

EDITORIALS

New school should not be placed on fields

It's difficult — perhaps impossible — to fathom why the majority of members of the Dallas School Board voted last week to put the replacement for Westmoreland Elementary School on the site of playing fields used by hundreds of Back Mountain children. Perhaps even a greater mystery is how that location suddenly became the site of choice when it had never before been brought up for serious discussion. What's easy to see — at least for the majority of observers — is that last week's decision is the worst of all possible options.

There are two issues here, both of them of substantial importance to the Back Mountain. The obvious one is the location of a school building, which is of greatest interest to families whose children would have attended Westmoreland Elementary and the teachers and staff who work there. Many of them wanted the school to remain in Trucksville, near their homes and a part of their community. The choice of a site away from the main campus may provide them with half a loaf, which to some is better than none.

The larger concern is the apparent belief on the part of some school directors that the community has no right to be informed and involved in critical decisions. While school directors are elected to take on responsibility for the operation of the district, voters don't expect them to wield power in a vacuum free of public opinion. But that is exactly what happened last week; board members took only a couple of hours to discuss among themselves a decision that should involve parents, teachers, and all citizens of the district, whether or not they have children in the public schools. It's one thing to choose which of three spots on the main campus to use for the new building, the announced purpose of the meeting. It's quite another to spring an entirely new location on an unsuspecting public, a location that would wipe out years of effort and investment by people working together to provide healthy recreation for our youth.

Thousands of young people have spent a portion of their summers on the fields developed by Back Mountain Baseball, and hundreds of adults have coached, maintained and improved the fields that will be lost if this decision is allowed to stand. While in a narrow sense it is true that since the school district owns the land it can do with it as it pleases, it is wrong to think the district operates independently of the community at large. In fact, the schools exist to serve the community, and the largest percentage of the revenue that supports them comes from local taxpayers, who are correct to demand that their voices be heard on issues like this one.

It may well be that the school board intends to replace the fields that will be lost to the new building, but if they have a plan to do so they haven't bothered to share it with anyone outside their circle. It seems more likely that, like the entire Westmoreland issue, the majority of board members haven't thought sufficiently hard about the ramifications of their vote. If that is a wrong impression, the board has brought it upon itself because it has jumped from one plan to another, only to select an option that was never fully presented to the public.

No matter where the new school goes, some fields will be lost, whether at the main campus or the Back Mountain Baseball complex. Given that choice, the board made a wrong turn by choosing to disrupt one of the nation's most successful youth sports programs. We urge them to reconsider, and put the new school where its impact will be less severe.

Merry Christmas

It's the most wonderful time of the year, so the song says. You can't tell it by the weather, of course, but that only illustrates how little relevance the weather has to people's lives. And it's surely not just because the old year is near its end, even if it may have been one more forgettable than many others. No, it's the spirit that makes the season bright, whether you believe it's the Holy Spirit or just the lilt in your heart when you think about sharing a special time with family and friends.

For Christians, who make up the vast majority of Americans, this is more than a time of gift giving and overindulging in homemade delights. Christmas signifies not the end of the year, but the beginning of a new relationship between man and God, one in which the Almighty shows His love by walking among us and ultimately sacrificing Himself for our redemption. But that chapter of the story is still far off; for now Christians celebrate the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem, and the beginning of His remarkable journey that remains fresh in our minds two millennia later.

That's the real reason for the season, but even those who doubt Christ's divinity can't miss the infectious good will that manifests itself at Christmastime. Enjoy it and share it this season, then try to keep it in your heart all year long.

Do you agree? Disagree?

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

Members of the staff of *The Dallas Post* wishing all our readers and advertisers a Merry Christmas, from left, foreground; Lou Mancini, darkroom; Charlotte Bartzek, associate publisher; Ron Bartzek, publisher; Paul Rismiller, composition; Dennise

Casterline, advertising. On stairs; Kylie Shafferkoetter, reporter; Jill Gruver, office manager; Olga Kostrobala, typesetting; Joy Morgan, pasteup. The newspaper will begin its 108th year of continuous publishing in 1997.

LETTERS

Westmoreland PTO president pleased with school location

Editor:

Two months ago I wrote of my shock and dismay with the Dallas School Board. Today I am heartened and delighted not only by their decision to build the Westmoreland replacement school at the current Administration site, but moreover by the genuine concern of the members that caused them to reconsider their previous decision. Since the time of the vote to place the new school at the Dallas

campus, they have continued to analyze additional information, question the architects and listen to the residents.

Although only one board member ultimately changed their vote thereby making this new decision just as close as the earlier one, I found the environment surrounding the open and continuing debate of this matter refreshing.

The Board's choice reflects the current and

educational trend toward decentralized, smaller, community oriented schools. As a Dallas resident, parent and Westmoreland PTO President, I applaud the decision to build the new school at the Administration site and to continue the "community/family" atmosphere that has been developed at Westmoreland.

Ellen Smith
Shavertown

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

Most of us have been movie buffs for most of our lives. I can remember my parents taking me to my first "talkie." It was "The Jazz Singer" with Al Jolson singing "Mammy" in blackface. If you like songs like that I guess he was pretty good. I don't, so I don't recall being too impressed with the new invention.

Sure there has been a tremendous change from those days, especially in the admission price. We could get into a silent western for a dime if you were under 12. (If you weren't you could "pass" by slouching down a bit when buying the ticket.)

Before that you could get into those converted stores called nickelodeons for just a nickel. The Saturday westerns weren't completely silent...there was a piano player adding drama, and later on Wurlitzer organs came into their own in the bigger and classier theatres like the Capitol. Bet ev-

Mystery movies you're sure to love

ery town had a Capitol Theatre. (Or Rialto, or Strand.)

"The Jazz Singer" wasn't supposed to be a talkie - the intention was to synchronize songs and sound effects but no speech. Jolson ad-libbed "You ain't heard nothing yet" and later on there were two talking sequences of 60 and 294 words.

About then Charlie Chaplin proved he was a better comedian than prophet, saying, "Moving pictures need sound as much as Beethoven symphonies needs lyrics." Wrong. Warner's liked the audience reaction so much they jumped in with ads like "100% Talking!" Variety called it "100% Crude."

Jolson quickly made another movie. "The Singing Fool," in which he sang the gushy "Sonny Boy." In the next nine months it sold two million records and well over one million pieces of sheet music.

Only two years later color came and everything became "all-talking" in "glorious Technicolor." A thoughtful writer said, "The legitimate theatre is in a panic with talking pictures...all their seats at the same price...Get it? The rich man stands in line with the poor."

Industry prophets, however far-seeing, would never in their wild-

est imagining have forecast the movie-by-video rental business, where for a few dollars and change, provided you wait a month or so, reasonably current hit movies can be taken home, shown in your own living room, and taken back the next day for someone else to rent.

Sacrebleu! Incroyable? Oui, and so to my point. (This guy can take forever to get to it.) There are movies being made, not many, but some, which have no big stars, no huge budget of millions, but instead have interesting scripts, great acting and more genuine thrills than any high-budget blockbuster.

There are three of these well-kept secrets I can recommend without reservation, all made by the same people, the Cohen brothers, Joel and Ethan. One directs, one produces. My only complaint about their work is that they don't make enough of it.

Their efforts also include Frances McDormand, Berwick native and Joel's wife. Not exactly a star, not exactly a raving beauty, Frances can out-act 10 Julia Roberts. She is perfect. She can do anything.

Look for the brothers' current output now in rental stores... "Fargo" a thriller like you

seldom see, maybe even like you never saw. It's in all the rental stores but you may have to reserve it. Next, pick up their first production from a dozen years ago called "Blood Simple." Blockbuster on Kidder Street has it, perhaps others too but I doubt it. This one won directing awards, and a Best Actor award for H. Emmett Walsh as a sleazy detective. Walsh is superbly creepy and almost steals the picture, not an easy task because everyone in it is great.

All the rating books gave Blood Simple 3 1/2 or 4 stars, and Leonard Maltin, noting the Cohens produced it on the proverbial shoestring, called it a "visual delight, full of showoffy stylistics." Another critic called it the "best thriller in 10 years." (He, was being too modest...20 years is more like it.)

The third Cohen classic is in the Kingston Blockbuster and possible other stores... "Miller's Crossing." This one pays tribute to the gangster movies of the 20s and 30s, but simply does it better. Far better.

If you movie buffs don't go ape over all three of these terrific movies, I will consider refunding your rental price.

Trust me.

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - Jan. 1, 1937 DALLAS RECOVERS FROM THE GREAT DEPRESSION

When local historians of another day turn the paper of time backward to 1936 they will read a graphic story of how Dallas and its neighboring communities stepped out of the shadow of depression and into a bright new era of community achievement. People of this section can look back upon the old with pride and forward to the new with assurance of continued progress.

Seven major offices in Dallas Borough will lie at stake in the election which looms as one of the most interesting events scheduled locally for 1937. Two school directors, three councilmen, a burgess, a tax collector and an audi-

tor must be elected by the citizens of Dallas next fall.

50 Years Ago - Jan. 3, 1947 THIEVES HIT BEAUMONT AREA, STEAL '41 DODGE

State Police were without clues Monday to a series of robberies committed at Beaumont late Friday evening or early Saturday morning. Thieves stole a '41 green Dodge belonging to Mary Jackson, Kingston High School teacher from a garage within 100 feet of her home on Tunkhannock Highway.

Held up by a blue bandana masked bandit as she left her home at Hays Corners. Friday evening to take her auto from her garage to visit her sick husband at Mercy Hospital. Mrs. Ralph Balut put up a terrific struggle and warded off her attacker until she could run screaming and crying across Country Club Road to the Gordon home for assistance. The attacker escaped.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 28, 1956 MRS. T.M.B. HICKS WINS STATEWIDE CONTEST

Back Mountain headlines during 1956 - Topping all other women in a statewide literary contest was our own Mrs. T.M.B. Hicks, who won first place in the short story division.

Following the shutdown of the Fernbrook Park Mills, the community was heartened by the news that the Linear Corp. would move into this area and employ many local people.

You could get - Center cut pork chops or roast, 69¢ lb.; rib roast, 59¢ lb.; Spanish onions, 2 lbs., 19¢; Supreme Rye Bread, 19¢ loaf.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 29, 1966 NO PROGRESS IN STRIKE AGAINST LINEAR

An early snowstorm visited the region two days after the first day of winter, blanketing the Back Mountain with up to 8 inches and reducing traffic to a minimum.

The situation at Linear remains the same with labor and management still deadlocked after five months, the new year growing colder and colder and pickets building larger bon fires to keep from freezing at the entrance driveway to the plant in Fernbrook.

The strike was called July 31 after a breakdown in labor contract negotiations. There has been no progress.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 30, 1976 ICE FISHING GETS EARLY START AT HARVEYS LAKE

Dallas Township Board of Supervisors approved their 1977 budget for \$296,300 at a special meeting Monday evening in the township building. There will be no tax increase for the township and the three mill 1% earned income (shared equally with the school district), \$5 per capita and \$2 per month trailer taxes will prevail for the coming year.

Ice fishermen welcomed this year's early freeze at Harveys lake and lost no time in cutting holes for their favorite sport.

Jim Davies, resident of Dallas and local businessman announced officially this week that he will enter the competition for mayor of Dallas Borough in the April primary. Council President Jerry Machell is presently serving as acting mayor due to the prolonged illness of Mayor Steve Hartman.