

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

Only two Odds 'N Ends today, but as usual, one is pretty odd. The first: If you have attempted to keep up with the flood of O.J. books, as I haven't, you've done a fair amount of reading. One of them was probably "Reasonable Doubts," by Alan Dershowitz. I decided to read it when I saw the author's jacket photo...old Al is a dead ringer for a guy I used to work with. And besides there was nothing worthwhile on TV. (Is there ever?) Dershowitz was first in his class at Yale Law School and became a full professor at 28, the youngest of the school's history. Very smart, but not a smart aleck. Newsweek calls him "the nation's most peripatetic civil liberties lawyer and one of its most distinguished defenders of individual rights." His clients include Claus von Bulow, Patricia Hearst, William Kuntzler and some death row inmates. Since my contract contains a clause forbidding me to do book reviews, the only thing I can say is that this book seems to be one of the better ones about the Simpson trial. It will make you think, which, after all, is why you read stuff like this. So perhaps Alan won't mind if I quote some inter-

The \$500 million verdict and the math illiteraterati

esting statistics from his first chapter. He chronicled some things going on during the time when all America, or most of it anyway, was anxiously awaiting the trial's outcome. Just prior to the announcement of the jury's verdict, here is what he said was happening. ...Our President was being briefed on nationwide security measures planned in the case of a riot. ...The Los Angeles Police Department was on full alert. ...Long distance phone calls dropped 58%. ...New York Stock Exchange trading dropped 41%. ...A tremendous surge took place in electrical consumption as millions turned on TV sets. ...Water usage dropped as fewer persons used bathrooms. ...U.S. Supreme Court justices arranged to have notes delivered to them on the trial's outcome. ...Exercises slowed to a halt in the nation's gymnasiums and fitness salons. ...Yon Kippur holiday was underway in Europe and TV-watching was a no-no, but thousands of sets were turned on anyway in Jordan. ...Work slowed in our factories to such an extent that lost production was estimated to cost close to \$500 million. ...Surgical suites, post offices, many other activities, all enjoyed sluggish and unproductive half-

hours. What are historians going to say about this someday? What are they going to say about us? ... For the second item, I can't recall the source for a few sad facts about our educational system as it exists today. The conclusion was that American children are not being taught enough. Our school year is pretty well standard, and frozen at 180 days. But consider school years of some other countries South Korea - 220 days; Germany - 230; Japan - 243! The average U.S. high school student is given 3.5 hours homework per week. Japan gives their students 33 hours per week. So what? So Japan, with only half our population, produces twice as many scientists and engineers every year. Japanese students spend twice as many hours studying math, science and history. Again, so what? Well, just listen to a major electronics firm which says that 80 percent of their job applicants can't pass a fifth grade math test. Overall this country loses 40 billion per year in lost productivity and the cost of remedial education because workers can't read, write, count or think! What are historians going to say about this some day? What are they going to say about us? Assuming, of course, that we still exist as a nation.

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

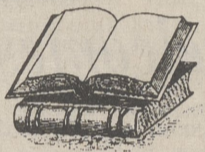
A few moments ago I was out in our suburban back yard hanging laundry on the line to dry. While there, my ears were accosted by the noise of constant heavy traffic on the four to five lane roadway that is less than a quarter mile from our home. There were also construction noises down the block, sirens periodically going in one direction or another, and the safety signals of the garbage truck as it backed up the street. I have become more and more annoyed by all this constant noise since I now work at home, the volume and speed of traffic continues to increase, and people cut down more and more trees and bushes between our property and the highway. In fact, it had gotten so bad that we were actively looking for quieter accommodations prior to our trip this summer. Then, I discovered that there is a difference between noise and NOISE! NOISE! is now defined as "sleeping" in a tent on a Saturday night less than one half mile from a motor speedway that we did not know was there. (The brochure had promised a quiet site!) But, the question that we must now answer is "should we simply learn to live with the noise levels in our neighborhood?" Let me share some of my research with you. Perhaps together we can begin to respond rationally to our modern noisy environment. One of the first facts I learned about noise pollution is that I am entirely justified in my complaint about the highway noise. In the seasons of the year when leaves

The truth about noise pollution

do not muffle the sound, we cannot carry on a normal conversation in our back yard. We must shout to greet our neighbors. G. Tyler Miller (1994) states that "you are being exposed to a sound level high enough to cause permanent hearing damage if you need to raise your voice to be heard above the racket." He also says that noise is still the most widespread occupational hazard. And, he goes on to point out that recent first year college students who have grown up with boom boxes, loud parties, and environmental noise pollution in our cities have the hearing capability of normal 60-year-old persons. If it were simply my hearing that was going, I might be able to write it off as one of the hazards of growing older. But, I have for several years had to take medication for unexplained high blood pressure. The more I read about the non-auditory health effects of constant noise, the more I wonder if that could be the explanation. Hypertension is listed in every environmental health book along with such symptoms as muscle tension, migraine headaches, higher cholesterol levels, gastric ulcers, irritability, insomnia, and various psychological disorders. Congress began to address this increasing problem with the "Noise Control Act of 1972" which states that "it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare." This act called for the EPA to design and enforce regulations regarding the manufacture and use of a wide variety of noisy products and machinery. It was further strengthened by the "Quiet Communities Act of 1978" which called for research into the whole

problem of noise pollution and its abatement. It seems quite reasonable to me that this is a valid concern for our federal government. It is ridiculous to suppose that my township or municipality can make or enforce laws regulating the noise of engines which are manufactured thousands of miles away. There was considerable progress during the 1970's toward the vision set forth in the Noise Control Act. But, in 1981, in direct violation of section 4, (b) of that Act, President Ronald Reagan refused to submit an appropriation request to Congress for the funding of the EPA Noise Control Office. Since that time, our government has had no funds with which to do any of the work detailed in that Act. Improvements in noise levels in automobiles and airplanes are still being made because the public demands it, but other improvements have not been required or pursued. Many of the original regulations have been totally forgotten during the past 15 years, and the scientists who worked on this project at EPA are long gone. I believe that it is time to reinstate the Noise Control Act and the Quiet Communities Act. Barking dogs and blaring stereos are the least of our problems. When companies can still build vacuum cleaners that are more noisy than necessary because "people don't believe quiet ones are picking up dirt," we desperately need some regulation. Europeans are using quieter jackhammers and air compressors than we are. They also have rubberized garbage collection trucks. It can be done. Let's demand some peace and quiet. Our ears and our bodies will thank us for it.

LIBRARY NEWS



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library experienced many new and exciting innovations and activities during the celebration of the 50th library auction. Among these was a special letter mailed to Ernest Ashbridge, general chairman of the auction, from The White House in Washington, in response to an invitation sent to President Clinton. The letter was signed by Stephanie Streett and Anne Hawley, directors of scheduling. The letter stated: Thank you for your kind invitation to President Clinton. He appreciates your offer and is sorry he was unable to join you. Please also accept our sincere apologies for the late re-

Framed White House letter to library is on display

sponse to your invitation. The overwhelming volume of invitations and requests that the President receives makes it difficult to reply as quickly as we would like. On behalf of the President, thank you again for your invitation. Your continued interest and support are deeply appreciated. The letter has been framed and is hanging with the 50th auction painting in the entryway of the library. New books at the library: "I'll Always Have Paris!" by Art Buchwald is a memoir given to the library in honor of Bob and Betty Parry by Tom and Virginia Jenkins. It is a continuation of the author's memoirs of the dazzling Paris of the late 1940's and the 1950's. It begins with Art at 21 in June of 1948, one of the army of 'fresh, peach-cheeked Americans' invading postwar France; ready to embark on the greatest adventure of his life.

"Jack and Jill" by James Patterson is an explosive and powerful novel. In the middle of the night, a controversial U.S. Senator is found murdered in bed in his Georgetown pied-a-terre. The police turn up only one clue: a mysterious rhyme signed "Jack and Jill" promising that this is just the beginning. Jack and Jill are out to get the rich and famous, and they will stop at nothing until their fiendish plan is carried out. A masterful nonstop nightmare. "About Schmidt" by Louis Begley is a powerful story of a man's fall from grace. After years of careful management, the life of Albert Schmidt lies about him in shambles. The clients he has served are turning to his firm's aggressive young comers as he stumbles into early retirement. Relations with his only child are going from bad to worse. Exploration of a tragic theme.

Fitch directs five area paramedic units

Dallas resident Nancie J. Fitch, D.O., a specialist in emergency medicine at the Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, was recently named medical director for area paramedic units 2, 3, 5, 8 and 303, and recommended by EMS (emergency medical services) for the facility medical commander at Geisinger Wyoming Valley. As medical director of the paramedic units, Dr. Fitch will serve in an educational and supervisory role, determining that all paramedics have the appropriate quali-

fications and fulfill the proper skill requirements. American Board certified in emergency medicine, Dr. Fitch is a graduate of the University of Scranton with a bachelor of science degree in biology. She earned her medical degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM), completed a rotating internship at the Lewistown Hospital, affiliated with PCOM, and a residency program in emergency medicine at Memorial Hospital in York, PA.



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