don't expect Strom Thurmond to go quietly from Capitol Hill."

However as far as I am concerned Old Strom should be around for as long as he can, and as long as he wants. His kind are too few and far between.

### Only yesterday

#### 60 Years Ago - July 5, 1935 STATE ROAD WORK INCLUDES OUR AREA

Thomas C. Carle of Trucksville, former supervising principal of Kingston Township High School released during a political squabble two years ago, was elected a teacher in Kingston Township High School at a \$1,500 salary this week.

Seven of 16 road projects included in the so-called omnibus road bill by Pennsylvania Legislature are in the vicinity of Dallas. They represent almost one half of the mileage taken by the State in Luzerne County and were included in the bill through recommendation of Wyoming Valley Motor Club and through the efforts of State Senators A.J. Sordoni and Lanning Harvey and the county's delegation in the House of Representatives.

You could get - Watermelon 39¢ ea.; lg. cantaloupes, 10¢ ea.; Chase & Sanborn Coffee, 1-lb. bag, 29¢; Tuna Fish 2 7-oz. cans 25¢.

#### 50 Years Ago - July 6, 1945 ECKERT BUYS LUMBER AND COAL BUSINESS

Dallas Township School Board, at its meeting Monday evening, renewed its school transportation contract with Andrew Bittenbender for a term of three years. Bittenbender will provide four school buses at a charge of \$1070 per month which is the same rate as his former contract.

Paul D. Eckert of Shavertown has purchased the lumber business owned by Harry Still, and has taken a lease on the property and will conduct business there under the name of Eckert Lumber & Coal Co. Mr. Still one of the oldest lumbermen in the area, will retire from active business.

Charles A. James, principal of Noxen Township Schools since April 1944, has been elected supervising principal of Dallas Borough Schools at a salary of \$2,700 a year to replace Prof. T.A. Willamnee, who resigned some weeks ago to become supervising principal of Falls-Overbrook Vocational School in Wyoming County.

#### 40 Years Ago - July 1, 1955 CHARLES FLYNN OPENS MELODY PARK

Charles V. Flynn has opened Melody Park, "the Back Mountain region's newest recreation area," on his 15 1/2 acre place at Demunds Corners. Flynn decided to take advantage of the many fresh flowing springs on his property to erect a 15x70 foot swimming pool and an additional 250 foot flooded area for wading.

Mr. and Mrs. John Steele, Mooretown, will celebrate their 57th Wedding Anniversary July 4. They are the parents of six children and have 22 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; one great-great grandchild.

#### 30 Years Ago - July 1, 1965 LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL BOARD FORMS

The Interim Operation Committee of Lake-Lehman Schools died last night on the stroke of midnight, when Lehman Merged Board, Lake-Lehman Jointure and Interim Committee became one entity, the Lake-Lehman School Board. Twenty-seven hours before its final gasp, the Interim Operation Committee adopted a budget of \$988,172.05 for the 1965-66 school year; set per capita tax at \$5; amusement tax of 10%; Realty Transfer, 1%; millage of 28 mills for all five townships, Lake, Lehman, Ross, Jackson, and Noxen.

One of the features of the Library Auction is the barbecued chicken dinner scheduled for opening night, July 8, beginning at 5 p.m. The dinner will be staged in Gate of Heaven's auditorium instead of its parking lot. The auction will get underway after dinner is over. Booths plan to open at 6 p.m.

#### 20 Years Ago - July 3, 1975 STATE WORKERS' STRIKE HITS AREA

Lake-Lehman school directors shaved two mills from their district's tentative 1975-76 budget but still found it necessary to raise the tax rate by 12 mills. The board adopted a \$3,207,709 budget which raised the school tax rate from 48 to 60 mills.

Striking employees of SCID, Retreat State Hospital, Hunlock Creek; Pennsylvania Game Commission offices in Dallas and at Ricketts Glen State Park and Frances Slocum State Park has brought the area impact by the first strike in history of employees of the state of Pennsylvania.

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Ronald A. Bartizek  
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

