

EDITORIALS

Try taking the bus, you just might like it

Ridden the bus lately? The overwhelming majority of readers will say no to that question, then offer a variety of reasons why they don't feel comfortable using municipal bus transportation. They should take another look. For all its faults and recent travails, bus service provided by the Luzerne County Transportation Authority is surprisingly good. Buses serve a number of locations in the Back Mountain with service about every half hour throughout the day, and they're almost always on time. The buses are clean, and the drivers are universally competent and courteous. They also share something with the Maytag repair man — they're often lonely.

Taking the bus is not as fast or convenient as driving your own car most places, but there are a number of good arguments for public transit, both for individuals and the society at large. One that makes sense for many people is the low cost of bus travel compared to automobile ownership. Someone could commute round-trip to Wilkes-Barre five days for as little as \$7.50 per week. That amount — \$390 a year — would barely pay for the gas a car would use to make the same jaunt. Even if you have a car, if you have to drive it to your destination and pay to park it, the bus could save a few dollars each trip.

Public transport offers plenty of advantages on a larger scale. Sharing space in one large vehicle — whether a bus, train or commuter van — saves fuel and decreases pollution. Perhaps more important, economical public transportation gives everyone the chance to travel as necessary to work, worship or family affairs, and that helps make our society stronger.

The tradeoff is time. It will take about a half hour to get to Public Square on the bus, and if you need to transfer to another destination your excursion could take an hour or more. Since time is money during working hours for most of us, the bus offers no advantage on that score much of the time. A weekend trip is another matter, and well worth looking into.

You'll pay more postage, so TIME pays less

Benjamin Franklin must be spinning in his grave now that the Postal Rate Commission has signed off on a plan that will raise postage for nearly everyone except huge bulk mailers. It will be a sad day for the nation if this proposal is adopted by the U.S. Postal Service.

Franklin, you may recall, in addition to inventing that stove and helping to found the nation, served as our first Postmaster General. In that capacity, he established the Post Road, which knitted together states in the Northeast in part by offering service to all at uniform rates. The rate commission's action would destroy that heritage by offering large-volume mailers lower rates than are available to smaller operations, particularly those that serve suburban and rural communities like the Back Mountain.

What does this mean to you? A couple of things: First, you will likely pay higher rates for first-class mail than you do now, while huge publishers pay less. The junk mail that floods your mailbox will get a break, which you'll subsidize with higher prices on letters, subscriptions and the prices charged by all businesses which must use the mail to send invoices and other material. Second, you may not be able to get some publications at all, since smaller publishers may be forced to drop rural subscribers because of the high cost to serve them.

Organizations representing newspapers of all sizes believe the rate commission used flawed data to calculate the cost of delivering mail to small communities. We agree, but would go one step further; adoption of this skewed rate plan will place the welfare of large, profitable businesses ahead of that of ordinary citizens. That is a formula for dissension and distrust, the very emotions that fed Benjamin Franklin and his contemporaries to act against King George.

We're not advocating revolution. But you need to contact your Congressman and Senators now, to let them know fairly-priced universal mail service is more important than Time magazine or Lands End's higher profits.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Uncle! I promise to never again complain about northeastern Pennsylvania's wimpy weather. I have been known to remark that the weather here is bland and uninteresting, with nary a hurricane of major storm in sight. Not! I was ready to write off the winter of 1993-94 as an aberration unlikely to be repeated in the next century. Was I wrong. This winter began with more snow and cold than that infamous season, and then came the floods. We are fortunate it wasn't worse; another two hours of rain and the Susquehanna would have had its way with the valley. As it was, many residents of low-lying areas suffered severe damage, and people to the west of us got hit even worse, with several fatalities and worse damage than Agnes caused.

Perhaps if I swear to give our weather more respect, Mother Nature will lay off. It's worth a try.

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Along a country road in Kunkle. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Smaller elementary schools are the best choice for students

Editor:
I attended a very informative meeting at Westmoreland Elementary School in the Dallas School District last week. Six options which are under consideration by the Dallas School District concerning the closing of Westmoreland were discussed.

It seems that the School Board is only seriously considering one of these options which would close Westmoreland, build a new grade 4-5 school attached to the Dallas Middle School, build a new Admin-

istrative Building attached to the Middle School and convert Dallas Elementary to a K-Third Grade School.

I have many concerns about this proposal. Current research in the field of education points out that the best schools are small and students are kept in one building as long as possible (K-5). Students have a better sense of belonging. They know and are known by ALL of the teachers. The results on National Achievement tests routinely show that students from

smaller schools score among the highest.

The current philosophy of the Dallas School Board is a campus style educational facility. However, adding all of Westmoreland students and all of the traffic required of a school administrative building to the current educational complex would seemingly create a nightmare of congestion and traffic problems.

Also, I don't believe it is in the best interest of a child to put them into a facility with 9 First Grades, 9

Second Grades, etc., and then move them to another building for 4-5 grades and then into yet another building for Middle School.

In conclusion, I hope that parents of Westmoreland and Dallas Elementary Schools can work together to convince the School Board to look more closely at the option which would build a new Westmoreland on land adjacent to the current building.

Mary Barbara Gilligan
Shavertown

Women's Commission seeks information about summer programs for kids

Editor:
On behalf of the Luzerne County Commission for Women, I am requesting information on summer activities for school age children (ages 7 to 17).

We have received inquiries from parents about summer activities for their children. If your organization or agency is planning summer events, please send the information to the Luzerne County Com-

mission for Women's office at the Luzerne County Court House, Wilkes-Barre, Pa 18711.

We will collect information and print a calendar of events for the summer of 1996 which can be

desseminated to parents upon their request.

Iran Fahmy
LCCW

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

TWO ODDS 'N ENDS: Probably only a handful of readers have seen or will know what is meant by a "Chautauqua." To save you looking it up, Webster calls it a noun meaning "an assembly for education and entertainment by lectures and concerts."

That says it well. My first Chautauqua, really my only one, was in Canada when I was 12 years old. An aunt and uncle were steady followers of those popular tent

A Chautauqua, Kipling and Lincoln

shows, yet the word isn't even in many modern dictionaries. This was, after all, over 60 years ago, and a lot usually happens in that length of time.

They were magic to a kid. One example of typical Chautauqua fare: a stirring reading of Kipling's "Gunga Din" with, and this what they were called, the elocutionist rendering "your as 'yer". His "safe" came out "cife." Veddy British.

(We interrupt this story briefly for a field report from my granddaughter's mom: During homework the youngster referred to an author as "Rude-yard Clipping.")

Now some of Mr. K's verse, oh-so-far removed from Gunga:

"There is sorrow enough in the natural way,
From men and women to fill our

day.
But when we are certain of sorrow in store,
Why do we always arrange for more?"

Brothers and sisters I bid you beware,
Of giving your heart to a dog to tear."

Rudyard Kipling

One day I should do some columns on our 16th President, who was assassinated 130 years ago. There are many things our history teaches never even hinted at, and it should make great reading.

His intellect and - in that old-fashioned expression - his "way with words" make one devoutly wish we had his like today. A small ferinstance: Picture Sam Donaldson asking Abe Lincoln, "Mr.

President, did you black your own boots?" And the answer, "Whose shoes do you think I shine?"

One example will illustrate his superb word power...in 1855, to a friend: "Our progress in degeneracy appears to be pretty tepid. As a nation, we began by declaring that 'all men are created equal.' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal except Negroes.' When the Know Nothings get control, it will read, 'all men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.' When it comes to this I should prefer migrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty - to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."

End of quote...remember, that was 140 years ago.

LIBRARY NEWS



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is featuring a collection of snow globes from Julie Howell of Dallas. She is 11 years old and attends 5th grade at Wyoming Seminary Lower School. Julie has been collecting snow globes since she was a young child. She has quite a large collection now and keeps them on a special shelf in her room at home. The smallest one is Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, which was given to her by

her Mom. She now receives new ones for birthdays and Christmas and other occasions. Her newest one is The Wizard of Oz, that plays the music of the Yellow Brick Road, which she received this past Christmas. Another special one is The Lion King that plays the Circle of Light.

The larger ones in the display are Phantom of the Opera, Unicorn, Winnie the Pooh, two Nativity sets and two Christmas ones. The smaller ones include an angel with baby Jesus, angel bear, young girl with a snowflake, snowman, Santa Claus, lamb, bunny, Liberty Science Center, two snow scenes and Washington, D.C. This is a very exciting display and pleasant for Valentine's Day and hopefully, when it's time for the snow globes to return home, our snow season

will be over. They will leave February 21st.

Newbooks at the library: "Criminals" by Margot Livesey is a stunning tour de force, suspenseful, beautifully observed, inarguable in its intricate portrayal of character. We find the innocent, the maligned, the yearning and the betrayed, each rife with schemes and hope, each with a plan. The bumbling nature of desire has been turned out with such delicate precision. The story testifies to the power of love. A great read and pleasure.

"Flesh Wounds" by Stephen Greenleaf is a new John Marshall Tanner novel. The long-sought-after heir of Spade, Marlow, and Archer meets the world of virtual reality in this powerful new thriller. Peggy Nettleton, Tanner's former secretary and former lover, who

left six years ago in circumstances too painful to remember calls and reopens old wounds, rekindling old desires. She lives in Seattle and is about to marry a wealthy banker.

"The Bride of Texas" by Josef Skvorecky evokes a crowded mid-nineteenth-century panorama as it tells the story of a group of emigrants who flee the oppression of the Hapsburg Empire and, in their pursuit of freedom and a better life, find themselves immersed in the chaos of an American war of emancipation. The kaleidoscopic drama is shaped by two parallel romances: Lida, the bride of the title marries a plantation owner's son; her soldier brother, Cyril, falls in love with a young slave woman. We are swept into a world at once unsentimental and romantic, in which love refuses to be easily snuffed out.