

**EDITORIALS**

**Local schools fight apathy on science, math - and win**

It has been widely reported in the mass media that American students are falling behind in science and mathematics when compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world. We don't doubt the accuracy of those reports, but the Back Mountain can be proud that its schools are challenging students in these subjects, which are critical to success in an increasingly complex world.

Students from Dallas and Wyoming Seminary performed admirably in the recent "Math Counts" competition for junior high level students. Michael Davies led the Dallas contingent with a second-place finish in the local competition held at Penn State Wilkes-Barre. Tom Byron, from Sem, went on to take second in the county. Both then competed at the state level.

Gate of Heaven School's annual science fair, held a couple of weeks ago, gave all students in grades 1-8 an opportunity to show off their skill. Their hard work and knowledge were amply displayed as parents swarmed through the buildings to view the exhibits, demonstrated by their creators under the watchful eye of proud teachers in every classroom.

Dallas Elementary took its first step toward a science fair last week, when a group of parents organized a "Science Expo." While it wasn't on the scale of the Gate of Heaven's fair — in which every student makes a project, and every teacher is present for the public presentation — it was a start. The students and teachers who did participate deserve commendation, and it's to be hoped their efforts will spark more enthusiasm next year. They could have used more help; most teachers refused to attend the evening public session and some didn't even hand out flyers announcing the event. The handful of teachers who pitched in to get the event off the ground are to be commended. Those who didn't owe parents and teachers an explanation and apology for their resistance.

There is no Sputnik or threat of nuclear destruction to drive interest in the sciences these days, and the lack of something similar may lie at the root of our national weakness in science and math. There are subtler, and no less important changes taking place in the world of commerce and academics, though, and they are good reason to offer our children challenge and opportunity in these important areas of knowledge.

And there's always the very best reason to learn — for the sheer enjoyment of it. We applaud teachers and parents who instill the love of learning in children, and hope they'll continue to help them find outlets for their creative and scientific expression.

**Business park would support local economy**

The Back Mountain will absorb another jab at its economy later this year, when about 180 jobs from the ALLTEL corporation move from offices in Dallas Township to the former PNC Bank building on Wilkes-Barre's Public Square. In the grand scheme of life, this is a relatively small jolt, but it will still mean fewer customers for local restaurants and shops.

The company is consolidating its operations in the region, which are now divided between two offices. That's a logical thing to do, and the local building's owner, Commonwealth Telephone, expects to add some jobs in the space vacated by ALLTEL, although not as many as are being lost, at least not yet. That is some consolation, but we can't help but wonder if both companies' needs could have been accommodated by an office/commercial park in the Back Mountain. Companies like ALLTEL and Commonwealth do most of their work electronically, and can settle down wherever they choose. Given that flexibility, many would pick an attractive suburban location over other options, if it was available to them.

While we continue to urge that development in the Back Mountain be contained and planned, we think part of the plan should be an attractive commercial park, so that businesses like ALLTEL can expand right here, keeping the economic benefits they generate in the region. Perhaps some savvy developer will be attracted to the 16-acre former Native Textiles property, which is on the market for a song, and will use it for just such a purpose.

**Publisher's notebook**

Ron Bartizek



We received a message from a reader last week, a complaint really, that the first sentence of an article about mailboxes being vandalized in Jackson Township left the reader hungry for more information. I can't disagree, and plead guilty to inadequate editing. The sentence in question read that the vandalism — to the mailboxes of two supervisors — had taken place shortly after the last township meeting, but the article provided no linkage between the two events. The reader was rightfully upset that we had teased him, then left him hanging.

I guess if that's the worst offense I commit, I shouldn't be unhappy. The annoying part of this story, though, is that I had the same thought when reading the article, but didn't act on it. Sometimes the facts offer interesting tidbits that don't really add up to much of consequence, and it's the editor's responsibility to winnow the wheat from the chaff. This time, I didn't.



Spring at the Outlet, Harveys Lake. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

**As I was saying**



Jack Hilsher

For a very short period recently I had thought you were all in for a treat...a column proving that aliens from space do exist and are presently here on Planet Earth. That would have been some column, right? Alas, I must tell you up front: NOT!

My enthusiasm was fueled by a large ad in the *NY Times* Book Review about a book entitled, "Cosmic Voyage" by Courtney Brown, PhD. It was sub-titled, "A Scientific Discovery of Extraterrestrials Visiting Earth."

Some quotes in the ad: "Courtney Brown has documented the reality of intelligent life out-

**The 'truth' about UFO's and aliens**

side of our planet." And, "Wonderful, audacious, important... breaks new ground."

And "There is extraterrestrial life, lots of it. This book explains what we now know about two extraterrestrial civilizations that have been visiting Earth."

Three questions were boldly featured: "What is the truth behind alien abductions?" "What scientific proof exists of visits?" and "What really happened in Roswell, New Mexico?"

Well, the Roswell reference did the trick. Although none of my favorite libraries saw fit to order this most important, groundbreaking tome, their shortsightedness did not stop me from having a big-city relative send me his library's copy.

Roswell has been said to be the spot where an alien spacecraft crashed, and where, in 1947, the U.S. Air Force had recovered some debris and actual alien bodies, keeping them under wraps for study and LYING TO THE PUB-

LIC ever since.

Furthermore, technical experts have supposedly been attempting to "reverse engineer" the alien craft, meaning they were disassembling its propulsion system and using its technology to develop our own "saucer-type" aircraft.

Dr. Brown's book arrived and, well, judge for yourself...he says his knowledge comes from advanced techniques of "remote viewing." This is the practice of using sensitive individuals (sort of "psychics") to close their eyes and use facilities other than their retinas to picture things, incidents, etc. happening some distance away, even in another continent.

I think it was the CIA which sunk a bundle of government dough into a remote viewing study project and finally concluded there wasn't enough to it for the work to continue.

But Dr. Brown did, and found

a colony of extraterrestrials living under the desert in New Mexico. Others were living underground on Mars, waiting space ferries to take them to Earth because their civilization faced extinction on the barren Martian plains.

These superior beings had perfected antigravity, optical invisibility, and probably, for all I know, levitation. The latter makes sense because they would have to have some means of lifting themselves above all the stuff Dr. Brown was spreading about them.

Now you must understand, this book was not labeled sci-fi no way. And there was no mention of this, but frankly I believe the good doctor was actually abducted by aliens from outer space, taken to their craft, and there underwent an operation where the major part of his brain was removed and replaced with seaweed.

At least I only borrowed his damn book. Imagine how sick I would be if I had bought it!

**Mainstream**



John W. Johnson

"I'm sick and tired of seeing Magic Johnson being portrayed as a hero," Da Vinci yells. "It's his lifestyle which got him into trouble, and now it's his otherwise good image which is being used by politicians."

The owner of this small, wood crafting shop pauses, and then looks at me for response. He continues to stare, dusting himself with the same Old World deliberation which finds him creating exquisite staircases?"

"Yes?" he finally queries. Before I could answer: "Yeah boss, interrupts his assistant Splinters, "and all those politicians could care less if he dropped dead tomorrow."

From somewhere in the office: "Good grief, you guys! Don't ya think he doin' some good?" asks Dusty, secretary to The Crafts-

**AIDS is anything but Magic**

men. Everyone, to a degree, sort of agrees with Dusty.

And everyone, including the Craftsmen, has an opinion about the anything but magical scourge known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, terrifyingly otherwise known as AIDS.

Da Vinci's problem with the publicity surrounding Johnson is that the activity which got Johnson into trouble is taking a back seat to his otherwise pristine image; indeed, his magic smile is being used to tell people about the horrors of AIDS without enough emphasis on the behavior which caused the problem in the first place.

"Instead of (Johnson) telling these kids that his behavior was wrong, he's simply telling them to wear a rubber," he complains. "If it were you or me...." he lets the words die, even as the dust which surrounds him floats to the floor.

According to Da Vinci's Pilgrimage philosophy, Johnson ought to be as much publicly pilloried for his behavior as sainted for his courage.

And he has a point. Lost in the

much ballyhooed courage of Johnson in acknowledging his infection with the virus which causes AIDS are the "women, women and more women" which Johnson has admitted was his lifestyle.

Also lost in the AIDS discussion is that this disease, while deadly, affects a relatively small number of people, less than 225,000 people in the United States having been diagnosed with full-blown AIDS.

"Yeah, and for the first time in history," adds Splinters, "we have a communicable disease which has caused a major national health problem, but whose carriers have not been quarantined."

Why is that? "Because a whole bunch of people who have this virus are also the most talented, creative and brightest people we have," he says.

And it's those same people who have access to the publicity machinery?

He nods. "Therefore we've been made to feel bad about even considering a quarantine which at some other time in history, and

given the deadly nature of this disease, would have been done without even thinking about it." He looks to Da Vinci for agreement, but finds him eyeing a long span of wood for defects.

And, even if it were possible or appropriate, who would be quarantined?

Those infected with full-blown AIDS?

Those known to have the AIDS virus?

Those known to have ARC (AIDS related complex) illnesses.

IV drug users. Homosexuals?

Those who know friends of homosexuals.

The whole problem with a quarantine is knowing who, in fact, to label a leper.

And you can also be sure that it this were an affliction of primarily white, straight males, the emphasis on what is being done, and what to do about it in the meantime, would be vastly different than it is today.

Da Vinci resumes work on today's cherry cabinets. He starts to add something as I leave. "Tomorrow," he waves, "Tomorrow."

**LIBRARY NEWS**



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Kick-Off dinner for the 50th annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction will be held at Yester-Days Restaurant in Trucksville on Monday, June 10. The cost of the dinner will be \$25 per person; cocktails at 6:00 (cash bar) and dinner served at 7:00.

The menu will feature beef tenderloin, salmon and two varieties

**Needed: empty bottles for Sand Art**

of chicken. Italian pastries will be served for dessert. Reservations may be made at the library. Payment will reserve your seating. Limited seating will be available.

A mini auction will be held after dinner with chairman, Ernest Ashbridge and antiques chairman, Betty Ashbridge and auction auctioneers conducting the auction. There will be many choice items up for bids.

A very warm thank you is extended to Reese Pelton, a member of Dallas Kiwanis and a library worker and supporter for many, many years. He wrote an article for *Pennsylvania Magazine* about the library auction and its 50th

edition coming in July of 1996. The story includes many interesting items from the early times and where it has progressed to date. The story appears in the June 1996 *Pennsylvania Magazine*.

Peggy Harvey, 1995 auction chairman, has asked that anyone who drinks Snapple would save the bottles and bring them to the library. The tops are not necessary.

These will be used for the sand art booth during the auction. Joyce Gebhardt and her helpers will chair this booth in 1996. There will be a barrel in the library entrance for the drop off of these bottles.

The stress busting techniques program will be held at the library on Wednesday, May 22 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend.

**New books at the library:** "Her Own Rules" by Barbara Taylor Bradford takes us on an unforgettable journey of discovery with a woman searching for her past and her true identity. Through therapy, she finds herself.

"The Rosewood Casket" by Sharyn McCrumb begins with Randall Stargill dying on his southern Appalachian farm, and his four sons have come home to build him a coffin from the rosewood he has hoarded for this purpose.

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