

LETTERS

State prison boss defends Chase security plan

Editor:
Your recent article about SCI Dallas ("Prison towers manned for now") contained some significant inaccuracies. You stated that the state's newer prisons are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment—but not Dallas. The electronic system installed at Dallas in 1995 is one of the best and most cost-effective systems available today. It does not blink, sleep, or turn its back, and is not blinded by the heavy fog that frequently shrouds the prison and surrounding community. In addition, you quoted a corrections officer who said that, 15

years ago, "two inmates hopped over the fence" in front of an unmanned tower. That was 15 years ago, when Dallas had one fence (since replaced with two more-secure fences) and no electronic detection system. In 1996, the perimeter at Dallas is as secure as the perimeter at the newer prisons you call "superjails." The community and staff are protected by a total system that includes good internal security (inmate counts, tool control, fence/lock/bar checks), two fences, 24-hour perimeter patrols, multiple rolls of razor wire, high intensity lighting and the new electronic intrusion detection system.

This same electronic system is in use at SCI's Greene (a maximum security prison built in 1993) and Waymart—both have no towers, and neither prison has experienced an escape through this system. And although escapes are extremely rare occurrences, in Pennsylvania there have been more escapes from prisons with walls and towers than from facilities with fences and no towers. Community and staff safety are my number one priority. I firmly believe that SCI Dallas is more secure today than at any time in its 36-year history.
Martin F. Horn
Secretary of Corrections

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

The Caspian Sea is the largest inland body of water on Earth. As such, you would think that it would get a lot of press. But, encyclopedias tend to give it three or four short paragraphs. Lake Baikal (the largest freshwater lake on Earth), the Great Lakes, and many smaller lakes are studied and reported on much more frequently. In fact, if you are not interested in oil exploration or caviar production, you probably know very little about the Caspian Sea.

Many of us are familiar with the terrible ecological disaster caused by the shrinking of the Aral Sea. About 20 years ago, the government of the Soviet Union became concerned that the same fate might befall the Caspian Sea. It seemed logical since both seas are fed by rivers from wetter regions, are situated in almost desert areas, and had been experiencing drops in sea level for many years. There was, however, one major difference: the drop in the level of the Aral Sea was directly attributable to diversion of water for irrigation (mainly for cotton production), whereas the Caspian Sea was, apparently, simply going through a natural phase.

So, just as the government was trying to engineer a solution to the "problem," the Caspian Sea began to rise. It has risen between 2.5 and 3.0 meters (about 9 feet) since the late 1970s! No one knows why. And now, the governments of five countries - four former Soviet republics and Iran - are facing an even bigger problem.

Scientists now know that these extreme fluctuations in sea level are natural for the Caspian Sea. Since they have only recently begun to study these fluctuations, they cannot predict when the level might stabilize or drop once again.

Caspian Sea rise: A lesson in humility

They do not know what balances exist between precipitation in the watersheds of the tributaries - particularly the Volga, which delivers 80% of the water to the sea - and the evaporation rate. Evaporation is the only natural way in which water can exit this sea since there is no outlet stream. Of course, human use patterns can, and do, alter this evaporation rate and must be taken into account in any water budget.

Those of us who live in the Back Mountain remember the problems caused by the beaver dam on the outlet stream at Harveys Lake. That only affected a small area and was only a change of two or three feet at the most. Imagine what would happen if all of Harveys Lake suddenly rose two or three times that amount. Now, picture a similar situation around a sea where docks are built for commerce instead of for pleasure, where fishing is a way of life for many people, where the buildings swamped are homes and businesses instead of boat houses, where oil and water pipelines are now subject to damage by storms and waves, and where agricultural lands, not lawns, are inundated. And, imagine not knowing whether the water level might continue to rise another meter or two. This is exactly the situation at the Caspian Sea.

Although the human difficulties are the most obvious in this situation, there are severe environmental dislocations as well. Wetlands along the shore and in the large Volga River delta are becoming more and more flooded. Sea grass beds in the shallow north end of the sea are under so much water now that many of them are dying and the animals, particularly fish and birds, which eat the smaller animals that live in these beds, are finding it harder and harder to survive. The water level change has been so rapid that many habitats have been unable to move or change quickly enough. And, in many cases, these habitats have nowhere to go

since the surrounding land has been converted to agricultural or other human uses.

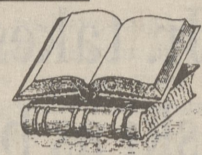
In areas where the animals have not been directly harmed by the physical changes, they find themselves at the mercy of desperate humans. The combination of ecological and political uncertainties has led to large-scale poaching of birds and fish by a hungry population. Hunters who used to go out a couple of times a month now go hunting several times each week to put food on the table. A shortage of ammunition is the only thing preventing wholesale slaughter of such birds as swans, flamingoes, and various diving ducks which use the Caspian Sea as a feeding, nesting, and/or wintering place. The local authorities have stopped trying to enforce the rules since the demise of the Soviet Union.

The same story is true for several species of fish. Sturgeon has been poached so consistently that several kinds (especially Beluga, the most prized for caviar) only occur because of stocking practices. The hatcheries are even having difficulty catching enough adult females to maintain their stocks.

Obviously, several problems must be solved simultaneously in order for people and their natural surroundings to adjust to this new situation. The governments of five countries

and the leaders of all the corporations working in this region must begin to cooperate. Decisions must be made as to whether nature is to be lived with or fought against. Economic dislocations must be addressed and resolved. Large-scale environmental disasters, such as ruptured oil pipelines, must be prevented. And, scientific inquiry must be encouraged. Perhaps the answers to the questions posed at the Caspian Sea will help the rest of the world deal with future climatic change. At the very least, it should remind us that nature often has its own agenda.

LIBRARY NEWS



By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is continuing the 'Green Jar' campaign at the library. The large plastic jar is set in the main lobby of the library ready to accept loose change, dollars and any other monies. This money is used to purchase special needs for the library that are not covered in the regular yearly budget. The public has been very willing to drop in their donations. We have just emptied and counted the money that accumulated during the last few months and were pleased with the amount of \$24.30

'Green Jar' campaign on now

that was in the jar. This amount will aid the special projects for the library.

Total circulation at the library for September was 6,956; Adult 3,747 and Children 3,209. Book Club circulated 170 books; Reference questions totaled 395 and Interlibrary loan books were 64. Audio tapes circulated 343; Videos 243 and CDs 57. New books added: adult 218; children 29. New borrowers, adult 50, juvenile 45; registrations, adult 279 and juvenile 272. Books withdrawn, juvenile 40.

New books at the library: "The Sea Hunters" by Clive Cussler is the author's first non-fiction book; in which he explores the special world of undersea adventure. He describes his lifelong love for the sea and ships, and how his involvement with the search for John Paul Jones' famous Revolution-

ary War ship led to his establishing the NUMA (National Underwater and Marine Agency) Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the discovery and preservation of historic shipwrecks. Dramatic and personal. "Final Victim" by Stephen J. Cannell is a heart-stopping psycho-thriller in the terrifying tradition of "Silence of the Lambs." Leonard Land is a 7 foot tall, completely hairless computer genius, wired to the cyperpunk subculture of Death Metal and Satan worship.

He is also a twisted, multipersonality maniac who is systematically murdering women. When he is the Rat, he is smart and cunning; when he becomes The Wind Minstrel, he is God and the Devil. The Rat covets women; The Wind Minstrel possesses them.



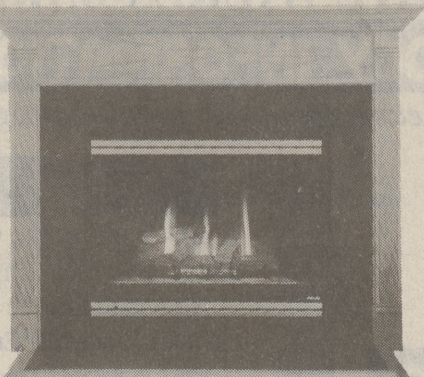
SHE'S QUEEN OF HOMECOMING

Dallas High School Principal Frank Galicki did the ceremonial honors at Monday's homecoming game, crowning Emily Schweitzer queen. At left was Francesa Stuppino, a runner-up. The queen was actually chosen at Saturday evening's homecoming dance, since rain postponed the game until Monday.

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Pain may be eliminated for millions

(SPECIAL) -- A drug that is exciting researchers in the treatment of pain has been formulated into a new product known as "Arthur Itis," and is being called a "Medical Miracle" by some, in the treatment of debilitating conditions such as arthritis, bursitis, rheumatism, painful muscle aches, joint aches, simple backache, bruises, and more. Although the mechanism of action is unclear, experiments indicate that Arthur Itis, relieves pain by first selectively attracting, and then destroying the messenger chemical which carries pain sensations to the brain, thus eliminating pain in the affected area. Arthur Itis, is an odorless, greaseless, non-staining cream and is available immediately without a prescription and is guaranteed to work or your money back.

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