

EDITORIALS

Safety first, yes, but not to this extreme

The state and federal agencies that responded to spilled mercury at Dallas High School certainly can't be accused of taking their responsibilities lightly. But in their rush to take every precaution possible once on scene, they turned a relatively minor incident into a major catastrophe for the district and students.

A laundry list of acronyms swooped down on Dallas when the district reported that mercury had been spilled in the school. DEP, EPA, DEH, ATSDR, CDC — they were all involved, each apparently trying to be more careful than the other. The result was an air quality standard set at nearly 17 times that used for industrial workers exposed to mercury vapor eight hours a day, every day. According to a chart from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the acceptable level in the Dallas High School was 10 times less than the amount believed to cause shakiness in industrial workers after 15 years of constant exposure. And since the mercury was cleaned up quickly, the levels here were sure to drop to nothing over a very short period of time.

There was good reason to test the school after it was discovered one or more students had scattered liquid mercury in the school. It didn't take long to find there was virtually no risk to students, but once the agencies were set in motion, they couldn't stop.

It's likely that Dallas High School students are exposed to greater risk from dust mites, hair spray or airborne bacteria than they were from mercury vapor. Surely the bus ride to school holds greater danger than a random drop of mercury.

We suppose those charged with protecting our health will say you can't be too careful in a situation such as this. That's not true; you can be too careful, and overzealous environmental officials probably caused more disruption than was necessary in this case.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



My apologies to the *Citizens' Voice*. In last week's column, I accused the paper of manipulating a photograph that appeared on the front page of the Nov. 7 issue. In the photograph, of a mercury cleanup worker dressed in full "moon suit" regalia in front of a school bus, the bus's sign cast an eerie green glow. I assumed (You all know what assume does, I assume) that the photo had been manipulated to add the glow, which is often associated with radioactivity. But CV managing editor Paul Gollas called to assure me that the paper has a policy against any manipulation of photos, even to "flopping" an image to make it face into a page. He said his staff went back and looked at the negative to make sure that policy hadn't been violated. Apparently, the sign's reflective coating cast the glow when it was struck by the camera's flash.

Washington pols are back touting a Constitutional amendment for a balanced budget. "Stop us before we kill again," they seem to say, as they assure us that this measure will end budget deficits as we know them. Think again. First, in order to become effective, an amendment must be passed by the legislatures of two-thirds of the states. While governors are perfectly accustomed to balancing their own budgets, they're likely to think twice about supporting this notion, especially since the Feds just voted to cut the amount of money shoveled their way for welfare.

Besides that small technicality, there's little likelihood a Constitutional amendment will stop the red ink. Congress and the White House routinely ignore other statutes, like the one requiring Congressional approval before troops can be sent into combat. With a bit of creative accounting, you can bet a deficit will magically become a surplus. The simplest way to duck responsibility has been to move an item "off budget," thereby placing the damage in some nook or cranny that will hide it at least until the perpetrators are out of office. It's as though a debtor could move his credit card bills to a secret place, so they don't prevent getting yet another home equity loan, which he can't pay.

I'm all for a balanced budget. I think much of the economy's growth the past few years can be credited to lower deficits, and dropping them to zero would be the best thing we could do for workers and their families. But I also have great respect for the Constitution, and don't want to see it junked up with politically-expedient amendments like this one. We must leave our children a legacy instead of an I.O.U., but this isn't the way to do it.

Do you agree? Disagree?

Editorials are the opinion of the management of The Dallas Post, and are written by the editor unless otherwise indicated. We welcome your opinion on contemporary issues in the form of letters to the editor. If you don't write, the community may never hear a contrasting point of view. Send letters to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612. Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number so that we may verify authenticity. We do not publish anonymous letters, but will consider withholding the name in exceptional circumstances. We reserve the right to edit for length and grammar.

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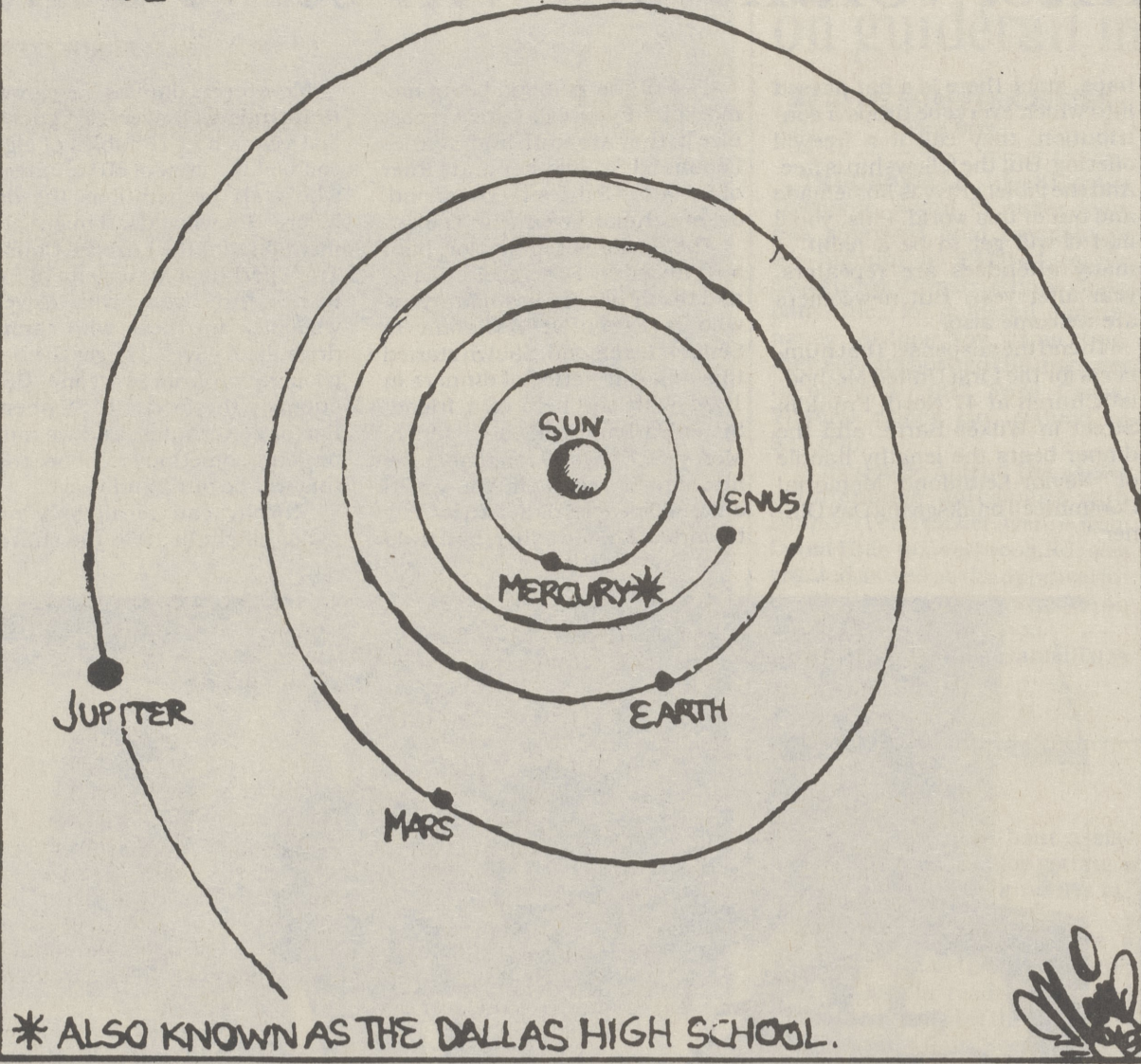
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SPROG



LETTERS

SPCA tips to keep animals safe this winter

Editor:
Like you, dogs and cats cannot withstand winter's bitter cold and numbing wetness. Help pets remain happy and healthy during winter:

- Do not leave dogs or cats outdoors when the temperature sharply drops. Short-haired, very young or old dogs (and cats) should never be left outdoors. Most dogs and cats are safer indoors except when taken out for exercise. Short coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during walks.
- No matter what the temperature, wind chill can threaten a pet's life. An outdoor dog must be protected by a dry, draft-free dog-

house that is large enough to allow the animal to sit and lie down comfortably but small enough to hold in its body heat, with a floor raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings. The house also should face away from the wind and have a doorway covered with burlap or a rug.

Outdoor dogs need more food in the winter because keeping warm depletes energy. Routinely check water dishes to make certain water is fresh and unfrozen.

- Warm engines in parked cars attract cats. To avoid their injury, bang on car hoods to scare them away before starting engines.
- Salt and chemicals used to melt snow and ice can burn the

pads of pets' feet. Wipe them with a damp towel before animals lick them and burn their mouths.

• Dry heat can dry out a cat's or dog's coat and skin. A small amount of vegetable oil in their food will help keep them soft.

• If you see a dog tied outside this winter, deprived of proper shelter please contact the SPCA of Luzerne County at 825-4111. Our humane officers enforce the animal cruelty statutes of the PA Crimes Code. Failure to provide proper shelter for a pet is punishable by a \$300 fine and/or 90 days imprisonment.

Edward Gross, Manager
SPCA of Luzerne County

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

By BOB WASILEWSKI
Guest Writer

Note from A. Case: The following article is an updated version of a piece that appeared in the autumn edition of the newsletter of the Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society (GWVAS). The author, Bob Wasilewski, is an active member and past president of GWVAS.

A gentle afternoon breeze wafts the delicate strains of a thrush from the woodlot at the bottom of the hill. Thousands of golden-yellow buttercups line the course of a small stream as it meanders through a marsh and into the thrush's dominion. Atop a hill, bobolinks sing in a grassy meadow, defending their territories from one another and from the small group of wildflower enthusiasts who stroll along the trail that bisects the blackbirds' domain. Although these sights and sounds might characterize any number of natural landscapes in the Back Mountain, many readers might be surprised to learn that this was the scene on a Sunday afternoon last June at the Huntsville Golf Club.

Since 1994, the Huntsville Golf Club has been participating in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, which is a joint effort of the Audubon Society of New York State and the United States Golf Association. Recognizing that golf courses represent open spaces

How green was my golf course

and greenbelts that are valuable to many species of wild animals and plants, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program encourages the conservation of these areas through an agenda that golf course managers can follow in order to ensure that the landscape for which they are responsible retains its ecological value while satisfying its recreational requirements.

To reach this goal of conservation, the Audubon Program requires that participating golf courses achieve certification in each of six categories: Environmental Planning, Wildlife and Habitat Management, Member/Public Involvement, Integrated Pest Management, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management. On November 1, 1996, the Huntsville Golf Club received notification that it has satisfied the requirements for certification in all six categories, and that it is now one of only four golf courses in Pennsylvania to have achieved full certification in the Audubon Program.

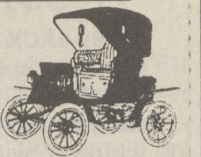
Among the tasks that needed to be completed for certification in the Audubon Program were inventories of the animals and plants that can be found along the fairways and in the forests that comprise the Huntsville Golf Club. For assistance with these tasks, the club turned to the local environmental community, specifically to the Dallas-based Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society. Members of the local Audubon chapter helped by identifying wildflowers and birds, and two Audubon members, Beaumont resident Sandy Goodwin and West Wyoming resident Jim Shoemaker, served on the Huntsville Golf Club's Resource Committee.

Huntsville's certification is thus at least partly the result of the cooperation between golfers and environmentalists.

Cooperation between golfers and environmentalists is a somewhat unusual phenomenon. These two groups are more often at odds as golfers seek new terrains to challenge their skills, while environmentalists challenge proposals to convert forests and meadows into fairways and greens. However, the opportunity to search for the colorful splashes of Huntsville's violets, polygalas, starflowers and buttercups, and to experience the sights and sounds of the club's resident thrushes, vireos, bluebirds and tanagers would delight even the staunchest environmentalist. In addition, the nature enthusiast would be impressed with the club's commitment to preserving a bit of nature, which benefits not only the club's wildlife, but also Huntsville's members by making a day on the links much more pleasurable and relaxing.

Whether one seeks relaxation with golf club in hand or with binoculars raised to the eyes, all can be thankful that the members of the Huntsville Golf Club are taking seriously their obligation to protect the Back Mountain's natural beauty. They are to be congratulated for their successful completion of, and their ongoing commitment to satisfying, the requirements for certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. Back Mountain residents can be proud that the Huntsville Golf Club is blazing the trail for other golf courses to follow toward balancing recreation and environmental protection by making its "greens" truly "green."

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - Nov. 27, 1936

DALLAS SCHOOL GETS SAFETY PATROLS

In cooperation with Wyoming Valley Motor Club, Dallas Borough School District is preparing to organize School Boy Safety Patrols, which will direct children across traveled streets to help in impressing the necessity for safety upon local pupils. Boys will wear white belts and badges and will carry red flags.

The Post Office Department is seeking quarters in Dallas, under lease for a term of five or 10 years from date of occupancy. Postmaster George T. Kirkendall announced this week. Postal inspectors will receive proposals up to Dec. 15. Proposals must state, price per annum for five years including, heat, light, etc. and bidders must include a diagram of the quarters.

50 Years Ago - Nov. 29, 1946

FIRST NATIONAL BANK HITS \$3 MILLION MARK

Another milestone in the history of First National Bank of Dallas was reached Friday when assets of that institution passed the \$3,000,000 mark. It was 20 years ago in 1926 just 20 years after its opening on April 10, 1906 that the Bank's assets attained the \$500,000 mark; 15 years later in 1941, assets reached \$1,000,000. Four years later in June 1945, total assets passed the \$2,000,000 mark.

Local schools are benefitting by a recently announced Westinghouse and Luzerne County Gas and Electric sponsored, half price, 5-year renewal plan for purchasing electrical equipment for their Home Economic Departments. Under the plan, schools are receiving needed equipment at half the retail price despite its scarcity at dealers showrooms. Each year for five years, equipment will be replaced by the newer models free of charge.

40 Years Ago - Nov. 23, 1956

22' SPRUCE GIVEN TO DECORATE BORO BUILDING

A 22 foot spruce tree with its wide spreading branches in front of Dallas Borough Building is the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Van Buskirk, Fernbrook. Al Shaffer and his tree crew set it upright in a three foot hole drilled through the pave. Borough crew trimmed the tree and lights were turned on in time for Thanksgiving.

Erna Sorber, Harveys Lake, will be seeing her homeland of Austria and her home city of Vienna for the first time in nine years early in December. She expects to visit St. Stephens Cathedral where her son Bobby was christened before she left for America with her soldier husband; ski in the Austrian Alps and drink her fill of the beautiful music of Vienna.

30 Years Ago - Nov. 22, 1966

POSSIBLE SEWING FACTORY EMERGES IN DALLAS

The possibility of a sewing factory in Dallas Borough has aroused hopes for more employment in many homes in the area and open antagonism in some residents. There is reason to believe that if Dallas Borough Council approves the establishment of such an industry in the former Himmeler Theatre on Lake Street, between 75-100 person will find gainful employment.

Hunters will take to the woods Monday for opening day of deer season. Local school bowing to the inevitable, close for the occasion, lengthening the Thanksgiving vacation by one day. Students are asked to call the Dallas Post to report their kill.

20 Years Ago - Nov. 24, 1976

SHAVERTOWN WATER CO. COMPLETES CONSTRUCTION

The Dallas - Lake-Lehman grid-iron contest for the Old Shoe will highlight Thanksgiving activities in the Back Mountain. The game for the Old Shoe will be up for grabs for the 28th time. The Mountaineers have kept the shoe for the past six years and have taken 13 of the past 16 games.

Shavertown Water Co. announced the completion program of the 1976 portion of its construction program with replacement of the old mains on Pioneer Ave. and Davis St. areas. Approximately 2500 feet of new four inch mains have been installed on Davis, Stafford and Zinn Streets.

If you missed *The Post* - you missed the news!