

The Dallas Post

EDITORIALS

Dream on, Congressman

No doubt about it, Congressman Paul Kanjorski is a dreamer. While other politicians revel in the rough and tumble of party politics, he slips into a vision of a Wyoming Valley that never was, but perhaps can be. Then he finagles funding in the federal budget to support his dreams. And he's pretty good at it.

Meanwhile back home, local pols fight to retain their standing, fearful that Kanjorski's manipulations will leave them out in the cold. They're not used to being upstaged by our man in Washington, and many don't like it, so they're lashing out at Kanjorski's secrecy and what they see as a desire to control all levels of the Democratic party in the region. Perhaps their fears are correct, but does that really matter to the rest of us?

Kanjorski has his faults, and surely some personal motives for his actions, but we might want to accept them if he's able to pull off his latest scheme. He sees the Wyoming Valley filled with good jobs and growing companies, its employees sailing on a lake where the mighty Susquehanna has raged. And he sees the region changing, emerging from decades of economic and social stagnation into a bright, high-technology future. It's an optimistic — some would say foolish — scenario and quite unlike what other political leaders have dared to project.

Even the most forward-thinking among us may have a hard time swallowing the whole Kanjorski vision, of a new Silicon Valley in the hills of northeastern Pennsylvania. There were probably few believers in the early days of the economic explosion in northern California, or Salt Lake City, or San Antonio either, just as there aren't a lot here now. But that didn't stop the dreamers, who were eventually proven more correct than they ever expected. That's unlikely to happen to Kanjorski, who seems able to dream big, and if even half of his expectations are fulfilled, we'll all be better off for it.

The greatest danger for the Wyoming Valley lies not in a visionary Congressman, but in the dozens, hundreds, maybe thousands of local political figures who like the way things are, precisely because they hold all the cards. They're uncomfortable with change, uneasy with outsiders, fearful that prosperous newcomers will mean the end of their reign as big fish in tiny ponds. They see this region as one of scarcity, where only those with the right connections can get ahead, and they supply those links. And there's at least one radio mouth who eagerly feeds on insecurity while doing his best to convince listeners nothing good will ever happen here.

Dream on, Congressman. We don't know if your dreams will come true, but it surely is worth the risk to give them a chance to become reality.



Chris Balchunas took to a ladder for some tree trimming duty at the Huntsville Golf Club. He

and his wife, Karen, are the horticulturalists for the course. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

Most of us now realize that the Susquehanna River is the major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. We also know that Pennsylvania contains the largest portion of the drainage area for the Susquehanna River. We have come to a rather limited understanding of some of our relationships to the river and the bay. Fewer of us discard waste oil into storm drains and more of us support controls on sewage treatment plants and other industrial discharges into our waterways. It is time to give serious thought to less obvious connections between our activities and the health (or lack thereof) of the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States. Estuaries are among the most biologically productive regions on earth, often rivaling coral reefs or intensive agriculture. But, because of its shallow depth and small opening to the sea, the Chesapeake is quite vulnerable to the changes taking place along its shore and within the drainage basins of the rivers that flow into

Flooding still major ill for Chesapeake

it. Only one percent of the pollutants that reach the bay in a year are flushed out to the Atlantic Ocean in that year.

This year may be a little different. The flood of '96 will have consequences that can only be guessed at now. The actual volume of fresh water entering the bay in January was almost as great as during the 1972 Agnes flood. This water carried with it large amounts of sediment which will settle out on the bottom of the bay. That sediment undoubtedly contains large amounts of phosphorus which may be resuspended later in the summer as the water warms and oxygen levels decrease. Nitrogen in huge quantities is also carried in the water of such floods. Some of this may be lost to the ocean faster than normal simply because of the high flows, but much of it will be there in the spring to produce large, undesirable algal blooms. As one researcher puts it, "any kinds of improvements that we might be making in nutrient loadings are going to be masked just by the huge flows that we had."

The sediments will smother many bottom-dwelling animals. The fresh water will kill others that are more accustomed to a saltier environment. It remains to be seen whether or not the grass beds on which many fish and other species depend will be hurt as they were in June of '72. They were growing then — this time they

were dormant for the winter. Many species can recover after one "freshet" such as this, but we had others in '93 and '94. Will they be able to withstand a third in quick succession?

This recent flood was no accident. Our lack of responsible watershed land use planning has made such events inevitable. We continue to clear large areas near streams, to build huge structures such as shopping malls, to pave more and more land for roads and parking areas, and to allow the filling of wetlands — with the proper permits, of course. Only recently have we given serious thought to replanting steep hillsides with trees or to providing vegetated buffer zones along streambanks. Many people continue to cut brush along streams or divert flow from swamps under the mistaken notion that the faster the water flows downstream the better. Actually, the opposite is true — the slower the water flows downstream, the more will be absorbed and held for drier times. And, the more storage of water we can encourage, the fewer floods we will have.

There are many excellent organizations working very hard to restore the Chesapeake Bay to a healthy water body. I recently received the January 1996 document from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) entitled Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Reduction Strategy. It contains all sorts of

marvelous plans to work with farmers to reduce the runoff from fields and barnyards, to take even more nitrate and phosphate out of our sewage before pumping it back into the river, to try to get more cooperation from New York, since about 25 percent of the Susquehanna drainage area is in that state, and even to address the issue of the nitrogen oxides emitted by our automobiles and power plants. Over the next four years we will try to meet our stated goal of reducing the nutrient input into the bay by 40 percent from the base year 1985. We are about halfway there, at least in terms of phosphates.

But, I submit that all this time, effort and expense may be to no avail if we fail to address the deeper issues of the causes and consequences of flooding. During floods, the sewerage system often combines with the storm drain system so that raw nutrients are flushed into the river. During floods, there is no time for the usual aeration and biological processes that render many pollutants harmless before they reach the bay. During floods, the sediments that have settled to the bottom of rivers and reservoirs (even behind the huge hydropower dams) are suspended and washed to the bay.

Let all of us who live within the drainage area of the mighty Chesapeake resolve to include her health in all of our plans.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



We had the pleasure of visiting Washington, D.C. last week, to attend the annual Government Affairs Conference of the National Newspaper Association, to which we belong. Washington's a wonderful city, at least the part of it most visitors see, and I always feel proud of the monuments, museums and other facilities we each own a piece of. We visited Air and Space (This is a must when you have young children) and Natural History in between our business schedule. A reception at the White House was better organized than one we attended two years ago, and everyone was able to have a photograph taken with President Clinton. He gave his usual short stump speech, touting his administration's accomplishments to counter the negative perception prevalent in the press.

We'll go back. When the kids are older, they'll be able to tolerate the art museums, or go off on their own. We still haven't made it to the House of Representatives viewing area, or the Corcoran, or the Jefferson Memorial.

I met with Congressman Paul Kanjorski during a luncheon at the Library of Congress. He has always accommodated this visit, and has plenty to talk about. I appreciate his willingness to take time from his schedule for a small newspaper publisher. I can't say the same for our two Senators. I invited both to the luncheon, even offering to arrange that all Pennsylvania publishers be seated together with them. Neither even had the courtesy to reply, which I specifically requested. This makes it look as though Senators Specter and Santorum think they have more important things to do than listen to their constituents, at least relatively powerless ones.

Do you agree? Disagree?

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As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

If an alphabetical list of noted curmudgeons were compiled it would start with Fred Allen. Then Bob Benchley, and W.C. Fields. Oscar Levant definitely and Groucho, natch, and add Westbrook Pegler, but we're past the K's and missed George S. Kaufman, who many say was the wittiest man in America. Yet, today people vaguely recall the name but not what he did.

The most prolific and successful playwright ever on Broadway, Kaufman was born plain George in 1889 to German-Jewish parents and added the "S," he said, for euphony...his newspaper by-

George S. Kaufman, extraordinary wit

line was "G.S.K."

He was raised by a neurotic mother who protected George from germs by preparing all his food in sterile containers and keeping him from the outdoors. She left him with a lifelong fear of disease and death.

George wore glasses, was skinny, and bullied. He fought back with gags instead of fists, and started to write stories in high school. At 15 he was a regular newspaper contributor, eventually writing a humor column. He wrote theater criticism also, and later became drama editor at *The New York Times*. His first play flopped, but by 1921 he and several collaborators (like Edna Ferber, Ring Lardner and Abe Burrows) wrote hit after hit, among them "The Man Who Came To Dinner," "Of Thee I Sing" (the first musical to win a Pulitzer) and "You Can't Take it With You."

The public was a false front. Not a dour man, his caustic comments were provoked by stupidity

and he actually liked people and could be generous and compassionate. When Hitler evacuated Jews, Kaufman sponsored many to come to the U.S. and supported them until they were settled.

But the wit was always there. Seated next to a non-stop talker at dinner, Kaufman asked, "Madam, don't you have any unexpressed thoughts?" He loved bridge but hated incompetence. When a poor partner asked to be excused to visit the men's room, Kaufman replied, "Gladly - for the first time today I'll know what you have in your hand." Sensing Kaufman's disgust with how he played, the partner asked how he would have played a hand. "Under an assumed name," Kaufman answered.

One of the best of his many barbs is the classic story involving crooner Eddie Fisher, who was notable more for three wives (Debbie R., Liz T., and Connie S.) than for his voice. A very young

Fisher and Kaufman were on a TV show and Fisher complained girls wouldn't go out with him because of his age. He asked Kaufman's advice.

Kaufman's reply: "Mr. Fisher, on Mount Wilson there is a telescope that can magnify the most distant stars up to 24 times more than any previous telescope could. It was unsurpassed until one was built at Mount Palomar capable of even greater magnification, four times the resolution of the Mount Wilson instrument."

"Mr. Fisher," Kaufman continued, "If you could somehow put the Mount Wilson telescope inside the Mount Palomar telescope, you still wouldn't be able to detect my interest in your problem."

Kaufman died in 1961. Moss Hart eulogized, "The paradox of his nature was that he felt deeply, yet he sheered from any display of emotion. Almost always, it remained unexpressed."

But not his wit.

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