

EDITORIALS

Let's hope cross burners didn't understand their hateful message

It is ironic that the day after former Alabama governor George Wallace presented an award to the black woman he barred from the University of Alabama 33 years ago, a cross was burned along a country road in Dallas Township.

For now, we'll trust this was simply the misguided act of someone too young to recall the turmoil of the 1960's civil rights movement or the decades before when the Klu Klux Klan was active. Anyone who was alive and aware at those times knows the significance of cross burnings: a virulent message of intolerance for non-white, non-Christian people. Intolerance is probably too mild a word. The sociopaths who danced around flaming crosses while wearing white robes and hoods also carried out horrific attacks on blacks and Jews, including but not limited to burning their homes and lynching them.

Klan leaders have always made quite a show of their bravado, often parading down main streets and attracting media coverage for their gatherings. But under their cloaks they were and still are cowards, afraid to show their faces and take responsibility for their actions. By their furtive nature, they showed that in even their own limited intelligence, they understood what they were doing was immoral.

America is a much more tolerant nation than it was when George Wallace stood on the university steps and prevented qualified black students from entering. As Wallace has grown to understand that people of every race and color must be treated with dignity and respect, so have millions of his fellow citizens. We need only look at the murderous turmoil in the former Yugoslavia to be reminded of the miracle of diversity America represents to the world.

George Wallace matured from an ardent defender of racial separation — in his 1962 gubernatorial address he pledged a policy of "segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever" — to one of conciliation. We hope whoever burned a cross in Dallas makes the same journey, and in a lot less than 30 years.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



The debasement of ethics in sport has nearly reached bottom, aided by a spitting baseball star and an excited 12-year-old. At least I hope it doesn't get much lower than it has during the baseball playoffs.

First, of course, was Roberto Alomar's shameful reaction to an umpire's call, which he followed with hurtful personal remarks about the man's family. The baseball hierarchy's feeble response validated the general belief that money is everything in sport. That was bad enough, until Jeff Maier reached over the right field wall at Yankee Stadium and deflected a fly ball that, if not caught, would surely have resulted in a double at best instead of the home run called by the nearest ump.

Neither the young fan's catch nor the ump's bad call disturbs me all that much. What I find thoroughly distasteful is that the boy is now considered some sort of hero for interfering with a play that ostensibly brought the Yanks a 1-0 playoff lead. This is a far cry from my days as a Yankee fan, when we relied on the batting prowess of Mantle and Maris. Whitey and Don's pitching and the slick fielding of Richardson and Kubek to win games, not interference from fans. I have to think the Pinstripes of the 50's and 60's would have been embarrassed — not overjoyed — that it took a missed call to win. I don't think the outcome should be changed, even though it's clear the homer should have been an out. But I do think we ought not celebrate winning by chance or error, reinforcing the incorrect nostrum that winning is the only thing. In sport, which is at its heart a diversion from real life and not a reflection of it, playing well and honorably is the most important thing.

Letters, columns and editorials

The Dallas Post attempts to publish opinions on a variety of topics in many forms.

Editorials, which are the opinion of the management of *The Post*, appear on the editorial page and are written by the editor unless otherwise indicated. Any artwork represents the opinion of the cartoonist, and columns are the opinion of the author.

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published, subject to the following guidelines:

- Letters should not exceed 500 words.
- No writer may have more than one letter published during a 30-day period, except as a reply to another letter.
- Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification.
- Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer.
- *The Post* retains the right to accept or reject any letter, and to edit letters for grammar and spelling, as well as to eliminate any libel, slander or objectionable wording.

In addition to letters, we welcome longer pieces that may run as columns. The author or subject's relevance to the Back Mountain will be the prime consideration when selecting material for publication.



Enjoying the last nice days of the season. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

PTO leader asks board to reconsider Westmoreland decision

Editor:

I was quite shocked and dismayed at the Dallas School Board's decision to erect the Westmoreland replacement elementary school at the Dallas Campus site next to the Middle School. The 5-to-4 vote itself underscores the lack of clarity of the decision. On a matter that will impact our children and the district for the foreseeable future I would have hoped that the board would have continued to analyze the issues and alternatives until a clear consensus became apparent.

Of the many issues I believe were not sufficiently addressed, first and foremost, is the loss of the community/neighborhood atmosphere and the impact it will have on the students, parents and teachers both educationally and, in a broader sense, morally as our

youngsters learn to take their place in the community and the world at large. More pragmatic unresolved matters include overcrowding of the campus resulting in the lack of expandability to existing buildings should future growth necessitate, increased traffic to an already congested campus, increased bus travel time for elementary students and the loss and overuse of fields. In addition, with the proposed site being next to the Middle School, as the parent of two elementary students I am concerned by the proximity and potential contact that my children will have with 6th through 8th graders.

I do not feel that adequate consideration was given to building on the existing Westmoreland site (although that location does have some drawbacks) or the alterna-

tive of the current Administration site. While the Administration site would have additional demolition costs (estimated at \$100,000 to \$200,000 by the architects), these costs are minimal when considering the total estimated project costs of \$6 to \$7 million dollars. This site would also alleviate construction disruptions to the other schools while maintaining many of the benefits described above including a separate "community" feeling to the school.

Frankly, the only proponents I have heard of building the new elementary school on the Dallas campus were certain members of the school board and the only reasons which were promulgated were costs and ease of administration. I remain disappointed at the decision and would have hoped that we could have done better for

our children. I appeal to the school board to reconsider.

Having said my piece, I would like to thank the school board for listening to the community in its decision to make the new school a K-5 environment and its commitment to move Westmoreland family intact. I believe these were the most crucial decisions. I would also like to thank all the parents, teachers and community members for their involvement and support.

As a Dallas resident, parent and president of the Westmoreland PTO, I look forward to working with the school board, teachers, parents and community to help make this new school the best it can be.

Ellen Smith
Shavertown

Harmful lessons students learn from teacher strikes

Editor:

In Pittston, officers of the local American Federation of Teachers undoubtedly feel that they are in the "catbird seat"—holding a winning position in the battle against the Pittston School Board. After all, they seem to hold all the cards. The opposition is weak and divided. The School Board is caught between the taxpayers (who don't want them to spend any more money), the parents (who want their kids in school no matter what it costs), the politicians (who are faced with perhaps one of the most powerful unions they have encountered) and the "professional public educators" (who feel that a "public" education is the essential foundation of our democracy). However, in spite of their "winning hand", I suggest that there's a "joker" in the deck that almost no one has considered.

It's almost a foregone conclusion that the Pittston Area public school teachers will win whatever they demand. In a very real sense they can't lose! Unless there is a change in law (Act 55), no matter what the local School Board decides, the teachers will be paid. There is no penalty incurred for striking. Consequently, in the next decade or so, here in Pennsylvania, we can expect local School Boards to regularly find themselves forced to comply with increasing teacher demands.

Furthermore, taxpayer resis-

tance is soon likely to be greatly weakened when impending legislation moves the burden of school taxes from the shoulders of the property owners (property taxes) to the more easily collected income tax. (Payroll taxes generally incur less taxpayer resistance because they are mostly deducted before the earner ever sees the money). Initially, the proposed legislation would have given taxpayers a veto (by referendum) over tax increases, but this provision has now been deleted.

Some analysts see the emergence of the national teachers union (the National Education Association) as potentially the most powerful union ever. John L. Lewis was a "piker" when matched against teachers. Consider: the teachers can muster an enormous highly motivated, well-heeled, well-educated, very articulate (after all, that's their specialty) group of people ensconced in almost every small community throughout the Nation. Come election time, who can match the telephone "get out the vote" squads of the NEA?

But, before we all "throw in the sponge" and meekly resign ourselves to our fate, let's consider some of the long-range implications of what we now face. For example, what effect is an all-powerful teachers' union likely to have on students?

In earlier years, our teachers

were among the most respected members of a community. They were seen to expend their lives in the best interests of youngsters and their communities. As scholars they were often far more educated and knowledgeable than most and their views were given great weight by community leaders. Indeed, in most communities they were truly the "pillars".

But, by banding together in a giant and militant union, presenting imperious demands to their community School Boards, and threatening to strike and shut down the schools, the teachers have moved from their status as "community pillars" to just another "organized rabble" trying to disrupt the community. Respect for teachers must inevitably tumble with the advent of the picket line. The former "Gods of Education" are found to have "feet of clay"! For some hapless teacher trying to impart a bit of learning to a cynical and reluctant student, the downfall is likely to be truly dismal and discouraging. I suggest that the unwitting lesson being taught is: "Only in union is there strength." Won't students "get the message" and thereby be encouraged to join "gangs" to get what they want from bumbling educators and a stubborn society?

Lost in the shuffle is any idea that teachers are "professionals"

whose value to a community is to be determined by a community School Board in the free market for goods and services. Instead of the individual being valued on the basis of contribution, he is made part of a group whose services are valued primarily on length of service, number of hours spent in education courses and credentials thereby earned. Actual teaching ability is rarely considered. The end result is that many in the community, though without any official teaching credentials, are better educated, more highly skilled in their chosen fields, and are even better teachers than the self-described "professionals".

In the end, as the power of the teachers unions expands and prospers, it may be expected that the quality of education will steadily decline. As public schools deteriorate, those seeking a quality education will gravitate towards private schools or home schooling. Those who can't afford these options may (if they are at all employable) find their employers conducting classes which teach the basics they should have learned in school. In large cities, like New York, this is already common practice.

Think about it! Hasn't unionization doomed public education?

Hugh P. King
Dallas

DA, media scored for jumping on Satanism bandwagon

Editor:

Reference the appropriately titled Ghostwriter column of October 9, 1996, concerning press coverage, and I would add television coverage, of the recent double suicide of two teenage boys from the Plymouth area.

In addition to the distortions from TV and the local papers, we were also entertained by the in-

sightful and objective histrionic performance of our own Luzerne County District Attorney.

I can't help but think that this effort to "blame" Satan, the occult, and other mysteries of the universe for all that is wrong in the valley is just another smokescreen to divert our attention from the countless other little corruptions going on around us.

Sounds to me like job for another czar at the federal level and at least a minor task force at the local level. This could prove to be another one of those unwinnable wars similar to our actions in Viet Nam and against drugs that will make some of us very rich. I can just picture the eyeballs of the select few on the task force turning to dollar signs now. That's

scary.

Once again Paul Rismiller and The Dallas Post have led the charge for reason and logic, concepts in this time and place which are as hard to grasp as common sense and responsibility. Keep up the good work.

John P. Bergevin
Dallas

The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.
P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
717-675-5211

Ronald A. Bartizek
PUBLISHER

Charlotte E. Bartizek
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Dennise Casterline
ADVERTISING ACCT. EXEC

Grace R. Dove
REPORTER

Paul Rismiller
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Olga Kostrobala
CLASSIFIED/TYPESSETTING

Jill Gruver
OFFICE MANAGER

